**Introduction**

**Whence?**

How does a theologian live with a haunted history –

disjointed, constantly shifting, and refusing to be fitted into one piece?[[1]](#footnote-1)

Kwok Pui-lan

Whatever else it might mean, being “haunted” does not stand for being settled comfortably in any geographical, linguistic, cultural, or confessional location. “Haunted,” that is, by the perplexities of belonging among divergent cultural memories, political allegiances, and theological traditions that co-inhere rather spontaneously in an intellectual sensibility marked indelibly by the experience of migrancy and diaspora. The project I present here is an amalgam of critical and constructive peregrination through some of the most mesmerizing conundrums of the modern Occidental theological method in the era of global postcoloniality from the perspective of a diasporic imaginary. It is a diasporic discourse on theological method. Among these conundrums, competitive dualism as an enduring habit of epistemological and ontological imagination throughout the mainstream Occidental modernity, formally and substantively, emerges as both convoluted and tragic. This dissertation interrogates the habit of dualistic imagination, not limited to but particularly thriving during colonial modernity, which continues to influence theological inquiry into the present day. Be it gender dualism or the competitive oppositionality of body and soul, spirit and flesh, private and public, rational and emotional, visual and aural, written and spoken word, worship and socio-economic life, – dualistic rationalities and imaginaries privilege the logic of “either/or” in all of these contexts. The itinerary of my interrogation traverses the habitual disengagement, or even the dualistic gridlock, between liturgical worship and the life of exercised faith in social ethics during this epoch as one of the most ominous symptoms of the rationale of competitive binarity.

The centrality of the Holocaust as the pivotal ethical contestation for the Western theological thought in late modernity, as many have observed, abundantly attests to the tragic ramifications of the gridlocked disengagement of liturgy and ethics within the Christian religion. Even though an expanded argument is beyond the scope of this project, at the present context of postcoloniality it is crucial to recognize the equally tragic ramifications of the same disengagement and the same rationale of binarity vis-à-vis the conquering operations of Western imperial powers in the colonized non-Western lands and, perhaps surprisingly for some, even in Europe. The correlation between the dualistic imaginary of Western modernity and the Christian religion as a discourse, facilitating the colonial expansion more often than resisting it, is not accidental. Certain racially inscribed essentializations notwithstanding, Marcella Althaus-Reid’s observation flags the often-avoided correlation:

Processes of colonization, for instance, are about spiritual competence but also competition. Western Christianity was able to prove that the white race was superior in spiritual terms to other races. Western theology affirmed its identity in a discourse of ‘we are the best’, which also justified the pillage of the colonies and the fables concocted to explain economic dependency in our present century. Economic and spiritual competition are related discourses of identity, based on perceptions of human relations as competitive. [[2]](#footnote-2)

As far as the connection of modernity and colonialism is concerned, I am in complete agreement with Walter D. Mignolo that modernity and coloniality are parallel concepts and that “there is no modernity without coloniality.”[[3]](#footnote-3) Mignolo argues that “the coloniality of power underlines nation building in both local histories of nations that devised and enacted global designs as well as in those local histories that had to accommodate themselves to global designs devised with them in mind but without their direct participation.”[[4]](#footnote-4) Thus, “coloniality … is the hidden face of modernity and its very condition of possibility” even though the fact “that coloniality remains difficult to understand as the darker side of modernity is due to the fact that most stories of modernity have been told from the perspective of modernity itself, including, of course, those told by its internal critics.”[[5]](#footnote-5)

My critical and constructive peregrination through the inner sanctum of Christian theological method and its elective affinities with dualistic imaginaries of God, divine transcendence, power, agency, and the ever exasperating relationship with the creation sourced *ex nihilo*, is situated in the polyphony (cacophony?) of diasporic life. As far as this life is polyphonic it is also inexorably drawn toward the scrutiny of relationality between the multiple, coexisting and conflicting, dimensions of experience and knowledge that so often seem altogether disagreeable at the first glance. The fascination with immensely diverse ecologies of relationality, divine and human, stems from my encounters with truly bewildering inhabited differences of cultures, languages, political and economical systems: how do they coexist and most importantly, how could they coexist fruitfully? In this regard being “haunted” stands for being embedded in a certain cultural and theological hybridity. I was born in Latvia, a multiply conquered and colonized interstice of Europe, starting from the Western European *Drang nach Osten* crusades in the 12th century that promptly brought Christianity there with “fire and sword” – a fact that is not lost on any Latvian mind, Christian or otherwise – to the most recent subjugation by the Communist “Second world” of the Soviet empire. Due to the complex colonial history, theological education in a scholarly sense was never truly possible in my native language, so studying theology meant reading and thinking in English, Russian, German and other dominant languages. The virtually absolute vacuum of theological literature in the early 1990s after the collapse of the officially atheistic Soviet empire facilitated the emergence of a seeker-type eclectic habit of inquisitiveness. Alongside being trained in theology according to the hastily defrosted pre-World War II traditions in combination with newly imported standards of Western Protestant and Catholic theological edifice, it must be mentioned that the Eastern Orthodox theological and spiritual tradition was always around. People read whatever theological literature they could get their hands on, in whatever languages or confessional traditions it came in, and often gravitated to more than one ecclesiastical context at the same time. The emergence of a certain theological creolization was rather inevitable in Latvia, one of the routinely unacknowledged dark undersides of modernity, conscripted into Europe and “the West” through crusade, apartheid, and serfdom.[[6]](#footnote-6) Even though the country is undoubtedly geo-culturally European more than anything else, it is by no means simply Western. Europe has never coincided with the West,[[7]](#footnote-7) its effortlessly enduring hegemonic spectacle and its ongoing (neo)colonial disavowals notwithstanding. Subsequent studies, professional training, and ecclesiastical ministry brought me to Sweden, Germany, Great Britain, and eventually took me to the United States. I am no stranger to inhabiting various imperial formations. In these circumstances, what started as a strategy of survival in the midst of theological scarcity and freshly erupted postcommunist religious pandemonium, compounded with a good dose of neophyte exhilaration about the previously forbidden intellectual fruit, eventually developed into a hybrid theological temperament. Yet historically, through the multiple colonizations of what is the present territory of Latvia, there was no original purity of religious tradition in the first place. Indigenous non-Christian religious practices endured alongside and within the various versions of German and Swedish Protestantism, German and Polish Catholicism, as well as Russian Orthodoxy. All of them came forcibly together within the same territory and among the locals and newcomers alike, and lived on throughout the colonial era right into the so-called “new” (the second-tier, non-core, formerly barbarian!) Europe of the former “Eastern Bloc.”[[8]](#footnote-8) This is the inherited postcolonial and postcommunist hybridity, indeed the *poétique forcée[[9]](#footnote-9)* (Édouard Glissant) of historical inscription that undergirds the unfinished genesis of my now diasporically attuned theological sensibility. In this sense Latvia has more in common with the Caribbean than, say, with its nearest Scandinavian neighbors.

The postcolonial connotations and connections that I find so pivotal for my hybrid theological sensibility might appear rather puzzling since postcoloniality is still routinely perceived as a domain of solely racially circumscribed discourses whose methodological inertias continue to offer homogenized and simplistic constructs of Europe and “the West” vis-à-vis race, subjugation, Christian missionary ideology and certain canonized versions of transmarine colonialism. Of course, the existential actualities of the present postcolonial milieu – as well as colonialism in the first place – are far more complex than that. Thankfully, the complexity of lived realities is starting to merit acknowledgment in more recent postcolonial studies. In the context of these debates, however, my locus of enunciation would probably need to be specified as being, to use Mita Banerjee’s term, “off-white.” It resonates within the postcolonial imaginary of “the tantalizing off-whiteness of Eastern Europeanness” which at present seemingly “falls outside the ‘ethno-racial pentagon’ of both US racial discourse and postcolonial studies.”[[10]](#footnote-10) Where all of that leaves me is being suspended somewhere in the middle of a fluid equilibrium of overlapping homing desires. Similarly to Osvaldo Vena, I too, “have this feeling of not being able to pin down my theology. To many I am a sort of theological chameleon…”[[11]](#footnote-11) What endures throughout the ebbs and flows of my migrancy and diasporic emplacements is a paramount fascination with the “how” of the relational ontology of existential engagements, cultural-political allegiances and empowerments. The “how,” ontologically speaking, pertains to the “ethics,” or the quiddity, or the distinctly qualitative nature, of relations between the divine and the created as well as among human persons, cultures, languages, races, genders, sexualities, political and economic regimes. But the “how,” epistemologically speaking, also pertains to the “method,” or the mindscapes of perceiving and conceiving God, the world, and human life.

