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DOI

[10.1080/01411896.2020.1787793](https://doi.org/10.1080/01411896.2020.1787793)

Publication date

2022

Document Version

Final published version

Published in

Journal of Musicological Research

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Citation for published version (APA):

Capitain, W. (2022). From Counterpoint to Heterophony and Back Again: Reading Edward Said's Drafts for *Culture and Imperialism*. *Journal of Musicological Research*, 41(1), 1-22. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01411896.2020.1787793>

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From Counterpoint to Heterophony and Back Again: Reading Edward Said's Drafts for *Culture and Imperialism*

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ABSTRACT

It is common in the academic reception of the legacy of Edward Said to limit the analysis of his theorization of a contrapuntal perspective on colonial history to the dominant theme of Said's published writings. Nevertheless, alternative narratives emerge in unpublished texts preserved in the Edward W. Said Papers at Columbia University. Archival research reveals that Said actually proposes a heterophonic, instead of contrapuntal, perspective in early drafts for *Culture and Imperialism* (1993). Said's legacy itself requires a heterophonic reading to analyze the overlap and interactions of these variations in his writings.

Introduction

Few twentieth-century public intellectuals have left behind a legacy as influential and controversial as Edward Said's. His work traverses different academic disciplines, including literary studies, philosophy, history, and musicology, and has intervened in different domains, from scholarly discourses to political, journalistic, and artistic debates. With respect to music, his work has had a profound (although disputed) impact on historical musicology as well as ethnomusicology;¹ he published extensively about the European classical canon;² and he has inspired several artistic and educational projects, most notably the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra (from 1999) and the Barenboim-Said Akademie in Berlin (from 2016). Moreover, not only does his work affect the possible ways of thinking about music and stereotypical representation, power relations, and intercultural collaborations, but Said also proposed that

¹See, for instance, Ralph Locke, "Exoticism and Orientalism in Music: Problems for the Worldly Critic," in *Edward Said and the Work of the Critic: Speaking Truth to Power*, ed. Paul Bové (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000), 257–81; Matthew Head, "Musicology on Safari: Orientalism and the Spectre of Postcolonial Theory," *Music Analysis* 22, no. 1–2 (2003): 211–30; Derek Scott, "Edward Said and the Interplay of Music, History and Ideology," in *Edward Said and the Literary, Social, and Political World*, ed. Ranjan Ghosh (London: Routledge, 2009), 104–23; Jonathan D. Bellman, "Musical Voyages and Their Baggage: Orientalism in Music and Critical Musicology," *The Musical Quarterly* 94, no. 3 (2011): 417–38; Brigid Cohen et al., "Round Table: Edward Said and Musicology Today," *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 141, no. 1 (2016): 203–32.

²Edward Said, *Musical Elaborations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991); Edward Said, *On Late Style: Music and Literature Against the Grain* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2006); Edward Said, *Music at the Limits* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008); Daniel Barenboim and Edward Said, *Parallels and Paradoxes: Explorations in Music and Society* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2002).

music can become “a mode for thinking through or thinking with the integral variety of human cultural practices.”³ In short, his legacy foregrounds how the interdisciplinary study of music can expose its relation to colonialism, but also how musical knowledge may inform the analysis of culture, history, and politics.

Said’s musical, theoretical, and political interests intersect, among other places, in his notion of counterpoint. In addition to his work on orientalism and Palestine,⁴ his use of this concept probably forms the most influential aspect of his legacy and has stimulated debates in fields ranging from musicology to international relations, the philosophy of education, theology, and literary studies.⁵ Within Said’s oeuvre, counterpoint figures most prominently as a theoretical concept in *Culture and Imperialism*, in which he rereads the cultural archive “not univocally but *contrapuntally*, with a simultaneous awareness both of the metropolitan history that is narrated and of those other histories against which (and together with which) the dominating discourse acts.”⁶ By analyzing history from a contrapuntal perspective, “alternative or new narratives emerge”⁷ that complement and possibly counter conventional monophonic and Eurocentric narratives. With this appropriation of a musical term within postcolonial theory, counterpoint constitutes what Mieke Bal calls a traveling concept in interdisciplinary debates.⁸ According to Bal, interdisciplinarity in the humanities “must seek

³Said, *Musical Elaborations*, 105.

⁴See in particular Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978); Edward Said, *The Question of Palestine* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980); Edward Said, *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981).

