**PART III**

**Chapter 1**

**Beyond the Rationale of Binaries: Counterpoint**

The overarching critical trajectory of the present project has so far been focused on the unproductive methodological disengagement of liturgy and ethics under the auspices of the rationale of binarity, which is a hallmark of the modern Occidental epistemological imaginary. The virtual canonization of a disciplinary fragmentation that isolates sacramental, liturgical, doctrinal, and ethical discourses in the modern Western theological inquiry has invited the observation that the overpitched polarity of the “either/or,” which surfaces again and again in the ongoing tensions between typical conceptualizations of liturgy and ethics, is indeed a symptom of the much broader binaristic habitus of competitive imagination, rationality, and socio-political praxis of the Occidental modernity. At the root of this particular disengagement – along many others – is the problematic Occidental imaginary of relationality. Or more precisely, the adiaphoric location of relationality in the ontological makeup of reality where difference and relation routinely cannot be conceived of concurrently and where relational interaction clandestinely signals an interference with the freedom and integrity of the autonomous subjectivity and agency of God and human beings alike. In the modern Western theological setting, the problematic of relationality appears most strikingly as the problematic of sacramentality. Divine and human agencies have been understood to require nothing less than extraordinary unilateral and arbitrary appropriations to co-work sacramentally. These sacramental actions have also been imagined as operating most of the time by mutually hegemonic dislocation of one agency by the other, one activity and one reality by the other, thus proliferating the same tired binarisms of possessive enclosure. All of that takes place, of course, within the compressed and exoticized sites of liturgy as extreme occasions of ritualized and marginal private choice on the margins of proper theological *loci*. These extreme occasions of institutionalized religious practices are routinely conceived as disjoined from and unaccountable to the other arenas of life, the other human persons sharing that life, and other theological modes of creativity and practice.

In the previous chapters I explored some of the most interesting proposals to interlace liturgy and ethics and to facilitate an exodus of liturgy from the modern Western backwaters of theological *parerga* through the enlargement of liturgy, most notably that of Jean-Yves Lacoste. Fascinating as Lacoste’s conception of liturgy-ethics relationality as “circularity” is, it seemed nevertheless to reinscribe the competitive and hegemonic either/or in the liturgical constellation of divine and human agencies. In my quest for the models of alternative relationalities between liturgy and ethics I engaged in conversations, rather asymmetrically, with two very differently situated diasporic and interstitially Western thinkers who originally come from the Baltics – the Russian Orthodox theologian Alexander Schmemann and the Jewish philosopher Emmanuel Levinas. Their respective attempts to re-orchestrate the modes of re-engagement between liturgy and ethics have proceeded – rather contrapuntally – by the enlargement of liturgy so that ethics (dis)appears to be preemptively consummated in a cosmically comprehensive liturgy (Schmemann) and by the enlargement of interpersonally circumscribed ethics so that liturgy is consummated/consumed in ethics as the self-sacrifical work of performing justice in relation to the other (Levinas). With an appreciation of the critical as well as the constructive merits of these envisagements, their itineraries of re-inter-lacement of liturgy and ethics, or the reconstruction of the intrinsic interdependence of the doxological praxis and ethically invested religious life, have nevertheless resonated far too co-sonorously with the binaristic logic of the Occidental modernity. I have approached these dichotomous predicaments through the dually-vectored interrogation of theological and cultural (mostly postcolonial) critiques since it is important to underscore the locality, indeed the parochiality, of this problematic as specifically pertinent to the Occidental modernity. And this modernity, as I have indicated by perhaps overly reiterative usage of the adjectives “Western”/ “Occidental,” is the modernity of Western colonialism,[[1]](#footnote-1) and of the unholy synergy of the three C’s – conquest, commerce, and Christ – which was (is?) being projected and enforced by a variety of means across the planet. On the other hand, I have also suggested, from the crevices of modernity such as my own interstitial and polyvocal diasporic experience and through conversing with postcolonial criticism – itself being a critical conversation with Western modernity from a *chiaroscuro* position of simultaneous inside and outside of it – that what in the posteriority of the Occidental imaginary of dualism is still so hard to theoretically reconnect can be actually lived as always already interrelated. This is the reality which the discourse of hybridity addresses. It includes but is not limited to existential experience and epistemological disposition intertwined in a contrapuntally harmonic relationality, which can be occasionally conflictual, asymmetrical, even coercive, but also reconciliatory, reciprocal and open to mutual empowerment by negotiation. This imaginary will serve as my constructive point of departure or more precisely, as a performative occasion for the transformation of a lived reality into a cognitive model in search for a post-binaristic and non-hegemonic composition of relationality with a particular focus on liturgy and ethics. But what would a peregrinative inquiry into the possibilities of a post-binaristic imaginary of relationality look like?

Above all, my peregrinative inquiry will proceed as a reflection no longer more analytically but rather constructively. The integrity of this constructive peregrination will be, as already intimated in the Overture, interstitial. The “interstitial integrity” allows, I submit, to think beyond, or perhaps from across and around the borders of[[2]](#footnote-2) the clashing fabrications of the “West” and “East” without demonizing or glorifying either in a petrified and ahistorical oppositionality.[[3]](#footnote-3) Moreover, in theological reflection the interstitial integrity of a diasporic imaginary – akin to what Walter Mignolo calls “border thinking” – aspires with equal fascination toward that “last horizon,” which in Mignolo’s insightful articulation is located much deeper than in the adaptive modulation of geo-cultural tensions alone:

The last horizon of border thinking is not only working toward a critique of colonial categories; it is also working toward redressing the subalternization of knowledge and the coloniality of power. It also points toward a new way of thinking in which dichotomies can be replaced by the complementarity of apparently contradictory terms.[[4]](#footnote-4)

The aspiration of an interstitially integrated imaginary consists in pondering trans-discursively a problematic so prominent in the Western modernity/coloniality and its theological creativity, yet without seeking its transcending modulation in retaliatory reversals and revolutions from a supposedly uncontaminated and singularly superior location outside of it. Such solutions, as the experience and discourse of hybridity have convinced me, are neither useful nor feasible any longer for certain constituencies of theological creativity. Thus, it might perhaps appear quite contentious for a project resonating rather generously and supportively with the cultural and discursive milieu of postcoloniality to still suggest a decidedly Western notion of musical counterpoint as its pivotal constructive image for a diasporically scored post-Occidental trajectory of theological thought. However, the counterpoint here has a postcolonial twist to it – in the vision of Edward W. Said, counterpoint emerges as a specification of the postcolonial hybridity and thus as an avenue toward a non-coercive pattern of relationality in living and in knowing. My constructive impetus, I submit, insofar as it is colored by hybridity, takes on a “deconstructive” tonality in the sense of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s “seeing” if “the magisterial texts can now be our servants, as the new magisterium constructs itself in the name of the Other.”[[5]](#footnote-5) In a certain sense, therefore, what transpires in Part III is, to borrow a curiously liturgical expression from Paul Gilroy, a constructive “litany of pollution and impurity.”[[6]](#footnote-6) Hence, the “litany” might not escape the appearance of a disciplinary insubordination of which, however, no regrets or retractions will be offered.