In this context, the possibilities and the always precarious actualities of conviviality, rather than the abundant visions and embodiments of violent clashes, have captivated my analytical and moral reasoning as much more demanding on both fronts and thus also much more interesting. In other words, life so full of interruptions and disruptions has bodied forth a peculiar curiosity about connections, encounters, interactions, intersections, interdependencies, and complex simultaneities not only on the plane of political economy but also on the plane of the economy of salvation. The concern about the nature of relations and connections is, at the end of the day, a concern about survival, a refrain so existentially dear for a displaced subjectivity. And survival, in turn, “is about the connections between things.”[[12]](#footnote-12) Thus the curiosity about the qualitative anatomy of relationality does not simply and solely stem from my labyrinthine interest in the paradigmatic “both/and” proclivity of the Eastern Orthodoxy; nor is sacramental discourse (as the sometimes prematurely written-off locus of Christian theological imagination of obsolete and irrelevant ritual unions and communions) the only theological terminus of this curiosity. In any case, it is this curiosity that undergirds my joining hands with postcolonial theorist Edward Said in recognition that a truly fruitful intellectual struggle is indeed the struggle “to construct fields of coexistence rather than fields of battle as the outcome of intellectual labor.”[[13]](#footnote-13)

**Why?**

Several prominent fields over the last decades have posited relationality as one of their analytical and constructive hallmarks, feminism arguably being the most consistent among them. But relationality *per se* cannot be naively valorized; it is simply the intrinsically interdependent ontological shape of reality, for good and for ill, no matter how much effort and advocacy it often takes to be acknowledged as such. What is most fascinating is the nature, or the quiddity, the “how” of such a relationality that could be recognized as the interface of ethical conviviality. The “why” of this project comprises the quest for an ethically configured “how” of relationality as a matter of *theological* rationality, or even better and broader, theoretical sensuality and comportment toward all things, holy and mundane, in relation to God. It is a quest for theological envisagements of ethically configured relationality or conviviality through an exploration of the notorious disjunctive gridlock of Christian sacramental-liturgical worship and the life of social justice as a symptom of the modern Western theological mindscape and its methodological *modus operandi*. Precisely as an issue of theological method – the crystallization of cultural imaginary, the mindscape of the patterns and practices of religious knowing, and finally the axiological structure of culturally and historically embedded organization of knowledge – the above disengagement succinctly reflects the impoverishing Occidental dualistic logic of “either/or,” so prominent in the colonial modernity.

What follows then is a contrapuntal investigative itinerary rather than a purely linear argument: the *raison d’être* of this project is to approach the resilient disengagement between liturgical worship and life of justice and service as if from a parallax perspective. Namely, from the viewpoint of an interstitial Western-Eastern diasporic imaginary in conversation with postcolonial theory and two other constitutive “outsides” of the modern Occidental theological imagination – Eastern Christian theology and Jewish ethical thought. The West often appears differently to those who are squarely rooted in its metropolitan centers of power and knowledge in comparison to those who were conscripted into it by colonial domination, imperialistic conquest, processes of globalization, or simply lingered in its marginalized “barbarian” interstices and borderzones since times immemorial – even in Europe and in North America. The origin of my parallax view is a *relative outside* of the Western modernity. It is the diasporic space of enmeshment, the space of living on the thresholds of Western and not quite Western socio-cultural imaginaries. None of them exist in splendid isolation and fabricated innocence. So the objective of such a parallactic exploration is not to issue a yet another homogenized condemnation of “the Western modernity” *tout court* in juxtaposition to some glorified “East” or some other imaginary space or “golden age” through a Manichean procedure of naïve or ideologically profitable reversal. The Western theological tradition in general, as well as that of modernity in particular, is immensely rich and superbly intricate as it accommodates diverse genealogies of spiritual and intellectual influences, including internal critiques and dissentions. Modernity is not a one-dimensional villain of world history. Nor are its theological traditions irremediably doomed and damned. Hence my parallax view does not intend to reverse hierarchies of virtue and value by derogatory juxtaposing “the West” and the “non-West.” What the parallax view does, with the recognition of the internal diversity of the Western theological mindscape, is to highlight certain disturbing and unproductive patterns within its imaginary that often slip under the radar screen of the more native internal critiques. It is important to stress the word “more” – which is by no means a univocal “contra” – since the diasporic positionality I inhabit is always already, and irreversibly, embedded in an empirical hybridity of multiple belonging. Moreover, the Occidental modernity precisely as colonial – somberly ironic as it is – is not the exclusive property of the Western colonizing cultures and intellectual traditions. The diasporic perception, then, emerging in this context from a postcolonially colored diasporic experience of cultural interstitiality, cannot, is not, and does not intend to be a spectacle of “the wholly other.” Herein, perhaps, hides its “conservative” or even “cunning”[[14]](#footnote-14) moment as Derek Walcott would put it. There is no unspoiled and absolute critical “outside” or constructive difference vis-à-vis the “natively” Western internal critiques to be claimed since postcolonial and diasporic imaginary precisely suspects and problematizes absolute differences! Yet, accentuating the Occidental unease around relationality, the diasporic parallax sentiment, however, cannot escape a certain astigmatism of critical vision. To inhabit the distance of marginality and interstitiality – though never a trouble-free oppositionality – vis-à-vis the Western cultural and theological edifice indeed entails a certain recalibration of the level of sensitivity toward internally exalted nuances and canonized in-house disagreements. Such a parallax view of the Occidental theological mindscape may appear somewhat insensitive toward some internally cherished idiosyncrasies. It lingers, out of its ambivalent rootedness, around those dimensions of the Western mainstream intellectual tradition that are like the “dark matter,” i.e. comparatively invisible, to those who find themselves rooted more organically and less ambiguously within that tradition. The resulting unease, even a certain heuristic homogenization of critiques and their objects, is to be borne with apprehension and resignation as this project invites and endorses lingering on the thresholds of several cultural traditions at once. Highlighting the “quiddity” of theologically conceived relationality as pivotal in ethical terms constitutes the constructive argument of this project in respect to divine-human as well as disciplinary modes of cohabitation and collaboration. Part III will offer a somewhat atonal ensemble of transdisciplinary elaborations comprising the constructive proposal for modulating the symptomatic disengagement of liturgy and ethics toward an interface of re-engagement according to sacramental counterpoint.

Now what is the often mentioned “quiddity” of relationality, what is ethics and why do they matter? Quiddity, in the context of this project, is a distant and non-technical cousin of its more glamorous medieval linguistic inspiration of *quidditas*. For the lack of a better expression in English, quiddity here describes the essential and qualitative nature of a relation, its type, structure, distinctive particularity and identity. This world is intensely structured in dominance and hegemony across all terrains of created life. Profoundly aware of such structure, ethics comprises the desirable quiddity of relationality as it denotes the qualitative make-up of relation, a configuration of “right relationality,” i.e. justice, integrity, dignity, non-coercion, reciprocal empowerment, and non-violated agency. Most often it is defined minimalistically and negatively – as non-coercive, non-hegemonic, non-violating quiddity of relationality among divine and human persons and agencies. Overall, the notion of ethics plays a dual, albeit again mostly non-technical, role in my project. First, as I just indicated it makes appearances as the shorthand for theologically sourced tonality of “right relationality” for both a morally inflected epistemological imagination – with which I am primarily concerned in this project – as well as for developing a morally and relationally accountable social ontology. While I cannot address the latter in sufficient detail in the present project, it is my deep conviction that both are interlaced exceptionally intimately, for good and very often for ill, as long as the relational timbre of this world remains scored in dominance.

Second, ethics in the traditional sense also expresses the life of Christian discipleship through socially responsive performance of faith in the service of God’s saving justice through participation in the redemptive *opus Dei*. Ethics, as understood here, does not analyze and evaluate any specific theories of moral life – be they aretological, deontological, teleological or otherwise. Rather, ethics refers to “the concrete way of life.”[[15]](#footnote-15) As Louis-Marie Chauvet suggests, ethics “includes every kind of *action* Christians perform in the world insofar as this is a testimony given to the gospel of the Crucified-Risen One and this conduct, as J.B. Metz has emphasized, concerns not only interpersonal ‘moral *praxis’* but also the collective ‘social *praxis*’.”[[16]](#footnote-16) Ethics denotes living within and acting from within the web of palimpsestic relations among the divine and human other(s). The relation with the divine shapes as well as feeds off the relations with our human others while both relationalities permeate each other for good or for ill. So, in full accord with Timothy Sedgwick’s maxim that has inspired both senses of ethics for this project, “in the light of the way in which God is perceived to be related to the world, ethics describes the character and form of life that would express and deepen the relationship with God.”[[17]](#footnote-17) Indeed, ethics engenders “the character and form of life” not only materially and socio-politically, but also as it colors the peregrinations of rationality and imagination.

