

Opponent's Report on Bibiana Machátová's Diploma Thesis:

“Edward W. Said : Postcolonial Studies and the Politics of Literary Theory”

Ms. Bibiana Machátová seeks to illumine the life-story as well as certain general intellectual and aesthetic properties and strategies of the topic area of Edward Said both as human being and Edward Said as teacher-scholar and cultural critic of a major body of compositional work. The sixty-seven page diploma text contains six main component parts: “Introduction”, “1. Who is Edward W. Said?”, “2. The True Homeland—The Text”, “3. Reorienting Orientalism”, “4. Culture and Imperialism”, “5. His Palestine”, “6. Intellectuals”, Conclusion”, “Bibliography” and “Summary”.

As concerns the prose style, the thesis is generally well written. But there are a few lapses or typos of which here are some textual supports:

- 1) ‘1996’ shd be something like ‘1966’ (11)
- 2) ‘Foulcauld’ shd be ‘Foucault’ (28)
- 3) ‘intellectual’ shd be ‘the intellectual’ (48)
- 4) ‘Said was suspected that’ shd rather be ‘it was suspected that Said’s lectures’ (48)
- 5) ‘certain hierarchy’ shd be ‘a certain hierarchy’ (50)
- 6) ‘by imitating of the world’ shd be ‘by imitating the world’ (12)
- 7) ‘corrupted’ reads better as ‘corrupt’ (51)
- 8) ‘certain extent’ shd be ‘a certain extent’ (first line, 55)
- 9) ‘dos’ shd be ‘does’ (59)

The majority of this diploma thesis, nevertheless, has been produced in very clean English.

As regard the content effects of the thesis I should adduce the following mention from the candidate that well reveals the basic point of her thesis: “the purpose of this thesis is to grant appropriate attention to Edward W. Said and present an interpretive overview of his work” (3) something the candidate does more precisely in a good survey view of things sort of way. She does not dig particularly deep in any one area of Said’s output, per se, for example a critical work or topic area, but she does cover a fair amount of ground. Sometimes, however, the thesis reads in a rather more descriptive than in an analytical key, which is the chief weakness in this otherwise fine piece of work. For example, there is very little discussion of who Said’s intellectual-academic (not general public) antagonists were and what ideological worlds these academicians inhabited compared with his own; would the candidate have anything to say to this question? Obviously it implicates large questions of imperialist culture and big power.

The discussion of specialization on page 54ff. nicely begs by implication the question of the ‘specializational nature of power’ (to wit Guy Debord’s argument among others, though the candidate does not line up this big tank nor does she identify the problem in precisely this way) and of what this feature of power may mean for Said’s own mode of thinking, of teaching, of writing and of living both within a world of power and of culture, all of which, the candidate implicitly addresses to some extent. Would the candidate, however, have more to say (beyond her discussion of Antonio Gramsci’s ‘organic intellectual’) about the deep motivating factors or purposes for Said and how and why more exactly the notion of ~~the~~ specialization did or did not chime with his mode of reality as thinking being? Was specialization even a form of self-brutalization for Said?

Finally, what does the candidate find the major shortcomings of Said’s work? For instance, does one necessarily endorse his tendentiousness (?) (something the candidate tackles in her discussion of Said-Michel Foucault) yet the concept as such is not broached per se.

Pre oral exam mark: velmi dobře+



**Erik Sherman Roraback, D.Phil.
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