1. **Edward Said: Counterpoint as a Method of Interpretation**

Counterpoint has so far appeared in these pages rather clandestinely as an under-thematized motif and, perhaps most deliberately and discreetly, as a somewhat annoying style of presentation which have to be suffered for a little longer here. But now it is time for counterpoint to start emerging from the motivistic background to be phrased into a theme, indeed, to disclose itself as the dually vectored – methodological and constructive – *basso continuo* of this project. Of course, it is possible to ponder over the musical intricacies of counterpoint and their critical utility for interdisciplinary theoretical discourses in a myriad of fascinating ways. Yet the transdisciplinary fecundity of the present theological elaborations on counterpoint originated from the encounter with the musical and postcolonial elaborations on counterpoint by one of the “Holy Trinity” of postcolonial critics[[7]](#footnote-7) – Edward W. Said.

Edward W. Said (1935-2003) was a Palestinian scholar of literature and cultural critic who lived most of his intellectually productive life in the USA and remains indisputably a seminal figure in the English-speaking postcolonial theory. Said’s *Orientalism* (1978) played the most decisive role in inaugurating the discipline of postcolonial studies by “facilitating and exploiting the transition from colonialist to post-colonial studies in the Western academy.”[[8]](#footnote-8) Now for Said (who also was a Julliard-trained classical pianist and a widely published amateur musical critic) as a postcolonial critic, the musical aesthetics of counterpoint emerged over the years as the methodological *Leitmotif* and his innovative interpretive strategy in his postcolonially colored literary and political critiques.[[9]](#footnote-9) By his own admission, Said’s relationship to music was exceptional: music is “a particularly rich, and for me, unique branch of aesthetic experience.”[[10]](#footnote-10) Thus it comes as little surprise that one of Said’s major critical concepts has explicit musical connotations. Counterpoint, to offer a short preliminary description, is the unique musical capacity to sound two or more voices comprehensibly and simultaneously. It facilitates “the coherent combination of distinct melodic lines in music, and the quality that best fulfils the aesthetic principle of unity in diversity.”[[11]](#footnote-11) Contrapuntal music is structured as a “balance between independence and interdependence, and this is as true of a canon by Webern as of a fugue by Bach.”[[12]](#footnote-12)

As a model of epistemological imagination, Said’s counterpoint engenders a “mobile and eclectic method” which was, according to Bart Moore-Gilbert, “specifically designed to combat the dichotomizing vision” as it “crosses disciplinary boundaries and received divisions of discursive fields.”[[13]](#footnote-13) Charles Forsdick aptly points to the epistemological thrust of Said’s notion of counterpoint as a (largely unfulfilled in his opinion) quest for “anti-Manichean middle course” produced as a “response to and a *potential* movement beyond restrictive binary versions of the colonial encounter.”[[14]](#footnote-14) Peter Hallward even suggests that the notion of counterpoint is Said’s “most distinctive contribution to the postcolonial lexicon.”[[15]](#footnote-15)

Counterpoint as an interpretive strategy and as a model of social cohabitation is for Said an imaginary of “both” wherein the oppositionality or the “contra” element is always relationally interactive, overlapping, and interdependent with the other components of the relational interface. The application of the contrapuntal interpretive strategy is mandated particularly in a post-colonial epoch since “partly because of the empire, all cultures are involved in one another; none is single and pure, all are hybrid, heterogeneous, extraordinarily differentiated, and unmonolithic.”[[16]](#footnote-16) The most fascinating feature of Said’s idea of contrapuntal interpretation consists, I believe, in his deliberate search for a locus of enunciation that would embody the hybrid *via media* of sorts, which would facilitate a genuinely contrapuntal embeddedness between the Western canonicity and its many dark undersides across the broadest socio-historical and epistemological terrains. The experience of migrancy prompted Said to repeatedly claim his non-belonging to any singular culture,[[17]](#footnote-17) even perceived very sensitively as a contrapuntal ensamble, but rather his multiple belonging in various socio-linguistic settings. Hence it is hardly surprising that the objective of Said’s technique of interpretation is to look at different cultural experiences and expressions contrapuntally, not merely comparatively. Contrapuntal strategy aims at “interpreting together” by privileging for all practical purposes the connectivity and coexistence as reflective of the experiential exigencies of inhabited postcoloniality. Therefore, for Said it is paramount for the contrapuntal method to

… think through and interpret together experiences that are discrepant, each with its particular agenda and pace of development, its own internal formations, its internal coherence and system of external relationships, all of them coexisting and interacting with others.[[18]](#footnote-18)

In an explicatory formulation that will later also surface in Said’s rare and sporadic theoretical elaborations on counterpoint, the pivotal tenet of contrapuntal reflection is the abdication of an external, allegedly neutral, ahistorical – a seemingly Archimedean perspective of evaluation. Instead, the contrapuntal strategy – in both literary and political sense – fosters engagement of various experiences among themselves, “letting them play off each other”[[19]](#footnote-19) so that various mutually closed and suppressed ideological and cultural experiences might be made concurrent.[[20]](#footnote-20) Of course, it has not escaped the critics that the theoretical weight of Said’s counterpoint bears down on its very aspirations to a certain meta-historical universality of vision which comes suspiciously close to functioning precisely as a methodological Archimedean point that ends up orienting all historical and cultural particularities “toward the same global coordination.”[[21]](#footnote-21) Counterpoint, as sketchy and sporadic as Said’s theoretical elaborations on it are, indeed emerges as a virtually “metaphysical” imaginary wherein the analytical aesthetics of counterpoint crosses over from music into literature and even further into socio-cultural and political critiques and occasionally functions as a certain “chamber” metaphysics of counterpoint. In this capacity, counterpoint is the “structuring structure” of Said’s unapologetic critical humanism as a worldview, exemplifying his insistence on a rigorous grounding of theoretical creativity in lived experience. Counterpoint represents, for Said, a kind of catholicity of vision, of “thinking through and together” – especially when counterpoint is used to articulate the intricacies of the inhabited complexity of postcolonial migrancy to which Said himself was no stranger. Yet, this catholicity of vision transcends a mere panoramic, or perhaps even voyeuristic, survey of cultural and historical particularities. Rather,

if these ideas of counterpoint, intertwining, and integration have anything more to them than a blandly uplifting suggestion for catholicity of vision, it is that they reaffirm the historical experience of imperialism as a matter first of interdependent histories, overlapping domains, second of something requiring intellectual and political choices.[[22]](#footnote-22)