What about the flamboyantly sounding *opus Dei*? It must be said at once that *opus Dei* in this project does not carry any sensationalist overtones in relation to the post-*Da Vinci Code* notoriety of the Prelature of the Holy Cross. Instead, it succinctly denotes the triune divine work of salvation as divine service, as the divine liturgy (Heb. 8:2, 8:6), which is open to the synergy of human participation in and, most notably in the context of this project, also beyond cultic rites of public worship and individual devotion. If “the justice of God that the liturgy proclaims *is* the Kingdom of God,”[[18]](#footnote-18) then ethics – or “the liturgy after liturgy” is to complete the proclamation by the performance of that justice in incarnational and sacramental way as precisely a liturgical act. Of course, the decisive argument of this project is to suggest that both liturgy and ethics, by grace, are but deeply consonant and contrapuntally intertwined ingredients of the same participatory *opus.* And of course, the decisive argument of this project is therefore hesitantly utopian as it keenly submits to the dictum that “the need to lend a voice to suffering is the condition of all truth.”[[19]](#footnote-19)

**Where?**

## The locus of enunciation for this project is *a* diasporic imaginary. Before anything else is said, I must emphasize that recently there has emerged an acknowledgment of a whole host of diasporic belongings and experiences besides the “classical” model of diaspora with its super-glued singular attachment to an original homeland. Similarly, there are various theorizations of the perplexities of diasporic belonging. The understanding of diaspora and its way of perceiving the world that I work with (Part I, Ch.2) represents a perspective, a rather popular perspective perhaps, but only *a* perspective. Now diaspora usually refers to the ethnic and cultural assemblages of people who have been uprooted and dispersed from their homelands by explicit or implicit forces of political, military or economic nature – through exile, asylum seeking, or migration – into new countries, cultures, and languages. In the aftermath of the glory days of Occidental postmodernism and its predilection for incommensurable differences, diasporic imaginary suggests another view of living amidst differences and contemplating differences. Amidst broad varieties of diasporic formations and their diverse and increasingly complex inscriptions as forced or voluntary, an earlier migration remains a crucial tenet of these formations. Diasporic imaginary[[20]](#footnote-20) then is a distinct way or style of perceiving the world as it is as well as envisioning it as it ought to be. It evolves out of the inhabited experience of having lived in multiple places, having spoken multiple languages, having participated in multiple political, economical, and civic traditions. Imaginary, as the notion is also increasingly being used in theological discourse at the present time, denotes the active inclusion of embodied non-cognitive, affective, performative, and voluntary aspects of human rationality in understanding of the world and the axiological orientations of life.[[21]](#footnote-21) Imaginary is an amalgam of *ratio* and αἴσθησις, of creative imagination and bodily practice, and of the preexisting socio-cultural realities as they orchestrate and are being in turn re-orchestrated into new patterns and values of life. In cultural production, including the disciplines of scholarly reflection, imaginary can function as something like a theoretical sensuality and as an aesthetically “thick” methodological disposition.

Diasporic imaginary conveys a certain “fabric of imagination” (Wilson Harris) and also a certain fabric of critical consciousness. It strikes me that from within a diasporic lifeworld, differences are always acutely present and yet fluid, mutating, evolving, and allowing for multiple, sometimes contradictory and sometimes harmonious, fidelities. Diasporic imaginary is a mindscape that indwells borderline jurisdictions – geo-cultural, socio-political, ecclesiastical, and intellectual alike. What the diasporic imaginary as espoused in this project does not indwell, despite sometimes using a rather similar language in its self-scrutiny, is “the poststructuralist appropriation of the diaspora” that “aestheticizes it as an avant-garde lifestyle based on deterritorialization.”[[22]](#footnote-22) Diasporic imaginary, as my locus of enunciation, is not a predominantly ludic imaginary: it is not nearly as attractive to live as it is to train one’s scholarly analysis on it; it is not a placeholder for the *jouissance* of metropolitan intellectual deracination. Even the peculiar intellectual “pleasures” of migrancy and “exile” that Edward Said rarely and guardedly praised as creative, unconventional, methodologically liberating and eccentrically enlivening neither erase the awkwardness of such efforts nor alleviate the “envying those around you who have always been at home.”[[23]](#footnote-23) This needs to be highlighted, since, as R.S Sugirtharajah recently observed, the present moment in theological history in the West is the unfolding “time of the diasporic intellectuals”[[24]](#footnote-24) and diasporic hermeneutics. Hence it might be regarded as merely fashionable to drop terms like “diasporic” and “hybrid” in one’s writing to participate in the academic rat race to be part of every voguish theoretical game in town. Yet Sugirtharajah also remarks that it is premature to “speak of a formidable diasporic theology.”[[25]](#footnote-25) What is present is a discourse that is “desperately seeking a home and acceptability in the academy, enamoured of and entrapped by its theoretical sophistry and methodological procedures.”[[26]](#footnote-26) Undeniably, the present project gravitates in the orbit of such a homing quest. It also resonates – through its preoccupation with theological method! – with the challenge of diasporic theology that Marcella Althaus-Reid also found emerging yet not quite “arrived at” as a part of the “metatheology” of liberation:

However, we are not fully in the presence of a postcolonial or diasporic systematic theology. Postcolonial and diasporic theologies are of a dispersed nature, because, in essence, they are contrary to the more Western notion of systematizing theology. The point is precisely one of opening borders and tunnels under the theoretical constructions of the West, not only in the content of theology but also challenging the order of submission that lies behind systematic theologies. In systematic theology we find the quasi-anthropological compulsion of the West for classifying a theory of understanding of God as theology into neat, closed compartments or systems. Is this administrative, taxonomic and colonial order in which historical experiences of some discourse about God and humanity are comprised challenged in postcolonialism and diasporic thought?[[27]](#footnote-27)

Diasporic imaginary, as I present it here from a methodological point of view, is a mindscape that is *ipso facto* an intellectual and affective borderscape of variously attuned hyphenations. As such, it bears certain deep and irrevocable consonances with my Latvian-American diasporic experience. For nearly 15 years, as a pastor of the Latvian Lutheran Church Abroad in Great Britain, Germany and the United States, I was, in a sense and with much unease, a “professional Latvian.” Yet this project never claims to speak “on behalf” of the Latvian-American, and even more specifically diasporically Latvian Lutheran, theological, ecclesiastical, or political constituency. The aspiration of being a “native informant” is not the guiding star of this itinerary.

Now, proleptically, “in Christ there is no East or West” with all the fears of hegemonic unilateralism eschatologically transformed. Yet in the present palpably unredeemed dispensation, both “East” and “West” are notoriously loaded and ambiguous notions. As I use these terms, “the West” and “Western” most often denote the geocultural location of the “old”/colonialist Europe and the North America of modernity. “The West” is by no means to be confused with the *whole* of Europe and the *whole* of Americas! However, I use terms “Occident” and “Occidental” to denote the particular cultural and intellectual economy of the colonial modernity, its epistemological imaginaries, as well as its cosmologies of power, goodness, and evil. The Occident as a cultural imaginary is not spatially identical with the West. The Occident is the West as a “psychological category,”[[28]](#footnote-28) not merely a geographical entity. The Occident is the West as a cultural “project,”[[29]](#footnote-29) as “an idea, a concept,”[[30]](#footnote-30) and as “an epistemological condition, a state of mind.”[[31]](#footnote-31) And certainly, the West as the Occident is “not just its localized name but also the history of its travels and pernicious effects on other histories.”[[32]](#footnote-32) As far as “the East” or “the non-West” is concerned, the usage of these compound and equally convoluted terms is mostly limited to expositions and quotations of my interlocutors. In the work of Alexander Schmemann, for example, the idea of “the East” is particularly mired in the predicament of appearing as a nativistic construct of a counter/anti-West, albeit being eerily reminiscent of a mere reversed and “Orientalistically” inscribed dualism. Thus ironies abound even within the very basic language that struggles to understand and then also transform the tragic fabrications of the axiomatic force of binarity, coextensive with colonial modernity. Diasporic reasoning is not a panacea nor is it always commensurable to its own claimed emancipatory aspirations. Moreover, certain diasporic discourses can be outright reactionary in their desires for vindictive restorative justice, violent reversals of power allocations, and proliferation of their “closed” ideologies of jealous uniqueness or inequitable privilege. On the other hand, what also abounds amongst these ironies is the diasporic penchant – as I experience it – to be wary of binaristic axiologies, even those that are generated precisely out of certain diasporic predicaments. Perhaps the most valuable lesson that the riddles of diasporic imaginary can teach is the recognition of how tortuous the efforts to find ways of thinking and living beyond dualistic ideologies of culture, race, gender, religion, political tradition and many other things are. Hence, in my project no source or idea, if interesting and useful for critical or constructive argument is *a priori* ostracized because of its origin, allegiance or location in a “wrong” place, or in a “wrong” canon, in the “West” or in the “East,” – geographically, culturally, confessionally, or in terms of gender, disciplinary turf, or time period.