⁵Many scholars have reflected on and appropriated Said’s notion of counterpoint. A few representative examples may suffice. From musicology: Katherine Fry, “Elaboration, Counterpoint, Transgression: Music and the Role of the Aesthetic in the Criticism of Edward W. Said,” *Paragraph* 31, no. 3 (2008): 265–80; Rokus de Groot, “Edward Said and Polyphony,” in *Edward Said: A Legacy of Emancipation and Representation*, ed. Adel Iskandar and Hakem Rustom (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 204–26. From international relations: Geeta Chowdhry, “Edward Said and Contrapuntal Reading: Implications for Critical Interventions in International Relations,” *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 36, no. 1 (2007): 101–16; Pinar Bilgin, “Contrapuntal Reading as a Method, an Ethos, and a Metaphor for Global IR,” *International Studies Review* 18, no. 1 (2016): 134–46. From the philosophy of education: Juliet Hess, “Balancing the Counterpoint: Exploring Contexts and Relations,” *Action, Criticism, and Theory for Music Education* 15, no. 2 (2016): 46–72; Jennifer Logue, “Deconstructing Privilege: A Contrapuntal Approach,” *Philosophy of Education* (2005): 371–79. From theology: Ebrahim Moosa, “Contrapuntal Readings in Muslim Thought: Translations and Transitions,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 74, no. 1 (2006): 107–18; Kristine Suna-Koro, *In Counterpoint: Diaspora, Postcoloniality, and Sacramental Theology* (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick, 2017). And from literary studies: David Bartine and Eileen Maguire, “Contrapuntal Critical Readings of Jane Austen’s ‘Mansfield Park’: Resolving Edward Said’s Paradox,” *Interdisciplinary Literary Studies* 11, no. 1 (2009): 32–56; Cameron Bushnell, “Beyond Contrapuntalism: A Politics of Alterity in World Literature,” in Cameron Bushnell, *Postcolonial Readings of Music in World Literature: Turning Empire on Its Ear* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 1–25; Ben Etherington, “Said, Grainger and the Ethics of Polyphony,” in *Edward Said: The Legacy of a Public Intellectual*, ed. Ned Curthoys and Debjani Ganguly (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2007), 221–38; Alexander Honold, “The Art of Counterpoint: Music as Site and Tool in Postcolonial Readings,” in *Edward Said’s Translocations: Essays in Secular Criticism*, ed. Tobias Döring and Mark Stein (New York: Routledge, 2012), 187–204; Kathryn Lachman, “The Allure of Counterpoint: History and Reconciliation in the Writing of Edward Said and Assia Djebar,” *Research in African Literatures* 41, no. 4 (2010): 162–86.

⁶Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1993), 59, emphasis in original.

⁷Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 59.

⁸Mieke Bal, *Travelling Concepts in the Humanities* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002).

its heuristic and methodological basis in *concepts* rather than *methods*,” because concepts are “dynamic in themselves” and thereby can form “sites of debate, awareness of difference, and tentative exchange” in interdisciplinary encounters.⁹

In this article I analyze counterpoint’s journey through Said’s work as a site of debate among musical, historical, and political domains. I should note that, following Bal, I am not concerned with the “proper” definition or usage of theoretical concepts,¹⁰ but instead consider counterpoint as a dynamic concept that transforms in its travel through Said’s various engagements. Nor am I primarily interested in reconstructing Said’s understanding of the term or in his intentions when proposing a contrapuntal reading. By contrast, I argue that Said’s employment of counterpoint can best be examined from what he calls a contrapuntal perspective; that is, I read it with a simultaneous awareness of the concept’s multiple manifestations, without reducing this multiplicity to, for instance, monophonic authorial intention. To this end, instead of limiting the analysis of Said’s legacy to the dominant theme of his published writings, I consider alternative narratives as they emerge in unpublished texts. Specifically, in this article I examine drafts of Said’s publications and lectures, which are preserved in the Edward W. Said Papers at Columbia University’s Rare Book and Manuscript Library, to investigate counterpoint’s transformations in his work.¹¹ As my archival research reveals, Said not only employed multiple conceptions of counterpoint, but while writing *Culture and Imperialism* he concurrently used two different words: *heterophony* and *counterpoint*.

In the first section I offer an overview of Said’s published elaborations on counterpoint, as expressed throughout his career in various debates about music, history, and politics, and argue that a contrapuntal juxtaposition of these statements suggests that variational structures in J.S. Bach’s *Goldberg Variations* informed Said’s theoretical perspective in *Culture and Imperialism*, even if this musical specificity is not explicitly addressed in the book. In the second section I analyze the use of heterophony and counterpoint in drafts of *Culture and Imperialism* and argue that, in the context of this book, these concepts evoke early twentieth-century atonal structures instead of contrapuntal music by J.S. Bach. In the third and

⁹Mieke Bal, *Travelling Concepts in the Humanities*, 5, 22, and 13, emphasis in original. Said presents a similar argument in the essay “Traveling Theory Reconsidered,” although he concentrates on the dynamic qualities of theories in general instead of concepts in particular. See Edward Said, “Traveling Theory Reconsidered,” in *Critical Reconstructions: The Relationship of Fiction and Life*, ed. Robert M. Polhemus and Roger B. Henkle (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994), 251–88.

¹⁰Bal, *Travelling Concepts in the Humanities*, 24.