Consequently, counterpoint as an interpretive strategy, as well as in its denser sense as a chamber metaphysics does not originate “blandly” in the spirit of parochial beauty (in the Kantian sense of das Schöne) out of a pristine musicological fancy of the modern Western musical milieu. It is, for Said, as both analytical as well as creative concept, irreparably come of age in the era of colonialism and imperialism. The sonorous topography of this counterpoint – epistemologically and ontologically – is not scored so much comparatively, or symphonically, but rather as an “atonal ensemble.”[[23]](#footnote-23) Atonality signals the appearance of a crucial timbre of Said’s imaginary (or arguably, his “chamber” metaphysics) of counterpoint – the capacity of counterpoint to convey the multilayered nature of overlapping, intertwined, yet independent and sometimes sublunary irreconcilable dialectics of lived reality short of a beatific vision of eschatology. In short, the solvency of counterpoint as a nuanced notion of critical imagination consists precisely in its relational facility for connection without premature or worse, coercively synthetic, resolution by absorption. This facet of the Saidian counterpoint – admittedly with Theodor W. Adorno looming magisterial throughout Said’s random literary orchestrations of it – is, I believe, among the most useful in the quest for an resourceful modulation of the conceptions of relational interface beyond either soporific and reductive fusion of differences or an automatic fixation on some seemingly eternal and antagonistic rationales of binarity. This is where counterpoint obtains as an inventive envisagement for a theological sensibility that finds itself embedded within the hybridities and interstices of postcoloniality. Before inquiring where the itinerary of counterpoint might take us, however, another facet of Said’s notion of counterpoint must be noted.

It is pertinent, I believe, to note at this juncture the other crucial component of Said’s imaginary of counterpoint besides his obvious indebtedness to and inspiration from the so-called “classical” Western art music – to which I will turn shortly – before sounding the critically inventive depths of the Saidian counterpoint. It is Said’s own exilic experience which he unapologetically explored and narrated through the recurrent analytical metaphor of counterpoint. As I already argued in Part I, Ch. 2, the polyvocality of the lived tensions of variously displaced life – through exile, asylum-seeking or e(im)migration – underwrites also Said’s poignantly personal articulations of migrancy. The unforgettable and unassimilable existential actuality of Said’s life was his exilic displacement. Of course, in *Culture and Imperialism* Said argued that virtually all cultural forms are hybrid and impure so that cultural identities are actually not essentializations but rather “contrapuntal ensembles.”[[24]](#footnote-24) The exilic and postcolonial counterpoint, experientially and theoretically, however, remains for Said a figure of particularly acute and hyper-self-aware intensification of lived hybridity, surpassing the habitual economy of culture as contrapuntal ensemble. Thus Said often troped displacement and migrancy as the embodiment of quintessential cultural counterpoint starting from his 1984 reflections on exile:

Most people are principally aware of one culture, one setting, one home; exiles are aware of at least two, and this plurality of vision gives rise to an awareness of simultaneous dimensions, an awareness that – to borrow a phrase from music – is *contrapuntal.[[25]](#footnote-25)*

Said emphasizes the tense simultaneity of the vivid old and new environments that might issue in a special appreciation of “contrapuntal juxtapositions that diminish orthodox judgment and elevate appreciative sympathy.”[[26]](#footnote-26) Such a contrapuntal consciousness of exile – which Said occasionally enlarged to denote rather generically the consciousness of an intellectual in a slightly flamboyant “metaphorical” and “metaphysical” sense[[27]](#footnote-27) – functions like a “mind of winter” with not only the “negative advantage of refuge in the émigré’s eccentricity” but also “the positive benefit of challenging the system.”[[28]](#footnote-28) The imaginary of counterpoint, interlinking the existential actualities of displaced human life particularly in the postcolony and a distinct musical sensibility and compositional technique, specifies for Said the more general postcolonial notion of hybridity as “tying together of multiple voices in a kind of disciplined whole” while underscoring that such a “tying together” is by no means a “simple reconciliation.”[[29]](#footnote-29)

Said’s transdisciplinary usage of counterpoint – from music into literature, politics, cultural critique, philosophy, art, and back to music – reveal the performed reciprocal translatability of existential actuality into a critical model of theoretical inquiry. The emphasis on “connecting” is noteworthy as far as the relational connotations of counterpoint as analytical paradigm are concerned, especially since for Said the methodology of (primary cultural) analysis is answerable to the lived reality rather than vice versa. As Said sees it, lived reality is preeminently hybrid, mixed and impure in its interconnectedness and interdependence. Hence, methodologically speaking, his “primary aim is not to separate but to connect.”[[30]](#footnote-30) The critical model thus crafted is, above all, an imaginary of relationality aspiring beyond the imaginative and habitual gridlocks of Manichean binarisms with its fetishization of difference, as well as the lures of facile and premature settlement by the logic of displacement which for Said entails “an ultimately uninteresting alternation of presence and absence.”[[31]](#footnote-31) The analytical and imaginative “beyond” for Said is expressed very daringly,[[32]](#footnote-32) indeed quite insubordinately precisely in its often suspected conservatism,[[33]](#footnote-33) through a particular aural regime of modern Western[[34]](#footnote-34) art music – counterpoint.

1. **Counterpoint: An Imaginary of Relationality Beyond Coercion**

Counterpoint is a trope of dialectical aesthetics, allowed or even encouraged to migrate into the realms of epistemological imagination and ethically invested social vision. Depending on the teleology of argument, the aspects of dissonance or harmony may come to be privileged. But far from being merely “uninteresting” due to a crudity of detractive alternation, counterpoint is perhaps hyper-interesting to the point of exhaustion precisely due to its unrelenting complexity and its occasionally beautiful yet always provisional resolutions which at the end of the day serve as an exciting foretaste of the non-eschatologically impossible. I find that this is where Said’s elaborations on counterpoint become particularly inciting for theological reflection. As I already noted, the intricate imaginary of counterpoint in Said’s work lends itself, hesitantly and implicitly, to the function of a “chamber” metaphysics as an attempt to produce conjectures on the whole of inhabited worldly reality as intrinsically interrelated and interdependent as well as on what is desired in liberating excess of the empirical realities of lived suffering and stifled experience. The “chamber” metaphysics of counterpoint is a more or less consistent incarnation of daring to “think together” the disparate and dissenting realities as one explores the world concurrently theoretically, socially, and through the aesthetic experience. Avoiding any metaphysical allusions in a more minimalistic style – for better or for worse – Rokus de Groot suggests that Said’s ideas on polyphony and counterpoint as a particular configuration of polyphony evolve from an interpretive literary strategy into his foremost model of humanistic emancipation. Counterpoint is the key concept of “the humanism of alternatives, always with room for dissent” and conductive for the coexistence of “difference without domination within a shared harmonic system” without tyranny.[[35]](#footnote-35) I believe that de Groot is right to bring Saidian counterpoint out of the orbit of secluded textual interpretation (as Said probably would insist on given his views on “isolated textuality”[[36]](#footnote-36) of rigorously literary theories) and my constructive intentions here reverberate with this approach.