Last but not least, this project is truly and deeply indebted and sympathetic to the constantly diversifying milieu of women’s theological creativity – be they feminist, womanist, *mujerista*, Third world, or otherwise. However, it is not explicitly and preeminently a feminist project even as the category of reciprocity, so crucial and enduringly agile in women-centered and women-generated discourses, appears as the pivotal inspiration for my orchestrations of ethically configured relationality. Impatience with rationales of binarity across arenas of theory, theology, and life also signals a resonance with feminist concerns. What Kathryn Tanner observed about feminist theology remains, I submit, equally pertinent to various women-generated discourses, including this project that may otherwise found to be too traditional and/or conservative for some tastes. Namely, I believe that the influence of feminist discourses indeed “is strengthened to the extent that it wrestles constructively with the theological claims that have traditionally been important in Christian theology; the more traditional the material with which it works, the greater the influence of feminist theology.”[[33]](#footnote-33) Obviously, the mere focus on sacramental theology signals attention to the tradition – but is it an automatically conservative gesture? Undeniably, in the context of gender discourse, my ardent avowal of the Eucharist as the paradigmatic theological locus of ethically configured relationality ontologically and epistemologically also reveals the most privileged aspect of my locus of enunciation. As an ordained Lutheran clergywoman of the Latvian Lutheran Church Abroad, with no gender-based restrictions (at least at the present moment) for upwardly-mobile advancement through the clerical hierarchy, I am not excluded from any positions of doctrinal, ecclesiastical, liturgical and sacramental authority – even though this is not the case in my native country and its Lutheran church, let alone in so many other Christian communities worldwide. However, in ecclesiastical and confessional contexts where women are still, sadly and scandalously, denied full participation in ordained priesthood and sacramental ministry, the intense focus on the Eucharist is at best ambiguous and can be seen as conservative or even reactionary due to its male-dominated institutional connotations.[[34]](#footnote-34) I recognize this sort of ambiguity surrounding the Eucharist not merely as truly disheartening, but indeed sacrilegious. Here I acknowledge my privilege and lament in solidarity with liturgically marginalized women the continuing ignominy of patriarchal injustice across cultures and confessions.

**When?**

The spiritual and historical chronotope of this project is, broadly speaking, the global postcoloniality of the early 21st century. Postcoloniality, as I use it here, is a condition and notion shared globally; it is not a simple synonym for the so-called “Third world.” On the one hand, in the chronological aftermath of colonialism, from the second part of the 20th century onwards, postcoloniality inhabits both the sovereignties of formerly colonizing and formerly colonized national states in an unequal, inequitable, yet irrevocable way. On the other, due to complex but undoubtedly massive processes of migrancy among colonially implicated geo-cultural and socio-economic spaces in the era of present globalization, postcoloniality is also a traveling *Lebenswelt.* Cultural memories and personal histories of dominance or being dominated – often is the latter that tend to linger most consciously and mournfully through an addiction to mull over them– migrate and find new domiciles as their bearers do. But above all, postcoloniality denotes a relationship of entanglement. According to Achille Mbembe, it can be imagined as enclosing “multiple *durées* made up of discontinuities, reversals, inertias, and swings that overlay one another, interpenetrate one another, and envelope one another”[[35]](#footnote-35) – it is an “experience of a period that is far from being uniform and absolutely cannot be reduced to a succession of moments and events, but in which instants, moments, and events are, as it were, on top of one another, inside one another.”[[36]](#footnote-36) Related to, yet distinct from postcoloniality as a geo-historical era, postcolonial theory is a multifarious hermeneutical posture that I have found sufficiently subversive of the overarching cultural and epistemological imaginary of the Occidental colonial modernity and also sufficiently concerned with ethical ramifications of historical materialities to be useful for theological inquiry. Fascinated as I remain with postcolonial theory, this project is not a project of “postcolonial theology” in the rigid sense of it being an exercise in translating the Christian theological *loci* into theoretically authorized versions of postcolonial high theory as an academic commodity. Rather, it is a mutually critical conversation between theology and postcolonial theory amidst the multiple *durées* of the global postcoloniality. Hence my postcolonially colored[[37]](#footnote-37) theological sensibility interacts with postcolonial theory obliquely to engage in a transformative conversation. To do otherwise, I submit, would amount to an ontotheological posture, theologically speaking, or surrendering to a danger that Homi Bhabha described as allowing “schools of thought [become] prisons of method by misplaced dogmatism of the practitioners or in response to institutional and disciplinary hegemonies,”[[38]](#footnote-38) theoretically speaking. A conversation, not a conversion to this or that version of “high postcolonial theory” as if it were an irrefutable dogma, is what inspires this project.

**With Whom?**

The slate of my interlocutors might initially invoke a Tertullianesque smirk: *quid ergo Athenis et Hierosolymis; quid academiae et ecclesiae*? Russian Orthodox diasporic liturgical theologian Alexander Schmemann, Jewish philosopher Emmanuel Levinas, and Arab-American postcolonial theorist Edward Said – how are they related to this project and to its polyphonic conversation? First, what distinguishes them from a number of relatively minor interlocutors is that their thought enters this conversation not just descriptively, informatively or critically, but also, each in its differently calibrated way, constructively and formatively. But most importantly, the selection of this migrant trio expresses one of my diasporic intellectual “homing desires,” to converse with sensibilities and rationalities that are at least tangentially related to my geo-cultural origins and imaginary homelands. They also share both the pleasures and pains of migrancy, and all it does to one’s perception and conception of the world. Now, the closest I could get to the Baltic states and thinkers interested in liturgy and ethics originating from that interstice of Europe, was to turn slightly East toward Estonia and engage in conversation one of the most famous liturgical theologians of late modernity, Alexander Schmemann. He was born in Estonia, in the Russian Orthodox diaspora there. Then I turned to the opposite direction, slightly West, to Lithuania, to engage in conversation one of the most famous Jewish philosophers of late modernity, Emmanuel Levinas. He was born in Lithuania, in the Jewish diaspora of Kaunas. Kaunas, incidentally, is also the city my maternal ancestors came from before they settled in Rīga, Latvia, in the early 20th century. Jewish diaspora endures as the “classical” paradigm in diasporic discourse even as new models of (neo)diasporic experience supplement it alongside with new theorizations emerging from the reflections on new diasporic emplacements. Of course, reading Schmemann and Levinas together on liturgy and ethics is also somewhat like constantly turning in 90-degree angles … Finally, the exilic voice of a seminal postcolonial theorist Edward Said opens up this already multifaceted conversation to an innovative constructive thrust not only in terms of postcolonial reasoning but also in reference to a transcultural “imaginary homeland” of mine – music. In short, this project is the itinerary of intertwined conversations with some of those with whom I find myself, as it were, more “at home;” yet, “at home” rather differently vis-à-vis each one of them – an Eastern Christian liturgical theologian, a Jewish moral philosopher, and a religiously deeply skeptical postcolonial scholar who also was a Julliard-trained pianist and an amateur musical critic.

Said’s notion of postcolonially modulated counterpoint – with another figure of some diasporic, exilic, and certainly musical, connections looming large in his critical creativity, Theodor W. Adorno[[39]](#footnote-39) – is the pivotal inspiration for the constructive envisagement of non-coercive and non-hegemonic ethical relationality in this project. It is Adorno who consistently connects music and power, society and morality, and it is this connection that attracted Said to Adorno and myself to both. But attraction does not preclude divergence: whereas for Adorno, in music and in life, the predilection toward permanent dissonance constitutes not only a faithful reflection of reality in critical consciousness but also the privileged model of ethical comportment toward the deeply flawed reality of social injustice and suffering, Said conceives such dissonance as genuine – but tragic and ultimately useless. As it will emerge in Part III, my theological itinerary intertwines with this paradigmatic *Gefühl* of Said’s critical trajectory more than it does with Adorno’s, regardless of how much it owes to the latter as well. The parting of the ways with Adorno for Said is not antagonistic yet important:

For Adorno, from the beginning of his career to the end of his life, music is in a permanent, contradictory, and dialectical tension with society. As few critics of Adorno acknowledge, music is at the core of his philosophy and understanding of culture. (…) the more you read of Adorno, the more you realize that music is in that state of tension with everything, including itself and including the music that matters most to him. (…) This kind of starkness of what is unreconciled and can’t be synthesized is what attracted me to Adorno. Yet he doesn’t give this irreconcilability the kind of tragic dimension that for me it has always had.[[40]](#footnote-40)

It is not the dissonance and the irreconcilabilities as such that fascinate Said, but rather the imaginary of counterpoint that acknowledges them with utmost seriousness in life, in thought, and in art, without valorizing them as a robust ethical teleology. So, “in the counterpoint of Western classical music, various themes play off one another, with only a provisional privilege being given to any particular one; yet in the resulting polyphony there is concert and order, an organized interplay that derives from the themes, not from a rigorous melodic or formal principle outside the work.”[[41]](#footnote-41) Here counterpoint emerges as a major analytical metaphor for postcolonial criticism as methodological strategy. At the same time, counterpoint also shapes Said’s self-reflective critical elaborations of exile and migrancy of his own inhabited experience. In this context, counterpoint is not only a postcolonial hermeneutical strategy but also an existentially engaged specification of hybridity associated with postcolonial displacements. Moreover, as I suggest in Part III, Ch. 1, counterpoint in Said’s thought can be seen as a template of emancipatory, perhaps ever utopian, regime of life and knowledge. Out of all these reciprocally related contexts, counterpoint is what undergirds the discursive and imaginative disposition in this project which holds together the most fruitful trajectories from both Schmemann (liturgy as performance of sacramental relationality in worship and life) and Levinas (the range of the ethical is the range of true liturgy) in a deep consonance within diasporic imaginary with its instinctually preferred option of “both/and” rather than “either/or.” If for Said counterpoint offers a sufficiently opaque sonic terrain to theorize postcolonial entanglements without reduction and binaristic axiologies as well as to reflect on the exigencies of his own migrancy, this project, using these valuable insights, takes counterpoint a step further. Counterpoint, I suggest, also offers a sufficiently complex sonic terrain to elaborate on the nature of mystery of hybrid relationality in sacrament, a relationality that is an analogical extension of the paradigmatic trinitarian and incarnational relationality. The unavoidable implication of this project is to acknowledge diasporic experience, particularly its contrapuntal features, as contextually formative for theological imagination at this moment of convoluted globalization.