¹¹To date this archive has scarcely been researched. Three recent publications that discuss specific documents in the Edward W. Said Papers are Helen Deutsch, “Living at This Hour: Jonathan Swift, Edward Said, and the Profession of Literature,” *boundary 2* 46, no. 4 (2019): 31–62; Nicolas Vandeviver, *Edward Said and the Authority of Literary Criticism* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019); Damián Gálvez González, “Narraciones Poscoloniales. La Escritura Autobiográfica de Edward Said y Stuart Hall,” *Tabula Rasa* 33 (2020): 313–34.

concluding section I argue that Said's theorization of musical concepts itself requires a contrapuntal—or rather a heterophonic—analysis to demonstrate how multiple terms, definitions, and connotations repeat, transform, overlap, and interact in his work.

Contrapuntal elaborations

The term counterpoint first appears in Said's writings in 1969. In his earliest publication about politics and the Middle East, titled "A Palestinian Voice," Said argues that, after the creation of Israel in 1948, the Jewish "rhythm of life" supplanted a more inclusive one, "the Palestinian, which before 1948 had allowed Christian, Moslem, and Jew to live in counterpoint with each other."¹² This early statement about counterpoint seems to be completely forgotten in the reception of his writings—most notably by Said himself, when in 1993 he affirmed that he first referred to the concept in a non-musical context in 1984.¹³ In retrospect, Said's forgotten mention of counterpoint in 1969 seems merely an incidental allusion to a term that would not recur in his writings for another fifteen years, yet its political context and implications are replicated almost exactly three decades later. In the late-1990s, Said argued that, partly due to the Oslo Accords, Palestinian self-determination in the form of an independent state had become impossible. He therefore controversially proposed a one-state solution, according to which Israel/Palestine would become a secular bi-national state with equal democratic citizenship for everyone within its borders. For Said, this prospect required the acknowledgment of mutual historical relations, as he explained in an interview in 1999: "I think it's one of the consequences of 1948, at this late date, five decades after it, that we can begin to talk about Palestinian and Israeli history together. Separate histories that can be seen as intertwined and counterpointed with each other."¹⁴ Probably Said had recently reread his 1969 essay, when in 1998 he assisted Moustafa Bayoumi and Andrew Rubin in compiling a list of his writings for the *Edward Said Reader*, which includes the early article about Palestine.¹⁵

Although Said first referred to counterpoint in writing in 1969, the term recurs more frequently in his work starting in the mid-1980s. In this period, counterpoint is not directly associated with the history and political reality in Israel/Palestine,

¹²Edward Said, "A Palestinian Voice," *Columbia Forum: A Quarterly Journal of Fact and Opinion* 12, no. 4 (1969): 31.

¹³In an interview with Agha Shahid Ali, Said answers the question when he first used counterpoint by stating: "I think probably about ten years ago when I was thinking about the condition of exile and I wrote an essay called 'A Mind of Winter' [1984]." This interview was transcribed for *The Paris Review* but has not been published; see Edward Said and Agha Shahid Ali, "The Art of Criticism," 1993, Edward W. Said Papers, box 179, folder 15, page 3, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University.

¹⁴David Barsamian and Edward Said, "A One-State Solution," in *Culture and Resistance: Conversations with Edward W. Said* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2003), 22. For a similar argument, see Said in John Higgins, "'Criticism and Democracy': An Interview with Edward W. Said," *Pretexts: Literary and Cultural Studies* 10, no. 2 (2001): 158.

¹⁵Moustafa Bayoumi and Andrew Rubin, eds., *The Edward Said Reader* (New York: Vintage Books, 2000), 14–37. Correspondence about the volume is preserved in the Edward W. Said Papers; see Andrew Rubin to Edward Said, September 17, 1998. Edward W. Said Papers, box 33, folder 63. Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University.

but has become a means to comprehend the experience of exile. The term is first employed in this sense in 1984 in the article “Reflections on Exile,” where Said considers the work of a number of authors who lived in exile and how it affected their writings. Said concludes this essay on a positive note, arguing that exile “makes possible originality of vision,”¹⁶ and in a frequently cited passage he further characterizes this originality in musical terms:

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*. For an exile, habits of life, expression or activity in the new environment inevitably occur against the memory of these things in another environment. Thus both the new and the old environments are vivid, actual, occurring together contrapuntally.¹⁷

Strictly speaking, “Reflections on Exile” is not an autobiographical essay, although in an interview recorded several years later Said explains that he based his understanding of exile and counterpoint on personal experience.¹⁸ Similar to the reference to counterpoint in 1969, in 1984 Said employs the concept to comprehend the copresence of multiple memories and experiences, yet here he underlines the personal rather than the political.

The third way in which Said employs counterpoint, and the one that has drawn most scholarly attention, is as a theoretical concept to analyze multiple voices in historical documents. Said theorizes this perspective in a number of academic articles¹⁹ and especially in *Culture and Imperialism*.²⁰ As a theoretical perspective,

¹⁶Edward Said, “Reflections on Exile,” *Granta* 13 (1984): 172. In an abridged form this essay was simultaneously published as Edward Said, “The Mind of Winter: Reflections on Life in Exile,” *Harper’s Magazine*, September, 1984.