What kind of relationality does the counterpoint enable and accommodate? It is definitely a relation of independence and interdependence, which sounds forth in an ineradicable and unceasing simultaneity without any detraction or diminishment of any of the participating voices. Counterpoint is not a generic polyphony which allows for any type of combination of equal or unequal voices. Counterpoint usually only occurs in a partnership of sounds wherein the voices live and move in relief against each other and enter into complex relations depending on their relative importance. The focus is on the interaction, overlapping, intertwining, interpenetration, hide and seek, fleeing and chasing, and all of that happening simultaneously – in other words, in concurrent “playing off each other” as Said would put it. Thus, according to Said,

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.[[37]](#footnote-37)

The fascination of counterpoint resides in its complexity and orientation to non-reductive integration amidst diversity: “… the essence of counterpoint is simultaneity of voices, preternatural control of resources” and in this simultaneity the voices always continue “to sound against, as well as with, all the others.”[[38]](#footnote-38) The value of counterpoint can be seen as the concurrence of two orientationally distinctive, yet complementary, themes. On the one hand, there is the “contrapuntal mania for inclusiveness” or “the total ordering of sound, the complete management of time”[[39]](#footnote-39) which Said insightfully ponders in connection with Thomas Mann’s *Doktor Faustus* and which suggests the aspiration – perhaps prematurely eschatological[[40]](#footnote-40) – toward the totality of “concert or order.” In less ominous contexts, contrapuntal imaginary and aesthetics is oriented toward the relational whole, the whole consisting of “various themes playing off one another” – never separately, never altogether absolutely sovereignly and never incarcerated in their singularity of difference. On the other hand, the contrapuntal “mania for inclusiveness” exists only in the equilibrium of opulent and amalgamated horizontality. Contrapuntal music, for Said, is horizontal, rather than vertical.[[41]](#footnote-41) The compounded voices of counterpoint remain independent in its “flowing, constantly transformed texture.”[[42]](#footnote-42) The aspiration to wholeness, which may border on something more resembling a totalizing – and even totalitarian – tendency, within counterpoint as a musically configured worldview is modulated by counterpoint’s texture of provisional privilege and irreducible total nonalignment despite more or less harmonious co-sonorities that may incessantly emerge. In this regard, counterpoint is precisely the embodiment of musical imaginary that challenges the impetus, often ascribed to the Western art music of modernity in particular, of “working toward domination and sovereignty.”[[43]](#footnote-43) In counterpoint, the orientation is towards thinking and treating

…one musical line in conjunction with several others that derive from and relate to it, and you do so through imitation, repetition, or ornamentation – as an antidote to the more overtly administrative and executive authority contained in, say, a Mozart or Beethoven classical sonata form.[[44]](#footnote-44)

What attracts Said – and, in turn, my theological imagination – to counterpoint is the interplay of independent, unassimilable yet not entirely post-hierarchic in the final analysis, voices in an interdependently echoic configuration of relationality. It is a relationality of both and many, of an asymmetrical reciprocity, to borrow a well-known expression from Iris Marion Young, vis-à-vis either/or, and yet without simplification – by synthesis or by sheer domination – into a mock utopianism of presumptuous or, perhaps, to put it in a more Adornian way, a false reconciliation under duress. As Said underscores in a rather opaque passage on Richard Wagner’s *Die Meistersinger*,[[45]](#footnote-45) contrapuntally configured action and texture of music reveals counterpoint – contradictorily to some ideas affirmed textually and dramatically in the same opera – as a structure of structural instability and resistance to reductive ideological recapitulation where the contrapuntal nature of the music undermines its final triumphalist cadenza. Yet as a model of relationality, counterpoint is posited as a planetary figure of at least “chamber”-metaphysical scope. That alone seems to mandate a certain suspicion in these post-grand-narrative times. R.Radhakrishnan perceptively observed that Said’s counterpoint as interpretive strategy is deployed as an intricate universal hermeneutical figurality with the result of counterpoint representing “an overarching structural syncronicity.”[[46]](#footnote-46) Counterpoint acknowledges relational antagonism and resistance, yet nevertheless seems to issue into what Radhakrishnan calls “the aesthetic pre-containment of antagonism.”[[47]](#footnote-47) While counterpoint definitely is, for Said, an overarching structural synchronicity, or to put it simply, the *breviatum verbum* of his worldview, there is also the vigilance about the tendency for universalizing upliftment regarding the uncanny transformation of “complexities of a many-stranded history into one large figure, or of elevating particular moments or monuments into universals.”[[48]](#footnote-48) Hence counterpoint as undoubtedly the “large figure” of Said’s thought, falls under the omnipresent “possibility to transgress.”[[49]](#footnote-49) Viewed from these proportions, counterpoint fulfils the role of pivotal epistemological and ethical envisagement in Said’s persistent quest for such social and cultural models of human cohabitation that would accommodate “the human distinction and concreteness dialectically preserved” through and by “non-dominative and non-coercive modes of life and knowledge as essential components of the desired future.”[[50]](#footnote-50) But the “negative” or auto-critical component of Said’s reasoning in general and in relation to counterpoint in particular does not stop here with what can appear to be a fairly standard “apophatic” axiom of a late modern critical sensibility. In Said’s “late style” in particular, an emphasis on “the irreconcilabilities” which transgress the apparitions of pre-containment of conflictuality, or perhaps simply a radically consistent polyphony, present the most interesting aspect of the imaginary of counterpoint. Here, however, a reference to a magisterial figure so far lurking in the motivic background of these reflections, must be mentioned explicitly, namely, Theodor W. Adorno.

From reflections on music of various eras and cultures to the existential actualities of exile, and onto the ethics of literary and political criticism, the constancy of Said’s references to, conversations with, and admiration of Theodor Adorno is remarkable. It is beyond the scope of my reflections to address this supremely fascinating intellectual conversation so uniquely rooted in a shared passion for the philosophy of music as a form of “transgressive” critical theory in proper detail as it deserves to be done. Here, however, I would like to point out that what Said found most attractive in Adorno “is this notion of tension, of highlighting and dramatizing what I call irreconcilabilities.”[[51]](#footnote-51) In both his reflections on “late style” in music and literature – an obviously Adornian motif in relation to Adorno’s explorations of the third-period Beethoven in *Spätstil Beethovens –* and in his own late style of writing under the shadow of terminal illness, Said gravitates to the contrapuntal “irreconcilabilities” with the recurring reminders of “nonharmonious, nonserene tension”[[52]](#footnote-52) and insisting on the prerogative of late style as “the power to render disenchantment and pleasure without resolving the contradiction between them.”[[53]](#footnote-53) Said’s imaginary of counterpoint enabled him to advance the struggle for non-dominative and noncoercive thought and life, whose aspiration “is to construct fields of coexistence rather than fields of battle as the outcome of intellectual labor,”[[54]](#footnote-54) as aspiration I have always found to be worthy of special treasuring. Yet, even this contrapuntal coexistence, short of being a charade of distorted eschatology of beatific vision, demands the recognition of the “overlapping, yet irreconcilable experiences” and the courage “to say that *that* is what is before us.”[[55]](#footnote-55) What is here conveyed with an explicitly robust apophatic reserve, is the need for a transcendence of synthetic idealism since for Said,