The intention of this extended conversation with Schmemann, Levinas, Said, and other secondary interlocutors is not to offer a scrupulous and polemical “close reading” for solely critical or purely comparative purposes. Rather, it is to see what happens when theological imagination indwells several conversations at the same time in a way similar to diasporic experience. To respect the polyphonic momentum, I have preserved the non-inclusive language in citations of my interlocutors, resisting temptation to domesticate and consequently, disguise, the distance that sometimes separates some of us in a rather irreconcilable way. Also, in a profoundly ironical way, the diasporic locations and worldviews of Schmemann and Levinas witness to subversive and innovative newness but also, even more strikingly, to the lures of diaspora to clandestinely feed on the same dualistic imaginaries that their thought often questions so passionately. Such a notable discrepancy of diasporic rationalities certainly highlights the actual diversity and complexity of diasporic formations and mindscapes. Yet the itinerary of my constructive argument is not to feed on their (sometimes truly depressing) oversights to advance my insights with a presumptuous gusto of omniscience. Rather the opposite applies: I converse with them through a disposition of generosity – yet not unconditional trust – in order to be both challenged and inspired to write for a life of mind and for a life of embodied historical materiality as contrapuntal as no theoretical envisagement can ever hope to capture adequately.

The lived complexity of diasporic life in conjunction with sacramental and liturgical lifeworlds of embodied *opus Dei* has only increased an irresistible desire to turn to music for an aurally evocative language. It is part for my larger quest for signifying practices that are not hegemonically ruled by competitive visualism and the logocentric fixation on the written word in linguistically infatuated Western modernity. As Vladimir Jankélévitch observes,

the experienced simultaneity of opposites is the daily regime, incomprehensible as it might be, of a life full of music. Music, like movement or duration, is a continuous miracle that with every step accomplishes the impossible. The superimposed voices of polyphony realize a *concordia discors*, of which music alone is capable…[[42]](#footnote-42)

It is interesting to note that in the milieu of postcoloniality, the critiques of modern Occidental visualism and textuality often go hand in hand. These critiques definitely resonate with internal Occidental dissatisfactions about the same issues that Said’s work addresses in such a fascinating way. From the perspective of the Black Atlantic as the counterculture of modernity Paul Gilroy has noted that music questions the “privileged conceptions of both language and writing as preeminent expressions of human consciousness” thereby challenging the “ideology of the text and of textuality as a mode of communicative practice which provides a model for all other forms of cognitive exchange and social interaction.”[[43]](#footnote-43)

**How?**

The question “how” is about method or the shorthand for epistemological imagination. It is about the human mindscape and its habits of knowledge-gathering and its axiological discernment. The fabric of diasporic imagination in this project reflects a methodological multiple belonging. It draws from multiple scriptural, creedal and confessional sources in the Christian theological tradition, it converses with sensibilities and rationalities pertaining to Western or Eastern Christians and some that avoid such connotations at all. It negotiates among diverse theological and critical norms. Some of these sources and rationalities I inhabit far deeper than others. That accounts for the asymmetry of their presence and influence. There is no pretense for a breathtaking originality or a tantalizing heterodoxy in this project. Rather, it resembles the insightful notion highlighted by Lewis Ayres in the context of patristic theology as “piecemeal engagement.” Ayres’ analysis suggests that the engagement of theology with philosophy (or any other non-theological discourse) in modernity was typically viewed as dualistic and competitive wherein the philosophies were viewed as self-enclosed vis-à-vis the Christian faith, so the only model of negotiation and appropriation would be a theological surrender to philosophy.[[44]](#footnote-44) Piecemeal engagement, however, denotes a selective usage, or transdisciplinary translation, of elements from other discourses than revealed theology to elucidate theological themes “through the use of whatever lies to hand and that may be persuasively adapted. What counts as ‘persuasive adaptation’ is, of course, something constantly under negotiation and argument.”[[45]](#footnote-45) Piecemeal engagement emerges here, I suggest, as a patristically informed description of constructive theology. As constructive, theology is inescapably contextual: it has been such in the era of contentious Trinitarian and Christological debates and it is so today. The constructive thrust for a postcolonially colored and diasporically embedded theological reflection, therefore, is curiously not so dissimilar – while being more explicit – to what has been in fact going on throughout the Christian history. As Thomas Cattoi observes,

In the contemporary, postcolonial world, the task of contextually minded theologians is thus to pursue in a reflective manner the mediating task that was pursued by Christian theologians in late antiquity, engaging those cultures from Asia, Africa, or Latin America that finally have come to be seen as valuable sources of theological insight.[[46]](#footnote-46)

My project, as a piecemeal engagement within diasporic imaginary and particularly in the context of liturgical and sacramental theology, surely goes well beyond the mutually critical (at least potentially) intra-ecclesial or intra-Christian juxtaposition of dogmatic traditions, scriptural interpretations, theological temperaments, elements and accents of various religious practices and rituals, as well as their ideas of ethics, justice, and responsibility. The “grace-period” of such relatively insular juxtapositions defining the boundaries of theological normativity and accountability– valuable and always necessary as they are – ought to be acknowledged as having expired in this era of post-Holocaust and postcolonial history with the ever present masculine monopoly in most things religious on the top of it all. To restrict theological inquiry to intra-cum-inter-ecclesial critiques in this historical context is to seriously underplay the danger of idolatry. Idolatry is, above all, a matter of relationality: right, wrong, appropriate, harmful, life-giving or outright fatal. So the piecemeal engagement performed in this project attempts to embody an attitude of sacramental – and thus ethical, as the argument of this project ultimately suggests – relationality toward sources and norms of theological inquiry. Here my guide is Nicholas Lash and his insistence (originally in the context of dialogue with Judaism) that

… a form of Christianity purified into recognition that the Christian doctrine of God functions as a set of protocols against idolatry, far from ‘exclusively’ and arrogantly imposing its claim through argument, Inquisition, or Crusade, would be obliged, *on its own terms*, to be receptive to enrichment and purification from other traditions of speech and behavior, whether religious or secular – for God’s word and presence are not *confined* to that particular tradition which acknowledges responsibility sacramentally to bear witness to them.[[47]](#footnote-47)

**What?**

What was so offensive in Paolo Veronese’s opulently Mannerist “Last Supper” (1572) painted for the refectory of the monastery of *San Giovanni e Paolo* in Venice to elicit the demand of the Holy Tribunal of the Inquisition to repaint it? Was it the scarcity of enclosing walls, the presence of some Germans in an Italian painting of the Eucharist during the heyday of Counter-Reformation in suspicious proximity to Christ? Maybe it was the parrot present at eucharistic celebration? Perhaps a man with bleeding nose, as well as scores of seemingly apostolically “unrelated” people, and finally a dog where Mary Magdalene was supposed to be? This “Last Supper” ended up being renamed, although not repainted. It became known and is now displayed in *Galleria dell’Accademia* in Venice as “The Feast in the House of Levi” with reference to Luke 5:27-30. However, as initially represented by Veronese, the grounding moment of all Christian liturgy is envisioned as being squarely located at a sumptuously painted yet amazingly ordinary site of convergence of varied people, animals, multiple conversations, movements, and exchanges taking place simultaneously with the eucharistic celebration. In other words, the Eucharist takes place right in the midst of routine living. Was the suspicious intertwinement of the liturgical, the sacramental, and the shockingly ordinary precisely the reason for Veronese’s interdiction? The palimpsestic interlacing of seemingly separate temporalities, spheres of life, creatures and their actions in Veronese’s controversial “Last Supper” for me has long been a concise sign of what sacramental liturgy is most profoundly all about. Like Veronese’s inquisitorially unacceptable “Last Supper,” liturgy is embodied, embedded, and performed in the world, in the world of social relations and values, not merely some canonized sites and occasions of supposedly pure, transparent, agreeable and instantly recognizable self-identity.