¹⁷Said, “Reflections on Exile,” 172, emphasis in original.

¹⁸Edward Said and Bonnie Marranca, “Criticism, Culture, and Performance: An Interview with Edward Said,” *Performing Arts Journal* 13, no. 1 (1991): 26.

¹⁹Edward Said, “Intellectuals in the Post-Colonial World,” *Salmagundi* 70/71 (1986): 65–81; Edward Said, “Jane Austen and Empire,” in *Raymond Williams: Critical Perspectives*, ed. Terry Eagleton (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1989), 150–64; Edward Said, “Third World Intellectuals and Metropolitan Culture,” *Raritan* 9, no. 3 (1990): 27–50.

²⁰Scholars frequently remark upon the significance of counterpoint to *Culture and Imperialism* in particular: see, for instance, Fakrul Alam, “Confronting the Canon Contrapuntally: The Example of Edward Said,” in *The English Paradigm in India: Essays in Language, Literature and Culture*, ed. Shweta Rao Garg and Deepti Gupta (Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 43–44; Jonathan Arac, “Criticism Between Opposition and Counterpoint,” in *Edward Said and the Work of the Critic: Speaking Truth to Power*, ed. Paul Bové (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000), 67; David Bartine, “The Counterpoints of Glenn Gould and Edward Said,” *Interdisciplinary Literary Studies* 21, no. 4 (2020): 425–28; Charles Forsdick, “Edward Said After Theory: The Limits of Counterpoint,” in *Post-Theory: New Directions in Criticism*, ed. Martin McQuillan et al. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1996), 193; Peter Hulme, “Imperial Counterpoint,” *Wasafiri* 9, no. 18 (1993): 57; Linda Hutcheon, “Edward Said on Music: Always Comparative, Always Contrapuntal,” *University of Toronto Quarterly* 83, no. 1 (2014): 24; John MacKenzie, “Occidentalism: Counterpoint and Counter-Polemic,” *Journal of Historical Geography* 19, no. 3 (1993): 133; Markus Schmitz, “Re-Reading Said in Arabic,” in *Edward Said’s Translocations: Essays in Secular Criticism*, ed. Tobias Döring and Mark Stein (London: Routledge, 2012), 105; Colin Symes, “The Paradox of the Canon: Edward W. Said and Musical Transgression,” *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 27, no. 3 (2006): 317; George Wilson, “Edward Said on Contrapuntal Reading,” *Philosophy and Literature* 18, no. 2 (1994): 265. In addition, Said’s employment of counterpoint in *Culture and Imperialism* has subsequently inspired a number of book titles: see David R.M. Irving, *Colonial Counterpoint: Music in Early Modern Manila* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Markus Schmitz, *Kulturkritik ohne Zentrum: Edward W. Said und die Kontrapunkte kritischer Dekolonisation* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2008); William V. Spanos, *Exiles in the City: Hannah Arendt and Edward W. Said in Counterpoint* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2012); Suna-Koro, *In Counterpoint: Diaspora, Postcoloniality, and Sacramental Theology*; May Telmissany and Stephanie Tara Schwartz, eds., *Counterpoints: Edward Said’s Legacy* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010).

counterpoint is again used to relate the past to the present and to consider how multiple narratives are intertwined, in particular in novels.²¹ Said remarks that his “attempts at a contrapuntal reading are perhaps eccentric or odd,” because the “individual work is seen in terms both of its own past and of later interpretations.”²² This perspective thus requires, as Said formulates it in an earlier publication, some loosening of the “simple sequence of temporal consecutiveness.”²³ In addition, a contrapuntal reading considers how artworks belong “equally to the history of culture and the historical experience of overseas domination,” and thereby foregrounds the geographical dimension in narratives; consequently, the “inherent mode for this counterpoint is not temporal but spatial.”²⁴ Whereas most historical accounts construct a monophonic sequence of European accomplishments, Said argues, a contrapuntal perspective redirects the focus to global interactions between artworks and political institutions in the imperial encounter. Furthermore, with a contrapuntal reading of historical documents, Said does not limit the analysis to discursive techniques of colonial control, as he does in *Orientalism*, but also considers local resistance to Western dominance.²⁵

In Said’s political, personal, and theoretical reflections on counterpoint, as briefly summarized above, the concept is hardly defined in a musical sense. In his very general and frequently quoted description of counterpoint’s musical features in *Culture and Imperialism*, he states:

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.²⁶

One consequence of this general definition is that, in the reception of Said’s work, the musical provenance of counterpoint is sometimes misinterpreted, distorted, or ignored, especially when it travels to disciplines other than musicology. The concept thereby risks becoming a fashionable label of the kinds that, as Bal signals,