…just as history is never over or complete, it is also the case that some dialectical oppositions are not reconcilable, not transcendable, not really capable of being folded into a sort of higher, undoubtedly nobler synthesis.[[56]](#footnote-56)

The “irreconcilabilities” of counterpoint sound forth, rather stubbornly, the motivic ghost chords of Adornian terror of false reconciliation, musically as well as socially, intellectually, and politically.[[57]](#footnote-57) Said never refers directly in his texts, to the best of my knowledge, to Adorno’s “The Function of Counterpoint in New Music.” Yet “late style” Said’s cryptic emphases on “irreconcilabilities” prompt me to explore Adorno’s interrogations of counterpoint to illuminate Said’s suggestive gestures. For Adorno, in a manner similar to Said, counterpoint is about relationality, and even more precisely, about reciprocal and interactive relationality. Adorno underscores counterpoint – admittedly the counterpoint as performed in the compositional techniques of the Second or Young Viennese School – as the aesthetics of struggle or friction, wherein the unity, or even a kind of *Aufhebung*, is achieved through indescribable tension.[[58]](#footnote-58) The independence of every contrapuntal voice is genuine and unassimilable while interpenetration is no less genuine. Unity in diversity emerges, and it is important to stress that it is not imposed by manipulation or coercion, since for Adorno by “taxing the ear” the emergent unity is a “not an immediate unity, but a unity of opposites.”[[59]](#footnote-59) Adorno’s insistence on “non-imposition”[[60]](#footnote-60) of the organizing principle outside the reciprocal interplay of the musical (counter)subjects and even occasionally *basso continuo* resonates with Said’s “playing off one another” posits prominently the crucial significance of all subject(ivitie)s involved in the contrapuntal collaboration. In other words, the counterpoint of voices is not a “mere transitory episode”[[61]](#footnote-61) in an exclusionary structure of hegemonic homophony. Each and every voice is entitled to a serious articulation as an individual part in its “autonomy” as it is rather idealistically and “unavoidably nominalistically”[[62]](#footnote-62) defined within the parameters of the modern utopia of sovereign and atomistic subjectivity.[[63]](#footnote-63) In any case, for Adorno (and for Said as I showed) the authority of contrapuntal synergy emerges from within, not from without. His concern for the unviolated/unviolable integrity of all participating voices or (counter)subjects remains supremely important, especially in the times of waning postmodernist infatuation with dissolving subjectivities and agencies, even those that did not enjoy the luxury of finding themselves on the upper-or-bright Occidental side of the colonial modernity with its avenues of modern subjecthood before it was pronounced dead. From this perspective, Adorno invests the late modern imaginary of counterpoint (modeled mainly upon Arnold Schoenberg’s music but with a serious consideration of J.S. Bach as well) with a unexpectedly utopian supra-audible value as the form of relationality that interactively “results from the relations of the voices to one another” and in which the mutual independence of voices nevertheless resounds simultaneously and facilitates a non-fraudulent[[64]](#footnote-64) integrity. This counterpoint is a “synthesis of contrasts”[[65]](#footnote-65) – a synthesis with the already mentioned universalizing, if not totalizing, proclivities, which are not lost on Adorno. For a “total counterpoint” would also mean the evaporation of the difference without resort to nonidentical exteriority, where distinctions collapse into sameness and precisely the inclusivity of counterpoint as distinguishing principle ends up singularizing the contrapuntal interface. What is thus fabricated is for Adorno a nightmarish relationality in which “differences are eroded into complementarities” and hence the irreducible contrapuntal differentiation is “submerged in synthesis without retaining its identity.”[[66]](#footnote-66) Of course, the same critical concerns have plagued Said’s rather similar, yet less theoretically elaborate, ruminations on counterpoint as noted above. Adorno’s answer to this predicament of a Hegelian (here, a dead-end) resolution of the non-identical into the identical is to offer a resignation that the independence of the voices has always been illusory. Yet, the legitimacy of counterpoint as an aesthetic social economy depends on the worthwhile effort, indeed the laboring, toward the extremely loyal bringing of independent voices together in interactively. But the labor of bringing the independent voices together emerges finally as a total constructivity under the auspices of a totality (the relationality of counterpoint) which then retains a (seemingly lamentable for Adorno) primacy over the individual components.[[67]](#footnote-67)

On the other hand, if the emergence of a common melody, out of the interplay itself, and even sporadic harmony is a priori dismissed as necessarily reductive, to say the least, then is not such a counterpoint an equally fraudulent idol, condensing the refusal to ever entertain the possibility of agreement and collaboration as a non-reductive and non-assimilative complementarity precisely in terms of a synthesis of contrasts? This pitfall of counterpoint, when envisioned as an exemplification of Adorno’s dictum that “what is wanted is not a peacefulness above all conflicts, but the pure, uncompromising representation of absolute conflict,”[[68]](#footnote-68) I find curiously under-elaborated in Adorno’s otherwise ruthless auto-critique without restraint. It is as if the potentialities of the Adornian counterpoint are necessarily limited by the need for counterpoint to purely and inflexibly embody what Slavoj Žižek calls the “downward-synthesis”[[69]](#footnote-69) or really curiously, “the Christian sublime” wherein there is never a possibility of harmony of the oppositionalities but instead an endlessly self-perpetuating and irreducibly conflictual deadlock. It is at this juncture that a theological conversation about counterpoint would seem to offer a constructively dissenting possibility from both the illusority of subjects’ integrity (which Adorno is more inclined to admit[[70]](#footnote-70)) and submersive synthesis – to which I will duly turn in the next chapter. Before starting that conversation, however, it is useful to notice briefly that the frustration vis-à-vis what Adorno refers to as the inescapable contradiction of counterpoint or what Said called the Adorno-inspired irreconcilabilities, nevertheless allows non-illusory usage of counterpoint as a strictly “anticipatory image” to gesture toward the dangerously impossible teleology – the “reconciling the irreconcilable in an anticipatory image.”[[71]](#footnote-71) Music, I have to point out here with a particular delectation, for Adorno and also for Said is uniquely fitting to transcend the empirical materiality of history precisely by rendering audible its contradictions and by being “the medium of positive negation.”[[72]](#footnote-72) At the end of the day, “without making concessions to a bad utopia, it is not wholly illegitimate to imagine that music may hope through spontaneous receptivity, through immersion in the unique, to become more than a mere existent thing”[[73]](#footnote-73) for Adorno.

