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Ashcroft, B., Griffiths, G. and Tiffin, H., eds (1995) *The post-colonial studies reader*. New York, Routledge, 526 p. (ISBN 0-415-09622-7)

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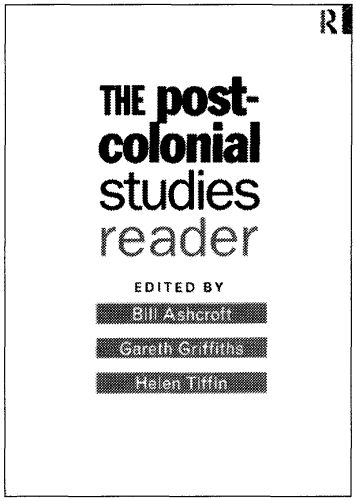

Recently, Stefan Collini, in the *Manchester Guardian Weekly,* commented upon the growing convergence between matters of scholarly concern and those which have been journalism's traditional domain: "[A]s universities have laid claim to study all areas of contemporary culture from teen-talk to tourism, so the boundary between the academic and the non-academic comes under greater pressure". The journalists have responded by taking pot shots at the 'unreadable' and 'jargon-ridden' nature of this academic intrusion into the profane daily lives of us all. Collini is quite accurate on all counts. The scholarly determination to chronicle life outside the halls of academe means that all is now grist to the academic mill. And the ways of expressing this interest extend from citing the lustrous and lyrical evocations of poets and novelists to the turgidity of many postmodernist texts.

All this appears in the *Post-colonial studies reader.* The range and scope of the selections are impressive and the editors must be congratulated for the exhaustiveness of their labours which lead them to the well-known — Said, Bhabha, Hall, Spivak, Fanon — and into the central thematic currents: "Universality and Difference", "Representation and Resistance", "Nationalism", "Ethnicity", "Feminism", "Language", "The Body", "History", "Place", and "Education". What else is there?

Revealing my own origins, I must admit to enjoying the Australasian view of colonialism brought by the Australian editors. The impact of colonialism was felt most heavily in the subjected societies of Africa, Asia or the West Indies, but the 'white dominions' of the British empire also experienced a muted dependence on the 'mother country'. Their literary and artistic talents had to slough off metropolitan influence — as in the case of Canada's 'Group of Seven' or New Zealand's Allen Curnow who appears here with the West Indian writers Derek Walcott and Edward Brathwaite. I like Robert Kroetsch's comment that, while Canadian writers are working with a language which appears to be their own, "so there is in the Canadian word a concealed other experience, sometimes British, sometimes American" (p. 394). In turn, the descendants of colonists have had to come to terms with their own contradictions stemming from the colonisation of indigenous populations, as Terrie Goldie points out (p. 232ff). Quebec writers, such as Emile Borduas, and the journal *Parti Pris* — and many since — have fought their own battles of liberation; yet, as Linda Hutcheon (p. 132) notes, this sense of Quebecois dispossession exists alongside French oppression of indigenous peoples in an earlier epoch.

I accept the concern of recent scholarship to peel off the layers of reality to reveal other previously hidden verities. But I have three caveats about it; first, that postmodernism's prose can be unimaginatively repetitive in the use of its talismanic slogans — epistemic, subaltern, discourse, sites, constructed, to mention only the most offending. Secondly, I object to its sheer wordiness; look at Benita Parry's (p. 37) sixty-two word criticism of Spivak's definition of native women as silent and subaltern, because, she argues (in my words now), research should show that they have played many roles as healers, ascetics, artists and singers in their cultures. And, finally, there is still the rather smug assumption that, as Marshall Berman engagingly put it, none of this existed until discovered, by postmodernism, last week. But, 'deconstruction' does reach back further than last week — to Aldous Huxley and his *The Devils of Loudun*, Oscar Lewis's *La Vida*, or the splendid array of E.P. Thompson's historical studies; and all these written in highly readable, luminous prose.

Two closing comments: first, that readers such as this are like food tasting; while your taste buds are piqued by many of the dishes offered, at the end, your stomach may be full but not satisfied. Better to eat (or read) fully one or two samples. And finally, one of my students thinks that the cover is as inspiring as that of a computer software manual; I'm inclined to agree.

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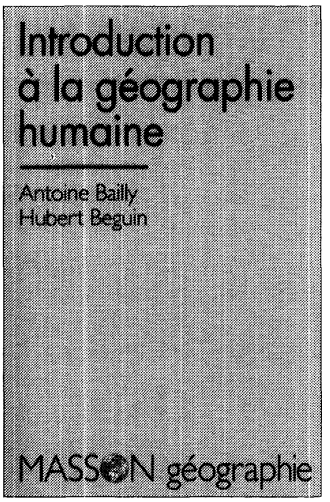
BAILLY, Antoine et BEGUIN, Hubert (1996) *Introduction à la géographie humaine.* Paris, Masson, 6e édition, 203 p. (ISBN 2-200-01393-0)



L'ouvrage de Bailly et de Beguin en est à sa sixième édition. N'est-ce pas là un signe de la valeur didactique de cette introduction à la géographie humaine? Ce succès, quant à nous, est largement mérité. Parmi les qualités de l'ouvrage, retenons en particulier la clarté et la logique de l'exposé, le nombre et la précision des concepts géographiques présentés, la mise en valeur, la description et la critique des diverses visions de la géographie. Comparé à la première édition parue en 1982, le contenu, dans son ensemble, n'a pas subi de transformations majeures à l'exception de l'ajout d'un dixième chapitre sur l'environnement, les risques naturels et les risques de sociétés. De plus, la bibliographie a été mise à jour et certaines introductions et conclusions ont été étoffées.