²¹Several scholars had previously employed counterpoint or polyphony as a theoretical concept to analyze literature, culture, or history, most notably: Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, edited and translated by Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984); James Clifford, “On Ethnographic Authority,” *Representations* 2 (1983): 118–46; James Clifford, “Introduction: Partial Truths,” in *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, ed. James Clifford and George E. Marcus (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 1–26. Said occasionally refers to these authors, although he does not explicitly relate his contrapuntal reading to his precursors; see Edward Said, “Opponents, Audiences, Constituencies, and Community,” *Critical Inquiry* 9, no. 1 (1982): 17; Edward Said, “Representing the Colonized: Anthropology’s Interlocutors,” *Critical Inquiry* 15, no. 2 (1989): 210, 212. A number of critics have compared Said’s approach to Bakhtin’s: Timothy Brennan, “Places of Mind, Occupied Lands: Edward Said and Philology,” *The Arab World Geographer* 7, no. 1–2 (2004): 47–64; Lachman, “The Allure of Counterpoint”; Linda Hutcheon, “The Review as Bakhtinian Rejoinder: Edward W. Said as Music Reviewer,” *Bakhtiniana* 11, no. 1 (2016): 183–99.

²²Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 134.

²³Said, “Jane Austen and Empire,” 151.

²⁴Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 137 and 97.

²⁵Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, xii and 59–60.

²⁶Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 59–60.

neither explains nor specifies.²⁷ Some commentators understand Said's notion of counterpoint simply as multiple voices sounding simultaneously; for instance, "to add one rhythm, melody, or theme to another as an accompaniment."²⁸ Frequently these musical lines are assumed to harmonically complement each other, with "two (or more) lines played beautifully in harmony."²⁹ Accordingly, "the emancipation of the dissonance, as for example in Arnold Schoenberg's atonal music, is obviously not aimed for."³⁰ Other interpreters, by contrast, understand Said's contrapuntal method to convey "the Adornian idea of atonality, hence going beyond symphonic assimilation or harmony,"³¹ where the term contrapuntal "literally means counterpoint as the opposite of harmony."³² As I will argue, both of these opposing definitions of counterpoint can be extracted from Said's work.

Although in Said's writings the musical features of counterpoint often remain obscure, he does define it quite specifically in several interviews. Here, counterpoint customarily involves music composed by J.S. Bach, with whom "the *ars combinatoria* of counterpoint ... reached its apogee."³³ In an interview recorded shortly before the publication of *Culture and Imperialism*, Said points out that, while writing this book, he had also begun to publish about music (starting in 1983), "and most of my writing about music is really focused on contrapuntal work."³⁴ He continues:

[And my favorite musical works] are not what you would call developmental or sonata-form works but, rather, works that might be called variation-structure works, like the Goldberg Variations, for example, or Bach's Canonic Variations, and it's that structure that I found tremendously useful in writing *Culture and Imperialism*. This has been a long-standing predilection of mine; it's the kind of music I'm most interested in and one of the reasons why I was so compelled by Glenn Gould, which I think had a direct bearing on this book.³⁵

Said returns to Bach's *Goldberg Variations* in more detail several years later, in an interview published in the first issue of the journal *Interventions*.³⁶ In response to criticism that *Orientalism* presents a homogeneous image of orientalists, Said argues in this conversation:

The point is that [the Orientalist vision] is not homogeneous, but it is possible that ... you can devise a fantastically complicated structure, endlessly variant, out

²⁷Bal, *Travelling Concepts in the Humanities*, 33.

²⁸Singh and Greenlaw, "Postcolonial Theory in the Literature Classroom," 194.

²⁹Bilgin, "Contrapuntal Reading as a Method, an Ethos, and a Metaphor for Global IR," 143.

³⁰Schmitz, *Kulturkritik ohne Zentrum*, 283.

³¹Abdirahman Hussein, *Edward Said: Criticism and Society* (London: Verso, 2002), 264.

³²Moosa, "Contrapuntal Readings in Muslim Thought," 112.

³³Edward Said, "Presidential Address 1999: Humanism and Heroism," *PMLA* 115, no. 3 (2000): 288.

³⁴Edward Said, "An Interview with Edward W. Said," *boundary 2* 20, no. 1 (1993): 2.

³⁵Said, "An Interview with Edward W. Said," 2–3.

³⁶Edward Said, "In Conversation with Neeladri Bhattacharya, Suvir Kaul and Ania Loomba, New Delhi, 16 December 1997," *Interventions* 1, no. 1 (1998): 81–96.

of a very small number of elements. I think this is the case with Orientalism. I think there is a kind of deep structure of Orientalism, which is able to multiply and proliferate in all kinds of ways. ... I come back to a model I referred to in *Culture and Imperialism*, namely counterpoint, where you have one line, a *canto fermo*, a sort of base line [*sic*], and in the case of a composer like Bach he can devise the most complex contrapuntal structures. But that doesn't diminish the fact that the Goldberg variations are based on a very simple descending motif in the bass.³⁷

The example of the *Goldberg Variations* is elucidating, because this composition strongly relies on and plays with repetition, memory, and transformation through what Said calls contrapuntal structures. The *Goldberg Variations* (1741) consist of an instrumental aria with thirty variations, where the harmonic progression in each variation is based on the aria's motif in the bass, "essentially a descending G major scale."³⁸ In other respects, each of the variations is quite distinct, but because they are based on the same harmonic progression, they are connected through a "deep structure."³⁹ Notably, after the thirty variations have ceased, the aria is repeated, and this time the literal repetition is "verbally identical, but infinitely richer."⁴⁰ In contrast to its initial performance, upon its repetition the listener hears the aria playing off against its thirty derivations, which in memory interact with the sounding music.