Now what is left after the vigilant recognition of the pre-eschatological and fraud-prone connotations of counterpoint is its usefulness as a somber and dauntingly labor-intensive utopian vision. Despite so many reservations, counterpoint retains its utopian potential precisely as a metaphysically[[74]](#footnote-74) proportioned imaginary for Adorno to “uphold the concrete image of a nonconformist, meaningful possibility.”[[75]](#footnote-75) As a “positive negation” – and this is the most eschatological sense of counterpoint that Adorno can allow – counterpoint is the performance of the effortful, laborious, process of simultaneous “negation and affirmation of the voice to which it is added.”[[76]](#footnote-76) Adorno’s counterpoint is not a figurality of stasis and accomplishment; it is rather, as Keith Chapin puts it, “a sounding image of effort.”[[77]](#footnote-77) Music and musical counterpoint above all can body forth an anticipatory image of a certain kind of reconciliatory relationality, fractional and perplexing as it may be, that is answerable to the antinomical predicament of relationality beyond both fraud and force. Adorno’s question “how can subjectivity become objective without force or fraud”[[78]](#footnote-78) can be fruitfully read, I submit, as a quest for non-coercive relationality or “reconciliation” of the fiercely conflictual dialectics of human histories – of the attainable possibility of which Adorno remained exceptionally circumspect in comparison with the slightly more moderate, more *via media* (or more “conservative”?) Said. That said, counterpoint as an anticipatory image of reconciliation is validated as a utopian aesthetic challenge “precisely because the real situation today refuses reconciliation” and so consequently, “we must retain the idea of it in an image.”[[79]](#footnote-79)

Even though interrelated, the soundings of counterpoint in both Edward Said’s and Theodor Adorno’s are precisely contrapuntal in certain aspects. Even though it might be a slight simplification, the emphasis for Adorno falls, unsurprisingly, on the particularities of individual voices in the whole economy of counterpoint, musically and philosophically. The paramount ethical concern here is the oppressive *Verwaltung* of human individualities politically, economically, and socially to which the totally democratizing and symmetrically oriented counterpoint responds by rejection of self-abnegation of any and all voices. Counterpoint as an imaginary of relentless social and ethical critique is worthy of consideration if it fulfills the condition of truth: “The need to lend a voice to suffering is the condition of all truth.”[[80]](#footnote-80) Said, on the other hand, underscores the interrelated whole and does not dismiss the possibility of congruent interaction, no matter how motivically complex and uneven, within the counterpoint of the totality of lived reality. For Said, the genuine ethical integrity of voices in playing “off one another” does not foreclose the potentialities of “concert and order” in the same way that Adorno’s positively negative tension or, for all practical purposes, indeed the grinding conflict, that Adorno deems necessary for the counterpoint to justly accommodate not only proper interrelation but also reconciliation, does. Said leans toward privileging – without absolutization, I submit – the laborious and negotiated consonance of the whole rather than the dissonant or even forced intertwining of disparate themes. Said’s immersion in the hybridity of lived complexities of migrancy seems to issue forth in an imaginary of counterpoint that is less dramatized and might be even somewhat pleasurable vis-à-vis Adorno’s Schoenbergian counterpoint, to which, as a critique of the societies and cultures of its own origins it is not really possible to listen to – even according to Adorno. Said opts hybridically, perhaps for some critical tastes too leniently and conservatively, for a contrapuntal alliance of “contrapuntal necessity and inventive freedom” which illuminate each other with nothing less than “magisterial beauty” – at least, he hears such a performed effort and effect in the music of J.S. Bach.[[81]](#footnote-81) Said’s *Leitmotif* – the “irreconcilabities” never being occluded! – emerges as the critical preference for coexistence and fruitful interaction (hence his unrelenting odium for the late Samuel Huntingdon’s “clash of civilizations” idea), rather than agonizing and ultimately unlivable tension, canonized into a necessity for all dialectically configured life experiences and critical sensibilities. Said’s counterpoint is notably less dramatic as compared to Adorno’s – all similarities and influences notwithstanding. It is not so much struggle, even though mutually incongruous elements are never simply brushed aside, but rather mutual enhancement of expressive power of all voices,[[82]](#footnote-82) that is the objective of counterpoint here. Without neglecting Adorno’s care for the integrity of all contrapuntally related voices, this is the element of Said’s perception of counterpoint that is, I submit, most conductive for theological reimaging of convoluted patterns of relationality. The fugue-like patterns of fleeing, chasing, tensing up and relaxing, and the interminable, sometimes inescapably painful and tortuous search for a livable, fruitful, non-violent equilibrium reflect the habits of encountering contradictory realities of the contrapuntal life of migrancy. Said’s counterpoint appears to be an aesthetically configured sign of hybridity as it flows from the order of existential actualities into the order of epistemological and critical positionality, and back, thus forming a “transgressive” (in Said’s sense) imaginary of living, thinking, and acting toward creating non-coercive relations across all these interdependent terrains of life. The experience of postcolonial displacement resonates into Said’s resilient preference for an unpretentious hope for a contrapuntal harmony of togetherness in difference which allows a reciprocity that may well be nonconsensual and asymmetrical as much as it can be interactively liberating, emancipatory, and just. Said’s imaginary of counterpoint admits moments of incommensurability and in this sense it is a musically inspired elaboration of hybridity precisely as a confrontation and problematization of boundaries without erasure or dissolution. Hence, this contrapuntal harmony is in no sense preordained, and comes across as a reservedly non-apocalyptic and secular, or humanistic, “concert and order.” Said’s counterpoint is also, ironically, more ambivalent and less romantic than Adorno’s, and thus again, more at home in the hybridities of postcoloniality rather than univocally in the hotbed of Western modernity. Rowan Williams has observed that modern Western cultural sensibilities “are a bit inclined to romanticize struggle and tension”[[83]](#footnote-83) and, as incredible as it may sound, Adorno’s consistent preference for extreme dialectical figuralities sounds the theme of revolting, yet therein somehow precisely sublime, tension of romanticism. Be that as it may, what could the theological application of counterpoint as a figuration of epistemological and ethical imagination be? In particular, what difference would it make to reflect on the theological notion of synergy from the perspective of counterpoint? To this question I will turn in the next chapter before offering a suggestion about the desirability of contrapuntal imaginary of relationality between liturgy and ethics in the last chapter of Part III.