In the sacramental economy of incarnation and salvation, this world – not just certain sites and discreet moments – is indwelt by God through Christ and in the Spirit. It is a reality created relationally, fallen relationally, and redeemed relationally. This dissertation proposes that sacramentally configured relationality coincides with the divinely inaugurated interface of ethical relationality. From this perspective, liturgy, ultimately, is the performance of sacramentality as ethical relationality. It is sacramentality *in actu*. Or, to underscore the painfully eschatological nature of such a proposition, it is ordained to be precisely such a performance even when the actual liturgies fall short or distort the vocation. In any case, ethics, in the sense of denoting the quiddity or qualitative nature of relationality, does not enter into theology as an extrinsic impostor at the whim of some extra-theological rationality. The ontological and the epistemological cannot be separated from the ethical in the sacramental economy of salvation. Ethics concretizes the incarnationally grounded sacramental nature of the economy of salvation as well as translates it into the socio-historical realm of routine living. This perception of ethical relationality deliberately contradicts the understanding of divine salvific power and agency according to the model of colonial conquest, wherein the relation is hegemonic, non-reciprocal, and arrogantly self-referential.

The critical objective of this dissertation is to interrogate the impact of the modern Occidental ontological and epistemological imagination, with its penchant for competitive dualism, on theological reflection. Christian theological imagination as part and parcel of Western culture has concurrently operated as a constitutive enabler as well as an ambivalent victim of its own power. Within the dualistic outlook, relationality is perceived and enacted through gestures of displacement, competitive juxtaposition, and detraction in search for clearly defined boundaries, as well as transparent and univocal meanings. The rationale of hierarchical binarity finds some of its most sinister ramifications in the disengagement of liturgy and social ethics of discipleship. Nothing tells this lamentable story better than the dreadful history of the Holocaust in the recent past in the heart of the Western world but even more so do the centuries of colonialism and imperialism all over the planet with its profitable syncretisms of the “cross and crown.” Recently, in some liturgical theologies, the same dualistic juxtaposition, the same rationale of binarity becomes curiously fetishized as an allegedly necessary and uniquely productive tension between worship and life. As attractive as the various models of “mutual critique” between liturgy and life may be, my aim here is to caution against the seldom explicitly stated yet underlying dualisms that nonetheless pervade the epistemological landscape of such imaginaries of critique and tension. From liturgical perspective, as far as the chronic disengagement of liturgy and life of discipleship goes, this project reiterates Joyce Ann Zimmerman’s sage judgment that theological emphasis on “adjoining” liturgy and justice already discloses a dualistic ontology that allocates liturgy and life “in two different spheres of human activity and results in a dualism that simply does not (or ought not) to exist.”[[48]](#footnote-48) Whenever liturgy and mundane life are *a priori* perceived as separate realms of human – and divine! – reality and therefore locked in a struggle of being somehow extrinsically reconciled then it becomes clear that a fabricated ontological and epistemological dualism is being imposed on the fluid interplay of the doxological and the mundane. And once in place, this fundamental dualistic imaginary cannot be alleviated by the cosmetic liturgical models of extrinsic rejoining, productive tension, and juxtaposition alone. As Zimmerman perceptively notes,

We do not *bring* our life to liturgy, although that is usually how we say it. … the problem with this kind of language is that it posits a dualism between liturgy and life that cannot be overcome. In such a dualistic approach liturgy and life will always remain two separate entities that are essentially foreign to each other. We can juxtapose them, but we cannot structurally identify them as sharing the same depth meaning. This is precisely the distance we wish to overcome.[[49]](#footnote-49)

This, indeed, is the “distance” that my project also identifies as being foundationally problematic in the theological and liturgical struggles to overcome what cannot be overcome through the ritualistic or linguistic theoretical maneuvers on the surface while the underlying rationale of binarity remains intact. This project takes Zimmerman’s liturgical diagnosis and her theological motto that “the meaning of Christian liturgy is synonymous with the meaning of Christian living”[[50]](#footnote-50) further into the arena of cultural history and memory. In other words, I historicize the profoundly problematic “distance” of chronic dualism or, more precisely, provincialize it in order to trace the genealogies and resonances of the notorious disengagement within the broader landscape and mindscape of dualistic ontological and epistemological imagination of Occidental colonial modernity. The rationale of competitive binarity is not primarily or exclusively a liturgical conundrum but its manifestation through the disjuncture of liturgy and ethics is surely among the most glaring instances of its uncanny power over the practices of knowing and living well into the present era.

Certainly it is obvious that there exists a tremendous tension between the liturgical reason of praise, extolling such virtues as charity, peace, compassion, on the one hand, and the “pure economic reason” of resolutely non-utopian routine living, on the other. To recognize the excruciating friction among liturgy as the faithful proclamation of God’s salvific love and justice, and the mundane business of craving for individual security and prosperity while consenting more or less willingly to the continued afflictions of others, is only to state the obvious about the lived reality we inhabit. But it is an altogether different thing to valorize this irresolvable tension as desirable, as creative, as a safeguard against idolatry, and even as a sublime *telos* of productive mutually critical relation. Such valorization is not the route this project follows; instead, the grinding tension is rather the point of departure for theological imagination toward an eschatological counterpoint of conviviality beyond grinding clashes and nagging agonies. To inhabit the unrelenting contradictory dialectic of tension is a sufficiently Sisyphean predicament and, not to worry, is here to stay for a very long time. So the refusal to make tension into a discursive and imaginative solace in this project represents a desire for a slow redemptive modulation of tension into a salvific relationality of contrapuntal reciprocity. Here burning discord is not the sole sign of truth. Because a sign of truth is also an emergent harmony of transfigured irreconcilabilities and the grace-filled wellbeing of over-tensed human bodies and souls.

With these observations in mind, the constructive objective of this dissertation is to propose a modulation of theological envisagement of relationality as ontologically and epistemologically grounded in incarnational sacramentality. Sacramentality thus conceived is the interface of ethical relationality between God and the created reality. From within a postcolonial diasporic imaginary, the ethical ecology of sacramentality can be conceived as contrapuntal. Liturgy, in this context, is sacramentality *in actu*. It is a reciprocally, yet asymmetrically, vectored divine service, or the interaction of divine and human agencies hinted at in the Latvian notion of *dievkalpojums*, which is a junior semantic relative of the well-known German notion of *Gottesdienst.* I suggest that liturgy denotes the participatory *opus Dei* toward salvation through the sacramental counterpoint of synergy. A fruitful re-engagement of liturgy and social ethics within the theological mindscape in this post-Holocaust and postcolonial era of convoluted globalization can be methodologically re-orchestrated according to the notion of counterpoint perceived in all its intertwining epistemological, ontological, and ethical dimensions. Within the contrapuntal interdependency, liturgy and ethics – or “liturgy after liturgy” – play off one another and sound together without detraction from the other, without violating the other’s integrity and authenticity, and without competition for unilateral and hegemonic dominance. Contrapuntal consonance, however, always remains under the eschatological proviso as decisively as it also allows for “at least the beginnings of possession.”[[51]](#footnote-51) It precariously obtains whenever and wherever the goodness of human spirit and the wholeness of human action is perfected by grace to participate in the *opus Dei*,concurrently in, under, and with praise and social action of discipleship. Contrapuntal consonance emerges as a fruitful pattern with transformative potentiality to imagine grace-filled redemptive conviviality from within a diasporic imaginary that theologically remains as loyal as ever to the incarnational style of religious life and theological thought. Contrapuntal consonance is more akin to incessantly perfectible communion – never automatic, fated, or coerced – on this side of beatific vision, rather than a teleology of desire for necessarily irreconcilable and infinite (Romantically fetishized?) tension as the safeguard against idolatrous relationality. But at the end of the day, as far as theological method is concerned, “it’s all a question of imagination: our responsibility begins with the power to imagine. It’s just like Yeats said: in dreams begin responsibilities.”[[52]](#footnote-52)

**Whither?**

The present dissertation is composed of the Overture, three parts, and the Coda. The Overture situates my critical and constructive interrogation of theological method in the overall framework of sacramental-liturgical discourse and elucidates my diasporic locus of enunciation within it. Part I explores the methodological genealogies of dualistic disengagement of liturgy and ethics as a symptom of the rationale of binarity, particularly characteristic to Occidental modernity and its epistemological imagination (Ch.1).

To search for envisagements of relationality beyond unproductive dualistic constructs I turn to postcolonial criticism, particularly its conceptualizations of hybridity and diaspora (Ch.2). Part II is a conversation with Eastern Orthodox liturgical theologian Alexander Schmemann (Ch.1) and Jewish philosopher Emmanuel Levinas (Ch.2), both of whom, with remarkably different approaches and conclusions yet with similar ardor, challenge the disengagement of liturgy and the life of faith.