By describing the structural unity of the *Goldberg Variations* as exemplary for contrapuntal techniques, Said's notion of the concept is not necessarily confined to the actual simultaneity of voices. Even though each third variation is a canon between two voices, accompanied by a differentiated third voice, within the context of Bach's oeuvre this work is not particularly renowned for its contrapuntal forms in that sense of the word. If it is specifically the simultaneity of overlapping voices that is constitutive of counterpoint, Said may have further elaborated on Bach's *Canonic Variations*, for instance; however, he repeatedly returned to the *Goldberg Variations*.⁴¹ Moreover, with respect to counterpoint as a theoretical concept, the canonic elements in the *Goldberg Variations* are not singled out by Said

³⁷Said, "In Conversation with Neeladri Bhattacharya, Suvir Kaul and Ania Loomba," 84–85.

³⁸Edward Said, "Cosmic Ambition," *London Review of Books*, July 19, 2001, 13.

³⁹Said, "In Conversation with Neeladri Bhattacharya, Suvir Kaul and Ania Loomba," 84.

⁴⁰Edward Said, "The Music Itself: Glenn Gould's Contrapuntal Vision," *Vanity Fair*, May 1983, 98. Said quotes this phrase from Jorge Luis Borges's essay "Pierre Menard, Author of the *Quixote*" about a fictional character who rewrote parts of *Don Quixote* word by word, which resulted in a version that is infinitely richer due to the intervening passage of time. See Jorge Luis Borges, "Pierre Menard, Author of the *Quixote*," in *Labyrinths: Selected Stories & Other Writings*, ed. Donald A. Yates and James E. Irby (New York: New Directions Books, 1964), 49–56.

⁴¹See, for instance, Said, "The Music Itself," 97–98; Edward Said, "The Words and Music of a Singular Musician," *Boston Sunday Globe*, December 2, 1984, A2; Edward Said, "Remembrances of Things Played: Presence and Memory in the Pianist's Art," *Harper's Magazine*, November 1985, 70–71; Edward Said, "Glenn Gould at the Metropolitan Museum," *The Nation*, November 7, 1987, 535; Said, *Musical Elaborations*, 23–24, 31–32; Edward Said, "In the Chair," *London Review of Books*, July 17, 1997, 3; Said, "In Conversation with Neeladri Bhattacharya, Suvir Kaul and Ania Loomba," 84–85; Edward Said, "Glenn Gould, the Virtuoso as Intellectual," *Raritan: A Quarterly Review* 20, no. 1 (2000): 2; Said, "Cosmic Ambition," 13; Said, *Music at the Limits*, 195.

as its most characteristic feature, but he instead underlines its variational qualities. This suggests that, at least in Said's definition of counterpoint, actual simultaneity—regardless of whether it sounds harmonious or atonal—is not its decisive component. Instead, repetition and memory form its essential features. In the *Goldberg Variations* the past and present converge, not because multiple voices temporarily overlap, but because each variation responds to the memory of the motif in the aria. If in counterpoint, according to Said, “a melody is always in the process of being repeated by one or another voice,”⁴² such repetitions are most evidently present in a canon, but they can also develop through temporally more extended structures. When Said argues in *Culture and Imperialism* that he considers artworks both in terms of their own past and of later interpretations,⁴³ this approach to repetition and transformation indeed resembles the structure of the *Goldberg Variations*, rather than overlapping voices in a canon.

Within Said's oeuvre, the parallel between musical and historical repetition is first illustrated with the *Goldberg Variations* in a relatively early essay about Giambattista Vico's notion of recurring cycles in history, titled “On Repetition.”⁴⁴ In this essay, Said argues that “Vico's understanding and use of repetition bears resemblance to musical techniques of repetition, in particular those of the *cantus firmus* or of the chaconne, or to cite the most developed classical instance, Bach's *Goldberg Variations*,” in which “a ground motif anchors the ornament variations taking place above it.”⁴⁵ Comparable to Vico's view on human history, “there is in these musical forms a tension between the contrariety, or eccentricity of the variation, and the constancy and asserted rationality of the *cantus firmus*.”⁴⁶ The fact that this statement about the *Goldberg Variations* was first published before Said started to engage with music more regularly from the mid-1980s, but around the time that he was finishing *Orientalism* and not long before he developed a book proposal for *Culture and Imperialism*,⁴⁷ suggests that variational structures, more than the contrapuntal simultaneity of differentiated voices, inform Said's work on colonial history.

In light of these statements in various interviews and essays, Said's contrapuntal perspective in *Culture and Imperialism* can be related quite specifically to the variational structure of the *Goldberg Variations*, even if this is not acknowledged in the book itself. By conflating the temporal order between past and present through

⁴²Said, “The Music Itself,” 98.