1. I am in complete agreement with Walter D. Mignolo that modernity and coloniality are parallel concepts and that “…there is no modernity without coloniality.” 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,” in *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000): 43. Thus, “coloniality … is the hidden face of modernity and its very condition of possibility” even though “that coloniality remains difficult to understand as the darker side of modernity is due to the fact that that most stories of modernity have been told from the perspective of modernity itself, including, of course, those told by its internal critics,” 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-1)
2. I refer to Mignolo’s notion of border gnosis/border thinking as “a critical reflection on knowledge production from both the interior borders of the modern/colonial world system (imperial conflicts, hegemonic languages, directionality of translations, etc.) and its exterior borders (imperial conflicts with cultures being colonized, as well as the subsequent stages of independence or decolonization),” *ibid*., 11. More specifically, border thinking “is a way of thinking from and beyond disciplines and the geopolitics of knowledge imbedded in Occidentalism, Orientalism, and area studies; from and beyond colonial legacies; from and beyond the gender divide and sexual prescriptions; and from and beyond ethnic identities and racial conflicts. Thus, border gnosis is a longing to overcome subalternity and a building block of postsubaltern ways of thinking. I insist that the post in postcolonial/post-Occidental is significantly different from other posts in contemporary cultural critiques,” Mignolo, “(Post)Occidentalism, (Post)Coloniality, and (Post)Subaltern Rationality”, *The Pre-Occupation of Postcolonial Studies* (Fawzia Afzal-Khan and Kalpana Seshadri-Crooks, eds.; Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2000):89. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. On the pathetic unproductivity and ideological overload of the efforts to deconsecrate West-centrism and “Eurocentrism” by inverse proliferation of Orientalism see Namsoon Kang, “Who/What Is Asian? A Postcolonial Theological Reading of Orientalism and Neo-Orientalism,” in *Postcolonial Theologies: Divinity and Empire* (Catherine Keller, Michael Nausner and Mayra Rivera, eds.; St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2004):100-117. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs*, 338. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward A History of the Vanishing Present* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1999):7. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993):2. I am struck here by the extended pertinence of Gilroy’s observations on “double consciousness” in cultural criticism through the methodological models of creolization, hybridity, mestizaje – if they are paraphrased in theological terms. At the beginning of his study Gilroy writes that “where racist, nationalist, or ethnically absolutist discourses orchestrate political relationships so that these identities appear to be mutually exclusive, occupying the space between them or trying to demonstrate their continuity has been viewed as a provocative and even oppositional act of political insubordination,” *ibid*., 1. “Occupying a space” between neatly compartmentalized and jealous theological disciplines and religious practices, and insisting on interactive continuities between them still appears as a kind of insubordination to the *Zeitgeist* of theological practice. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. As famously suggested by Robert J.C. Young in his *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race* (London: Routledge, 1995): 163. The other two *dramatis personae* of this theoretical “trinity” besides Said include Homi K. Bhabha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. David Hawkes, “The Secular and the Post-Secular in the Thought of Edward Said,” *Histories of Postmodernism* (Mark Bevir, Jill Hargis, Sara Rushing, eds.; New York and London: Routledge, 2007): 215. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. See, for example, Said’s comments in “Between the Worlds,” *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002): 562. The most sustained application of counterpoint as an interpretive strategy or “reading” is Said’s *Culture and Imperialism* first published in 1993. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Said, *Reflections on Exile*, Introduction, xxxii. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Grove Dictionary of Music, Oxford Music Online, The Oxford Companion of Music, [www.oxfordmusiconline.com:80/subscriber/article/oprt114/e1670](http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com:80/subscriber/article/oprt114/e1670), accessed November 19, 2008. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. *Ibid.* [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Bart Moore-Gilbert, *Postcolonial Theory: Contexts, Practices, Politics* (London and New York: Verso, 1997):64. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Charles Forsdick, “Edward Said After Theory: The Limits of Counterpoint,” *Post-Theory: New Directions in Criticism* (Martin McQuillan et al., eds.; Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999):193, 194. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Peter Hallward, *Absolutely Postcolonial: Writing Between the Singular and the Specific* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2001): 58. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Edward W. Said *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Books, Random House, 1994): xxv. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. For example in *Ibid.*, xxvi or “Between Worlds,” *Reflections on Exile*, 557. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 32. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. *Ibid*. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. *Ibid*., 33. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Hallward, *Absolutely Postcolonial*, 59. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 259. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. *Ibid*., 318. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. *Ibid*., 52. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Said, “Reflections on Exile,” *Reflections on Exile*, 186. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. *Ibid*. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. See Said, “Intellectual Exile: Expatriates and Marginals,” *The Edward Said Reader* (Moustafa Bayoumi and Andrew Rubin, eds.; New York: Vintage Books, Random House, 2000): 373-379 with Theodor W. Adorno as his prime example of intellectual as exile. A similar line of reasoning appears in *Culture and Imperialism*, 332-333. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 333. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Edward W. Said, “Criticism, Culture and Performance: An Interview with Edward Said,” *Performing Arts Journal* 37 (January 1991): 26. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 14. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Said, “The Politics of Knowledge,” *Reflections on Exile*, 379. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Encyclopedia Britannica peculiarly describes counterpoint as “the most characteristic element in Western music and a major distinguishing feature between the music of the West and that of the Orient and of primitive peoples,” see "Counterpoint," *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*. Retrieved January19, 2009, <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-9110126>. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Valerie Kennedy provides a helpful concise insight into what usually gets labeled as the “fundamental conservatism of Said’s literary tastes” while also suggesting, accurately I submit, that the very impetus of Said’s contrapuntal hermeneutical strategy is indeed the “search for an alternative to both radical and conservative orthodoxies,” see Kennedy, *Edward Said: A Critical Introduction* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2000): 97-106. Said’s perfunctory engagement with feminist discourses is usually and rather deservedly mentioned in relation to his “conservatism” and occasionally even his allegedly “mandarin” preferences in music – the art music of Western modernity – are also included in the catalogue of his “conservatism.” [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. It must be noted that Said was profoundly aware of the probable consternations regarding the validity of his postcolonial credentials in relation to his passionate interest in, knowledge of, and usage of the Western European art music of the mostly modern period. Said’s extensive reflections on music disclose his post-Occidentalist critical sentiments regarding, for example, the dominating modern form of sonata, including of course symphonic forms, in Western music, especially as he juxtaposes this style of composition and aesthetic regime to the technique and the whole sensibility of counterpoint or nonnarrative aesthetic and compositional style of, for example, Olivier Messiaen. For Said, like for his admired Theodor Adorno, music was always more than aesthetic, irreducible and sui generis as it is, experience alone; it crossed over and interacted with the social, philosophical, and cultural actualities so that the musical conjectures of power and coercive development, mastery of time, and administration of relations among different musical subjects constituted Said’s focus on music. See, for example, his 1989 Welleck Library Lectures at the University of California published as *Musical Elaborations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), particularly Ch. 3 “Melody, Solitude, and Affirmation,” 73-105. For a short analysis of the common emphasis in Adorno and Said on music and its socio-historic context see Kiyoko Magome, “Edward Said’s Counterpoint,” *Paradoxical Citizenship: Edward Said* (Silvia Nagy-Zekmi, ed.; Lanham, Boulder, New York, Toronto, Oxford: Lexington Books, 2006): 67-73. