

Malcolm K. Read. *Educating the Educators: Hispanism and its Institutions*. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2003.

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Malcolm Read says of his objective in writing his latest work, *Educating the Educators*:

My aim throughout has been less to write a book in the currently fashionable academic genre of memoir writing than to uncover the political and ideological presuppositions of Hispanism, as these were filtered through my own life experiences. (12)

It is an intriguing proposition and, as its author notes, not one without pitfalls. The book itself went through several revisions and re-submissions as it baffled some editors with its multivalent, class-conscious style. For what Read takes on in his book is to map his own role in developing and sustaining a Marxist stance on the subject's relation to social formations and ideology and how this correlates to his own journey from working class beginnings to the academy in one of its most conservative and traditionalist domains: British Hispanic Studies. His book is hence a hybrid affair. It mixes details of his childhood and adolescence in Derby, England, his forthwith but unexpected entry into the university, with critiques of post-war pedagogy and the trajectory of scholarship within Hispanic Studies in the U.K. from this period to the present day.

Educating the Educators represents a challenge to the old school emphasis on the "universal subject" who encounters the "unity of the text" and the new school post-modernist insistence on relativism and fragmentation seen in the generational sweep of British Hispanism. Most centrally, it chal-

lenges the pedagogical practices and theoretical assumptions of both these currents which commonly leave out lived experience and social context, most pointedly, the impact of class in theoretical applications and the important ideological nature of reading. Class, it seems, in British Hispanism, is still a dirty word.

As a project it is a rigorous enterprise. And Read has certainly done his footwork. Stylistically and content-wise, *Educating the Educators* is innovative. It comprises the first real thorough-going assessment of the contours of a discipline traditionally loath to assess itself – and also often ignorant of developments further afield.

Chapter one tracks the rise and fall of the discipline overall, which leads thinkers of the Old Guard to wax nostalgic for a time where British Hispanism – conceived as a kind of nation – pledged itself to intellectual unity and resisted “succumbing” to generational conflicts. We have the Hispanism of the 1920s which exhibits a fixation with a pre-modern Romantic vision of Spain. By the 1930s, the concentration on Golden Age texts marks a blissful retreat for this rather closed academic community into the past, prompting ahistorical, moral universalising. The post-war period when Read was a young school boy was marked by the educational philosophies of men like Bruce Truscot (pseudonym of Allison Peers), a major contributor to the development of modern British Hispanism. From the 1950s to the 1970s the empiricist idealism of Parker holds sway. The wide-ranging educational reforms that were begun at primary, secondary and tertiary levels as a result of Thatcherism and the New Right from 1970-1980 present a unique threat from without (26); the notion of the importance of a liberal education for the mind and soul of the individual is usurped by pragmatic market-driven goals; there is an increasing emphasis on technicism and utilitarianism within Spanish programs, giving rise to Spanish for business and commercial translation/interpreting. Finally, with the pressures of global capital, postmodern relativisms and the effects of the new Cultural Studies are felt in the discipline.

Chapter two profiles Peers, a traditional intellectual who touted the virtues of a liberal education under the “civilising” influence of the teacher. He often wrote under the pseudonym Truscot in the forties. Peers saw the university as a religious-like sanctuary away from the rabble: here, the working class proceeding from the growing number of technical institutions that Peers feared would overtake the academy and eventually knock down its walls. The period of Hispanism under him was hence notably anti-proletarian, appealing to a kind of “moral” education that served the interests of the ruling class.

Chapter three follows Read’s adventures and misadventures through a

pedagogical setting and academic field inflected by Peers's philosophies, which, if they admitted at all students from more "humble" backgrounds, invoked a kind of hierarchical teacher-student relationship whose end was to inculcate the more "authoritative" counsel's view of world and texts; considerations of class difference or unorthodox treatments were to be left at the door. This pedagogy was ironically a reproduction of the unequal social relations evidenced in the British class system itself. Perilously charting these waters, Read eventually graduates from the University of Bristol and moves on to postgraduate research. When he gains work it is not at this institution, rather, at the University College of Wales.

In chapter four Read then turns his attention to two products of that period whose output could not be more different – owing, in great part, to their different political and theoretical allegiances and class backgrounds. This section compares the career trajectories of himself and Paul Julian Smith, who is something of an academic celebrity. Read can be scathing in his judgments of colleagues and rivals yet at the same time this trenchant critique extends to his own work, which he reviews in line with his development personally and academically as a resistant but accommodated part of a bourgeois setting, far from his proletarian origins.

Through the period of moral universalising and empirical idealism, Read holds, British Hispanism continued to be far more conservative and intellectually inferior to say, English or Philosophy (101), whether following the principles of Peers (the older Hispanists) or Parker (the younger). While other schools in the Humanities provided insights from socio-linguistic theory (which was Read's initial concern before turning to literary theory and Hispanism), Hispanic Philology clung to ideas of sensibility (that the reader encounters the text through elevated faculties) and subjective textual aesthetics. All this amounted to an ideological package in line with conservatism (104). Such insights into the ideological workings of the field are well laid out in chapter five.

The sixth chapter, "In the meantime: British Hispanism and the rise of Cultural Studies" strikes the reader as particularly well thought out. This brings together earlier explorations and places them in a framework which accounts for the shifts in focus within the discipline in terms of the greater dynamics at play. Read applies Critical Realist Margaret Archer's concepts of contradiction and compatibility to map the dialectical developments of divergent elements and the appeasing drive for harmony within British Hispanism from its Peers and Parkerian years up to the present day. He brings together the insights of his previous chapters in a very cogent manner. Additionally he warns against what he terms the "irreducible presentism" of the brand of cultural studies that is currently shaping British Hispanism

(148). The so-called New Hispanists, heady with the fervour of post-structuralist deconstruction, risk ignoring the historical development of culture when reading texts. They may criticise the Old Guard's positivist empiricism and lack of critical self-awareness, but imposing the paradigm of the fragmented postmodern subject onto pre-modern contexts similarly manifests a refusal of historical specificity, Read argues (148). The New Hispanists for Read pointedly favour considerations of gender over class, which he sees as a category that demands understandings of social relations which elude those new critics who largely disavow Marxism.

The book closes in chapter seven with details of his time working abroad in Jamaica and New Zealand. The autobiographical elements combined with the self-reflection on his intellectual development within the academy as an increasingly marginal Marxist provide a clear landscape in which the reader can locate Read's positions on British Hispanism. In *Educating the Educators*, Read places his cards firmly on the table. His accounts touched a chord in this reviewer for whom class differences manifest in the realities of the university and the outside world have also been personally apparent. Moreover, as this reviewer is part of that emergent generation of scholars in the so-called New Hispanism, Read's reminder of the place of class and ideology is welcome. Class is still relevant and to throw it out of the picture is to throw the baby out with the bathwater. With this book Read hence works against the grain; what he argues could hardly be termed fashionable. His book contributes both a descriptive profile of the evolution of a discipline and presents a challenge to its often unconscious ideological manoeuvres and rapprochements.

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