⁴³Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 134.

⁴⁴Edward Said, “On Repetition,” in *The Literature of Fact: Selected Papers from the English Institute*, ed. Angus Fletcher (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), 135–58.

⁴⁵Said, “On Repetition,” 139–40.

⁴⁶Said, “On Repetition,” 140.

⁴⁷For an early book proposal, with the provisional title *On Imperialism and Culture*, see Edward Said to University of California Press, July 5, 1977, Edward W. Said Papers, box 47, folder 16, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University.

playing with the listeners' memory, this understanding of musical counterpoint parallels the theoretical approach in *Culture and Imperialism*, which moves beyond conventional linear histories and the implications of developmental or unilinear progression. Said thus argues that a contrapuntal reading evokes a "simultaneous awareness" of multiple historical narratives,⁴⁸ without suggesting that the different voices were necessarily present simultaneously at any specific moment. Instead, in this book counterpoint is primarily a means to comprehend the copresence of historically and geographically dispersed voices as they are consolidated in and memorized through artworks. Similarly, in Said's previous use of the concept with respect to the experience of exile, counterpoint foregrounds "a recollection of what you've left behind and what you can remember, and you play it against the current experience," as he explained in an interview.⁴⁹ In short, Said's musical as well as theoretical notion of counterpoint does not necessarily imply the simultaneous presence of voices, but rather emphasizes the interaction between the past and present in memory.

A number of musical, theoretical, and ideological issues manifest, however, when the contrapuntal perspective in *Culture and Imperialism* derives from a very specific form of musical composition, as exemplified by Bach's *Goldberg Variations*. First, the question arises why this musical specificity is not explicitly addressed in the book, if this is what informed its theoretical framework. The relation between Bach's composition and Said's theoretical approach only becomes explicit through a reading of *Culture and Imperialism* in juxtaposition with Said's statements about counterpoint in various essays and interviews, as I have argued, but it is not acknowledged in the text itself. Second, and in striking contrast to what I have suggested, at one point in *Culture and Imperialism* Said claims that a contrapuntal analysis "should be modelled not (as earlier notions of comparative literature were) on a symphony but rather on an atonal ensemble."⁵⁰ In this statement the musical associations of counterpoint take quite a leap from Bach to atonality. Arguably, as David Bartine observes, "the book presents—without sufficient discussion of distinctions between them—two versions of counterpoint, 'tonal' or 'harmonic' and 'atonal' counterpoint."⁵¹ The third issue is that counterpoint is categorically European, at least in Said's definition of the term, and may evoke historical connotations of claims to distinction and superiority that are antithetical to his work and legacy in general. Problematically, counterpoint was often associated with unilinear development from primitive monophony to advanced, sophisticated, and civilized polyphony, with implications of a balanced, disciplined, and possibly divine reason.⁵² As Karen Painter

⁴⁸Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 59.

⁴⁹Said and Marranca, "Criticism, Culture, and Performance," 26.

⁵⁰Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 386.

⁵¹David Bartine, "The Contrapuntal Humanisms of Edward Said," *Interdisciplinary Literary Studies* 17, no. 1 (2015): 72.

⁵²In an early essay about Glenn Gould's contrapuntal vision, Said observes that "the rules of counterpoint are so demanding, so exacting in their detail as to seem divinely ordained To master counterpoint is therefore in a way almost to play God." See Said, "The Music Itself," 98.

explains, in the German context of the early twentieth century, with a heightened awareness of non-Western musics, counterpoint became crucial to demarcate the boundaries of German music and to underline its hegemony.⁵³ More generally, David R.M. Irving points out that Europeans “deliberately used counterpoint as a self-conscious cultural emblem to emphasize their difference from the non-European Other.”⁵⁴ This trope strikingly reappears in Said’s memories of listening as a young child to the popular Egyptian singer Umm Kulthum. In her music, Said could not recognize “the kind of form or shape” that he had come accustomed to from playing and listening to European classical music.⁵⁵ Specifically with respect to multivocality, Said recalls that “above all, what I missed, I realize now, what I missed was counterpoint. It’s very monophonic music.”⁵⁶ Consequently, Kulthum’s music “contrasted terribly with the Western music—you know Mozart and Beethoven and Mendelssohn—that I loved and played.”⁵⁷ With respect to the historical and ideological background of such statements, Said has been accused of being “a dreadful ethnocentrist,”⁵⁸ and regarding Said’s choice of counterpoint as a theoretical perspective, Kristine Suna-Koro therefore provocatively asks: “Why, on earth, use a quintessentially European musical technique that blossomed precisely during the ‘golden era’ of colonial modernity to develop a postcolonial hermeneutic?”⁵⁹ In other words, why use counterpoint as a theoretical concept if its definition is ambiguous and its ideological connotations are problematic?