Part III contains the narration of my constructive itinerary for a re-envisagement of ethical relation between liturgy and ethics. I start with an inquiry into Edward Said’s notion of postcolonial counterpoint in relation to his theoretical elaboration on hybridity as an ethical pattern of relation (Ch.1), turning subsequently to the Eastern Christian idea of synergy as a theological conceptualization suggestive of contrapuntal relationality in the salvific economy of *theosis* (Ch.2).

The concluding section (Ch.3), emerging from a diasporic imaginary, suggests that in theological inquiry the methodological practices or habits of knowing, imagining, and judging are far from being theoretically aloof and existentially irrelevant for theologically grounded exigencies of moral imagination and action. Rather, precisely as imaginative habits and reflective practices they bear an irrevocable ethical accountability particularly in light of the histories of colonialism. The epistemological is never separate from the ethical; the more this intrinsic intertwinement is disavowed the more urgent is the vocation for the ethical and the historical to interrupt and modulate the allegedly free-floating epistemological self-sufficiency. To perform such a modulation I suggest that sacramentality as both an ontological and epistemological template of ethical relationality offers a theological avenue of re-orchestrating the persistent drumbeat of dualistic and hegemonic cultural and theological imaginaries. Specifically, I propose that the notion of postcolonially colored counterpoint as a concretization of sacramental relationality can serve as a useful *Leitmotif* of both an ethically answerable methodological comportment as well as a fruitful re-conception of the problematic disengagement between liturgy and ethics. Sacramental counterpoint privileges synergistic reciprocity as its structural *basso continuo* methodologically and thematically as an aspiration to analogical performance in knowing, dreaming, and acting of the paradigmatic Christian mysteries of relationality – the Trinity, the incarnation of Jesus Christ, and the Eucharist. At the end of the chapter the tricky questions about the value, authenticity, and the lacunae of diasporic imaginary and its always contested hybridity are addressed to suggest that certain varieties of diasporic difference embody their hybridity as precisely a predicament of *forced* hybridity that cannot find rest in any exotic reifications of alterity.

The brief Coda concludes this project to underscore the pivotal role of the quiddity – or ethics – of relationality within Christian theological imagination as part of the perennial monotheistic trepidation about idolatry, which, in the postcolonial context, acquires new urgency but also an even more profound ambivalence.