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Rokus de Groot, “Perspectives of Polyphony in Edward Said’s Writings,” *Edward Said: Critical Decolonization* (Ferial J. Ghazoul, ed.; Cairo and New York: The American University in Cairo Press, 2007):231-232. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Edward W. Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983): 4. Said consistently disparaged certain tendencies of “philosophy of pure textuality” in the poststructuralist literary theories which isolate “textuality from the circumstances, the events, the physical senses that made it possible and render it intelligible as the result of human work, *ibid*. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Said, *Culture and Imperialism,* 51. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Edward W. Said, “The Music Itself: Glenn Gould’s Contrapuntal Vision,” *Music at the Limits* (Foreword by Daniel Barenboim; New York: Columbia University Press, 2008):5. Said’s reflections on counterpoint mainly invoke the music of Johann Sebastian Bach – preeminently as performed by Glenn Gould – as the actual point of departure for the elaborations on the supra-audible meanings of contrapuntal music without, however, being limited to J.S. Bach. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. *Ibid.* [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Said actually muses that contrapuntal music is “connected to eschatology,” every detail being seemingly “divinely ordained” as to come tantalizingly close to totalitarian ordering of sound space as a corollary of totalitarian politics and social vision, *ibid.*, 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. *Ibid*., 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Edward W. Said, “Bach for the Masses,” *Music at the Limits*, 251. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Said, *Musical Elaborations*, xxi. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. *Ibid*., 102. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. *Ibid*., 61. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. R.Radhakrishnan, “Derivative Discourses and the Problem of Signification,” *The European Legacy*, 7:6 (2002): 784. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. *Ibid*. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Said, *Musical Elaborations*, 55. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. *Ibid*. Said remarks that “no social system, no historical vision, no theoretical totalization, no matter how powerful, can exhaust all the alternatives or practices exists within its domain. There is always the possibility to transgress.” Transgression, for Said, is devoid of particularly countercultural insurgency-related or blasphemous connotations so it “does not imply some irrevocable action against law or divinity. Secular transgression chiefly involves moving from one form to another, the testing and challenging of limits, the mixing and intermingling of heterogeneities, cutting across expectations, providing unforeseen pleasures, discoveries, experiences. Once the totalizing tendency is refused an unquestioning assent, a whole series of transgressions both by and involving Western classical music proposes itself… ,” *ibid.* [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. Edward W. Said, “The Future of Criticism,” *Reflections on Exile*, 172. See also Said, “Orientalism Reconsidered,” *Reflections on Exile*, 214. In “The Future of Criticism” Said notably refers to Theodor W. Adorno’s essay “Subject and Object” and its notion of “eternal peace” as distinctness without domination. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. “An Interview with Edward W. Said,” *The Edward Said Reader*, 437. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. Edward W. Said, “Timeliness and Lateness,” *On Late Style: Music and Literature Against the Grain* (New York: Vintage Books, Random House, 2006):7. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. Edward W. Said, “Glimpses of Late Style,” *On Late Style*, 148. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. Edward W. Said, “The Public Role of Writers and Intellectuals,” *Humanism and Democratic Criticism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004):141. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. *Ibid*., 143. Said adds, unsurprisingly, that an exemplar of such a courage is Adorno and refers to his work on modern music. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. *Ibid*., [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. See, for example, Theodor W. Adorno’s essays “Some Ideas on the Sociology of Music,” “Classicism, Romanticism, New Music,” and “The Function of Counterpoint in New Music,” all available in English translation in Adorno, *Sound Figures* (Rodney Livingstone, trans.; Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), among other more specifically philosophical works such as *Negative Dialectics*. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. Adorno, “The Function of Counterpoint in New Music,” *Sound Figures*, 128-129. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. *Ibid*., 129. Immediate unity would most likely amount to pseudopolyphony for Adorno. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. *Ibid*., 129, 133, 134. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. *Ibid*., 133. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. *Ibid*., 144. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. Adorno muses about the ideal of autonomy that “adheres to nothing that is alien to its own impulse, its own coherence, and that has been merely imposed upon it. It desires to become objective out of its own subjectivity, through the unreserved immersion in its unique self, without external supports and borrowings,” *ibid*., 134. I suspect Said would question such a premise, but I have to refrain from further elaboration here due to the constraints of space and limit myself by simply flagging this rather ironic and non-contrapuntal conception of human subjectivity. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. Adorno insists that “if one [voice] is the mere shadow of the other, or even just too similar, the counterpoint in which each voice claims to be independent becomes a fraud. It loses the oppositional power on which the integration of the contrapuntal structure depends,” *ibid*, 138. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. *Ibid*., 139. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. *Ibid*., 139-140. I find it important to note that Adorno’s vigilance against enthusiasm for synthesis in art is founded in his emphasis on holding the aesthetic and the social in mutually interactive, yet mutually non-reductive, tension. Thus, “the idea of synthesis has its repugnant side, namely the hope that unity and peace can be achieved in art, even though they missed their moment in reality. Music that aims at reconciliation is at its most sensitive when confronted by the illusion of reconciliation,” see “Classicism, Romanticism, New Music,” *Sound Figures*, 122. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. *Ibid*., 140. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. Adorno, “Classicism, Romanticism, New Music,” *Sound Figures,* 122. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. Slavoj Žižek, *Tarrying with the Negative: Kant, Hegel, and the Critique of Ideology* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993):50-51. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. See Adorno, “The Function of Counterpoint in New Music,” *Sound Figures*, 144, where he states that “absolute individuality is a delusion, just as much as absolute universality.” [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. Adorno, “Some Ideas on the Sociology of Music,” *Sound Figures*, 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. Adorno, “The Function of Counterpoint in New Music,” *Sound Figures*, 143. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. *Ibid*. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. I find Keith Chapin’s thesis about Adorno’s “metaphysics of counterpoint” convincing, see Chapin, “Labor and Metaphysics in Hindemith’s and Adorno’s Statements on Counterpoint,” *Apparitions: New Perspectives on Adorno and Twentieth-Century Music* (Berthold Hoeckner, ed.; New York and London: Routledge, 2006):19-40. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. Adorno, “The Function of Counterpoint in New Music,” *Sound Figures*, 142. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. *Ibid*., 143. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. Chapin, “Labor and Metaphysics,” *Apparitions*, 39. Chapin’s critique of Adorno here interestingly focuses on his generalization and overextension, almost emptying out, of the notion of counterpoint to make it into a metaphysically oriented concept which tries to image a musical and philosophical interrelationship wherein individual moments retain their high degree of potentiality for autonomy within an integrated whole. This is not convincing, according to Chapin, since for Adorno’s modern (Schoenbergian) counterpoint the harmonic conventions or simultaneities are dismissed, but then there is no longer any regulatory norm for the relationship among the musical lines and this may seriously deprive the concept of any specific analytical purchase, see p.38. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. *Ibid.*, 142. [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. *Ibid.*, 144. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectic* (E.B.Ashton, trans.; New York: The Seabury Press, Continuum Book: 1973): 17-18. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. Said, “Bach for the Masses,” *Music at the Limits*, 255. [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. Edmund Rubra, *Counterpoint. A Survey* (London: Hutchinson University Library, 1960):14. [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. Rowan Williams, *Where God Happens: Discovering Christ in One Another* (Boston: New Seeds, 2005): 63. [↑](#footnote-ref-83)