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SUPERVISOR'S REPORT:

re "*Giving a Voice to the Other: Said's Theory of Anti-Colonial Resistance*" by Ali
Daghman
(MA dissertation, 2010)

Mr Daghman's dissertation amounts to an extended critique of certain facets of post-colonialism, a discourse dominated in Britain and America by the work of Edward Said, Homi Bhabha and Michel Foucault. Mr Daghman's starting point is the inadequacy of approaches specific to "anti-colonial resistance"—an inadequacy which represents one of the "consequences of the current conception of colonial power and discourse in postcolonial theory" (6). In Daghman's view, this conception has been further effected by an undue focus on "Western" discourses of power (8). Whilst the dissertation is specifically addressed to the limitations of Edward Said's theory of "Anti-Colonial Resistance," a key moment in Daghman's argument comes in a refutation of Bhabha—from page 29—which reveals deep flaws in the discursive orientation of "postcolonial" theory and its Hegelian foundations (the ontological preoccupation, as it were, of the colonised subject by the coloniser, and hence a certain perpetuated "colonisation" of Bhabha's theoretical stance, assumed *on behalf* of the colonial subject of which it speaks, etc.).

Daghman's dissertation is in many ways timely and important. However, a number of questions (or further considerations) arise:

1. Why is the question of "Anti-Colonial Resistance" tied to a critique of Said (and Bhabha and Foucault)? What is the status of a theory of "Anti-Colonial Resistance" beyond the Anglo-European framework of postcolonial theory? And how is "Anti-Colonial Resistance" articulated by other Anglo-European writers, perhaps from a more militant background, such as Sartre or Fanon (who is mentioned only in footnote 42)? Or, more recently, the "nomadology" of Pierre Joris?
2. Why are the literary studies given limited to Conrad and Yeats? In other words, why is Said's adoption of Western literary figures allowed to predominate, and their indebtedness to Victorian mores left unexamined? Why does Daghman thereby allow the error of postcolonialism (its undue focus upon "Western" discourses of power) to repeat itself in his overly deferential treatment of Said? Why is there no discussion of more contemporary literature, particularly from those "oriental" cultures which are the implied "Other" of Said's project? For example the Syrian poet Adonis, the Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish, or Maghrebian writers like Adbelwahab Meddeb (Tunisia), Habib Tengour (Algeria), Drisi Chraïbi (Morocco)?
3. In view of the critique of the dialectical binaries of postcolonial theory, why does Daghman not discuss the colonialist history of Arabic and Islam (in counterpoint to Said's stance on "Western" colonialism in the Middle East and elsewhere)? Further, why is there no discussion of the way in which "anticolonialism" has been adopted as a repressive political instrument in its own right by authoritarian regimes in former "colonial" countries (e.g. Zimbabwe)—not to mention the status of *writers* in these countries? Why is the dissertation weighted towards the Mediterranean Arab world and an East-West dichotomy—thus both reinscribing the formal assumptions of Western postcolonialism and avoiding the

complexities of thereby marginalised situations such as those arising in East Timor (i.e. also continuing to imply that colonialism is *essentially* a Western characteristic of “power”)?

In general, however, and in light of this dissertation’s significant accomplishments, my recommendation is for a grade of (1) “EXCELLENT.”


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