1. Kwok, Pui-lan, “A Theology of Border Passage,” *Border Crossings: Cross-Cultural Hermeneutics* (D.N. Premnath ed.; Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2007): 110. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Marcella Maria Althaus-Reid “Gustavo Gutiérrez Goes to Disneyland: Theme Park Theologies and the Diaspora of the Discourse of the Popular Theologian in Liberation Theology,” *Interpreting Beyond Borders*, The Bible and Postcolonialism 3(Fernando Segovia, ed.; R.S. Sugirtharajah, series ed.; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000): 46. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Walter D. Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000): 43. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. *Ibid.* [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Walter D. Mignolo, “The Many Faces of Cosmo-polis: Border Thinking and Critical Cosmopolitanism,” *Cosmopolitanism* (Carol A. Breckenridge, Sheldon Pollock, Homi K. Bhabha, Dipesh Chakrabarty, eds.; Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2002):158, 159. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Apart from a tiny number of lone articles, the recent collection of essays *Baltic Postcolonialism* (Violeta Kelertas, ed.; Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2006) is one of the few publications dealing with hitherto neglected region in postcolonial studies. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. I have elaborated on the historical and ethical necessity of that distinction, particularly in the postcolonial context, in the paper “Questioning Ethically and Interstitially: Which Europe and Whose Eurocentrism?” presented at the Emory European Studies Seminar, October, 2008. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. On the postcolonial and postcommunist intra-European antagonisms of colonial origin see *Old Europe, New Europe, Core Europe: Transatlantic Relations After the Iraq War* (Daniel Levy et al. eds.; London and New York: Verso, 2005). [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Glissant describes “forced poetics” as any “collective desire for expression that, when it manifests itself, is negated at the same time because of the deficiency that stifles it, not at the level of desire, which never ceases, but at the level of expression, which is never realized.” Accordingly, “forced poetics exist where a need for expression confronts an inability to achieve expression. It can happen that this confrontation is fixed in an opposition between the content to be expressed and the language suggested or imposed.” What can be done in such circumstances is to “cut across one language in order to attain a form of expression that is perhaps not part of the internal logic of this language. A forced poetics is created from the awareness of the opposition between a language that one uses and a form of expression that one needs,” in Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse: Selected Essays* (J. Michael Dash, transl. and ed.; Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1999): 120-121. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Mita Banerjee, “Postethnicity and Postcommunism in Hanif Kureishi’s *Gabriel’s Gift* and Salman Rushdie’s *Fury*,” *Reconstructing Hybridity: Post-Colonial Studies in Transition* (Joel Juortti and Jopi Nyman, eds.; Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2007): 316. Banerjee observes that “Eastern Europeanness verges on the racial difference of an off-whiteness” (314); this “different whiteness” is ethically inscribed. Some see the present geo-cultural moment as post-postcolonial and in this context “the postcommunist takes the place of ethnicity; the postcommunist is the new ethnic” (315) as it also suggests “the new erotic of the postcolonial” (317). The methodological inertias of early postcolonial studies manifest clearly and in my opinion problematically in what Banerjee describes as “no sense of a shared history or kinship between the ex-postcolonial and the postcommunist” (315). Banerjee’s argument reaches well beyond the particularities of Kureishi and Rushdie’s novels; the (ethical) problematic at hand for postcolonial discourses is indeed in the need to acknowledge the emergence of new, previously unauthorized forms of subalternity, among which “the Eastern European appears as the un-or precivilized” while “Eastern Europe has become the other of a now civilized postcolonial world. Disturbingly, not only is the history of colonization thus reconfigured as a civilizing process, but Kipling’s burden of the civilizing mission has now been transmitted to the erstwhile colonial itself,” (316-317). [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Osvaldo D. Vena, “My Hermeneutical Journey and Daily Journey into Hermeneutics: Meaning-Making and Biblical Interpretation in the North American Diaspora,” *Interpreting Beyond Borders*, 99. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Books, Random House, 1994): 336. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Edward W. Said, *Humanism and Democratic Criticism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004): 141. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Derek Walcott, “The Caribbean: Culture or Mimicry?” in *Postcolonialisms: An Anthology of Cultural Theory and Criticism* (Gaurav Desai and Supriya Nair, eds.; New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2005):258. According to Walcott, for the ex-colonial cultural formations – such as the “powerless archipelago” of the Caribbean but also the post-Soviet borderzones of the Baltic, I submit – violent revolution against what has been forced upon them is not the only alternative, let alone “spiritual alternative.” Another route, or Walcott’s version of postcolonial mimicry, is “cunning” or “conservative, by which I mean the open assimilation of what is considered from the metropolitan center to be the most *useful*,” *ibid*. Italics added. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Don E. Saliers, *Worship as Theology: Foretaste of Glory Divine* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994): 172. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Louis-Marie Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence* (Patrick Madigan, S.J., and Madeleine Beaumont, trans.; Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1995):179. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Timothy F. Sedgwick, *Sacramental Ethics: Paschal Identity and the Christian Life* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987): 14. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Mark Searle, “Serving the Lord with Justice,” *Liturgy and Social Justice* (Mark Searle, ed., Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1980): 17. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics* (E.B. Ashton, trans.; New York: Seabury Press, A Continuum Book, 1973): 17-18. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. The term “diasporic imaginary” was introduced by Vijai Mishra, “The Diasporic Imaginary: Theorizing the Indian Diaspora,” *Textual Practice* 10:3 (1996): 421-447 in resonance with Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1991). I am using the term “imaginary” in a non-Lacanian sense but rather following the usage Édouard Glissant’s work has disseminated, and in this sense, imaginary denotes the complexity of perceptive, analytical, imaginative, political, economical, and interventional attitudes and responses toward life and world that a culture or a constituency may have. Imaginary is neither imagination nor ratiocination alone. Without doubt, imaginary is also “a landscape of dream and fantasy,” and in the case of diasporic location this landscape, argues Monica Fludernik, “is stocked with a variety of perhaps contradictory landmarks” which in concrete instances congeal around some particular landmarks rather than others, “The Diasporic Imaginary: Postcolonial Reconfigurations in the Context of Multiculturalism,” *Diaspora and Multiculturalism: Common Traditions and New Developments* (Monika Fludernik, ed.; Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2003): xi. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. See, for example, James K.A. Smith’s recent *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009): 63-73. Smith builds on the work of Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), but both, however, point back to the understanding of “imaginary” in the initial context of postcolonial and diaspora studies. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. R. Radhakrishnan, “Postcoloniality and the Boundaries of Identity,” *Callaloo* 16:4 (1993): 764. Radhakrishnan rightly exposes excessive allegorization or metaphorization of diaspora as the fabrication of an alienated post-political and post-representative spatiality through which “high metropolitan theory creates a virtual consciousness as a form of blindness to historical realities. The metropolitan theory of diaspora is in fact a form of false consciousness that has to be demystified before the diasporic condition can be historicized as a condition of pain, and double alienation,” *ibid.*  [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Edward W. Said, “Intellectual Exile: Expatriates and Marginals,” *The Edward Said Reader* (Moustafa Bayoumi and Andrew Rubin, eds.; New York: Vintage Books, Random House, 2000): 379. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. R.S. Sugirtharajah, “Muddling Along at the Margins,” *Still at the Margins: Biblical Scholarship Fifteen Years after* Voices from the Margin, (R.S. Sugirtharajah, ed.; London and New York: T&T Clark, 2008): 13. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. *Ibid.* [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. *Ibid*., 14. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Althaus-Reid, “Gustavo Gutiérrez Goes to Disneyland,” *Interpreting Beyond Borders*, 45. Althaus-Reid’s article is a decade old yet her observations have not become obsolete. Interestingly, Kevin J. Vanhoozer has remarked that the very category of “method” might be a too Western category to embrace for some, especially when it comes to the hegemonic “one big fat Greek method,” and suggested that the era of world Christianity inhabits a situation “after method,” which he defines as “a situation in which no one method dominates.” In my opinion, a pluritopic, non-hegemonic hermeneutical ethos and a genuinely multilateral universality does not preclude interest in method, rather the opposite is the case. Yet, interestingly, Vanhoozer’s constructive proposal is to suggest a “diasporadic systematics” of dispersed interpretative authority of *mestizaje*, which “will not lord the truth over others from position of power… but will instead witness to the truth from positions of weakness,” “One Rule to Rule Them All? Theological Method in an Era of World Christianity,” *Globalizing Theology: Belief and Practice in an Era of World Christianity* (Craig Ott and Harold A. Netland, eds.; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006): 125-126. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Ashis Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism* (Oxford and Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983): ix. In this context Nandy summarizes the unquestionable status quo: what I call “Occident,” is what Nandy describes as “the West [that] is now everywhere, within the West and outside; in structures and in minds,” *ibid.* [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Édouard Glissant, *Le Discours antillais* (Paris: Gallimard, 1997): 14. Glissant, in a footnote, remarks that “the Occident is not in the West. It is not a place, it is a project,” (“L’Occident n’est pas à l’ouest. Ce n’est pas un lieu, c’est un project”). In the French language the crucial nuance is obvious. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Stuart Hall, “The West and the Rest: Discourse and Power,” *Formations of Modernity* (S. Hall and B. Gieben, eds; Cambridge: Polity Press and Open University Press, 1992): 277. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. R. Radhakrishnan, “Derivative Discourses and the Problem of Signification,” *The European Legacy* 7:6 (2002): 786. Even though Radhakrishnan’s description literally refers to Europe, I see it pertaining with a broader adequacy to what I call the Occident. Similarly, then, it is rather the ability of the Occident, not merely Europe, “to have influenced the whole world on the basis of colonial modernity that empowers it to function simultaneously as a place and non-place,” *ibid.*  [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. R. Radhakrishnan, “Postmodernism and the Rest of the World,” *The Pre-Occupation of Postcolonial Studies* (Fawzia Afzal-Khan and Kalpana Seshardi-Crooks, eds.; Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2000): 55. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Kathryn Tanner, “Social Theory Concerning the ‘New Social Movements’ and the Practice of Feminist Theology,” *Horizons in Feminist Theology: Identity, Tradition, and Norms* (Rebecca S. Chopp and Sheila Greeve Davaney, eds.; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997):192. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. The profound ambivalence regarding the Eucharist is particularly clearly manifested in the Roman Catholic liturgical context. Susan A. Ross remarks “while the Eucharist remains central, it also remains painful,” *Extravagant Affections: A Feminist Sacramental Theology* (New York: Continuum, 1998): 219. See also, Susan A. Ross, “Feminist theology and sacramental theology: old and new challenges,” *The Gestures of God: Explorations in Sacramentality* (Geoffrey Rowell and Christine Hall, eds.; London and New York: Continuum, 2004): 116-117. Teresa Berger observes that “in most theological claims about the importance of the Eucharist for the life of the church, there is no acknowledgment of the peculiar ways in which women’s gender has shaped, circumscribed, and, last but not least, restricted their engagement with this sacrament. More than half of the church, in its gendered particularity, remains invisible in these claims about the centrality of the Eucharist,” *Dissident Daughters: Feminist Liturgies in Global Context* (Louisville and London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001):222-223. Recently, in the context of her liturgical study Siobhan Garrigan has pointed to her “regret at contributing to an overly Eucharist-oriented view of worship in contemporary theology,” *Beyond Ritual: Sacramental Theology After Habermas* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004): ix-x. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Achille Mbembe, *On the Postcolony* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2001): 14. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. *Ibid*., 242. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. By postcolonially colored sensibility I mean a resonance with what Walter Mignolo calls postcolonial *theorizing* in distinction from postcolonial *theories* (with their prominent indebtedness to the Western poststructuralism). As Mignolo suggests, postcolonial theorizing is “a process of thought that people living under colonial domination enact in order to negotiate their life and subaltern condition” and this “enactment of subaltern reason coexists with colonialism itself as a constant move and force toward autonomy and liberation in every order of life, from economy to religion, from language to education, from memories to spatial order, and it is not limited to the academy, even less to the American academy,” “(Post)Occidentalism, (Post)Coloniality, and (Post)Subaltern Rationality,” *The Pre-Occupation of Postcolonial Studies*, 87. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Homi K. Bhabha, “Surviving Theory: A Conversation with Homi K. Bhabha,” *The Pre-Occupation of Postcolonial Studies*, 377. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. It is interesting to note that Said rarely fails to make references to Adorno – besides Adorno’s steady emergence in Said’s texts as one of his most fascinating and enduring interlocutors from reflections on philosophy of music to politics – when pondering on the themes of exile and migrancy. Exile, of course, was known by Adorno as a personal experience during the Nazi reign in Europe and his *Minima Moralia* definitely proved particularly inspirational for Said’s own theorizations of exile. Adorno’s role in my project is to insightfully yet sporadically represent the post-Holocaust cultural milieu that has been so decisive as the major ethical critique of modern Western theological tradition, including liturgical theologies. But it is mainly as a principal, indeed a beloved, interlocutor of Said that Adorno enters this conversation on theological method, liturgy, and ethics in the milieu of diasporic postcoloniality. Said’s thought, I believe, can be appreciated and engaged with far deeper if the influence of Adorno is recognized. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. “An Interview with Edward W. Said,” *The Edward Said Reader*, 426-427. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 51. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Vladimir Jankélévitch, *Music and the Ineffable* (Carolyn Abbate, trans.; Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2003): 18-19. There is also an ethical connection with music that philosopher Kathleen Marie Higgins suggests in her book on philosophical ethics and music. She remarkably argues that music provides models of “flowering and resolution of tension” through “the possibility of graceful navigation within a texture of external and internal tensions” – thus music suggests desirable modes of ethical social interaction. Most importantly, “reflection on music suggests that satisfaction need not be construed as a drastic reduction or elimination of tension. Instead, satisfaction can be found in controlled and coordinated manipulation of tension itself. Musical experience also suggests the fallacy involved in making satisfaction our overriding ethical concern. Risk itself has a positive value in both musical and ethical experience,” *The Music of Our Lives* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991):194. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993): 74, 77. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Lewis Ayres, *Nicea and its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004): 391. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. *Ibid.*, 392. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Thomas Cattoi, “What Has Chalcedon to Do with Lhasa? John Keenan’s and Lai Pai-chiu’s Reflections on Classical Christology and the Possible Shape of a Tibetan Theology of Incarnation,” *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 28 (2008): 13-25. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. Nicholas Lash, *Easter in Ordinary: Reflections on Human Experience and the Knowledge of God* (Notre Dame and London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988): 264-265. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Joyce Ann Zimmerman, *Liturgy as Living Faith: A Liturgical Spirituality* (Scranton: University of Scranton Press, 1993): 135. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. *Ibid*., xi-xii. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. *Ibid*., viii. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Henri de Lubac, *The Mystery of the Supernatural* (Rosemary Sheed, trans.; New York: Herder and Herder, The Crossroad Publishing Co: 1998): 201. The context of de Lubac’s thought is Gregory of Nyssa’s idea of infinite progress in the knowledge and experience of God, which de Lubac delightfully interprets as not being obsessed with infinite deferrals into absolute difference: “Real advance, effective movement forward, with the delight it brings, presupposes at least the beginnings of possession” (201) and “the idea of continuing to become without ever reaching any conclusion is not attractive; there must of necessity be some ultimate goal when one will finally be wholly in act. Otherwise the journey can only be one of despair,” (204). [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. Harouki Murakami, *Kafka on the Shore* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005): 122. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)