Said may have recognized some of these issues while working on *Culture and Imperialism*. Notably, at a public lecture in 1990, around the time that he was writing this book, Said remarked that he preferred *heterophony* as a theoretical concept instead of *counterpoint*. According to Said, “in Western classical music counterpoint assumes the stability and centering effect of a principal theme in a given tonality,”⁶⁰ making it unsuitable for his historical analysis. Indeed, as my archival research of the Edward W. Said Papers reveals, in drafts of *Culture and Imperialism* Said explicitly recommends *not* to use counterpoint as a postcolonial

⁵³Karen Painter, “Contested Counterpoint: ‘Jewish’ Appropriation and Polyphonic Liberation,” *Archiv Für Musikwissenschaft* 58, no. 3 (2001): 222.

⁵⁴Irving, *Colonial Counterpoint*, 3.

⁵⁵Edward Said, interview with Michael Zeeman, in *Leven en Werken* (September 28, 2003; Hilversum: VPRO, 2000). The item is available online: “Interview with Edward Said,” YouTube, last modified November 28, 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=676fb7ExZys> (from 08:45) (accessed October 29, 2019).

⁵⁶“Edward Said, interview with Michael Zeeman.”

⁵⁷*Edward Said: The Last Interview*, directed by Michael Dibb (Brooklyn: Icarus Films, 2004). The item is available online: “Edward Said: The Last Interview,” YouTube, last modified February 24, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CxW0uJBWVIY> (from 24:12), accessed October 29, 2019. I discuss Said’s statements about Kulthum in more detail in “Edward Said on Popular Music,” *Popular Music and Society* 40, no. 1 (2017): 52–55.

⁵⁸Birgit Abels, “Musik, Macht und der Mythos Mehrstimmigkeit,” *Norient: Network for Local and Global Sounds and Media Culture*, last modified March 21, 2014, <https://norient.com/stories/popular-orientalisms-3/> (accessed October 29, 2019).

⁵⁹Suna-Koro, *In Counterpoint*, 139.

⁶⁰Said quoted in Aram Veeseer, *Edward Said: The Charisma of Criticism* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 129; and in Spanos, *Exiles in the City*, 284, n.82. Veeseer and Spanos quote Said from an unpublished transcription of a conversation with David Barsamian, which followed upon a lecture at Princeton University.

hermeneutic and proposes a heterophonic perspective instead. In the next section I analyze these drafts and the transition between these two musical concepts.

Heterophonic interference

Shortly after having introduced his concept of counterpoint in “Reflections on Exile” in 1984, Said delivered a series of four lectures at the University of Kent at Canterbury in December 1985, titled the T.S. Eliot Lectures, on which *Culture and Imperialism* is modeled. The structure and contents of these lectures closely resemble the four chapters of the book, although the published version is much longer.⁶¹ In the first lecture, Said formulates an alternative to a politics of blame “by looking at the different experiences contrapuntally as making up a set of intertwined histories.”⁶² Toward the end of the lecture he again notes that, in the aim to think through the discrepant experiences of imperialism, a “comparative or, better, the contrapuntal perspective then proposes itself” to let different experiences “play off each other contrapuntally.”⁶³ This is the first time that Said presents counterpoint as a theoretical perspective, rather than as a descriptive term to comprehend how different cultures could live together in Israel/Palestine or the experience of exile. In that sense, counterpoint proves significant for Said’s methodology in these early stages of writing *Culture and Imperialism*.

Nevertheless, when rewriting and expanding the Eliot Lectures into the lengthy chapters of *Culture and Imperialism*, Said reformulates the passages where he had mentioned his contrapuntal perspective, gradually replacing it by heterophony. Above I quoted three instances where the term “contrapuntal(ly)” is used in the first lecture, each of which is revised. In the first instance, when proposing an alternative to the politics of blame, this is further specified as “looking at the different experiences contrapuntally, {or more exactly heterophonically,} as making up a set of intertwined histories.”⁶⁴ Similarly, the second phrase is rewritten to present a “comparative or, better, the contrapuntal {and heterophonic} perspective.”⁶⁵ In the third instance, counterpoint is replaced entirely, instead of being used together with heterophony, now proposing to let different experiences “play off each other ~~contrapuntally~~ {heterophonically}.”⁶⁶ In these undated drafts

⁶¹The drafts and typescripts of these lectures are preserved in the Edward W. Said Papers. See Edward Said, “Eliot Lectures,” 1985, Edward W. Said Papers, box 74, folder 19–25, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University.

⁶²Edward Said, draft of lecture “Overlapping Territories, Intertwined Histories,” 1985, Edward W. Said Papers, box 74, folder 21, page 10, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University.

⁶³Said, draft of lecture “Overlapping Territories, Intertwined Histories,” 22.

⁶⁴Edward Said, draft two of chapter one, “Overlapping Territories, Intertwined Histories,” of *Culture and Imperialism*, Edward W. Said Papers, box 41, folder 15, page 25, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University. In this and the following quotations, the italicized passages between brackets indicate Said’s handwritten additions or modifications to earlier drafts.

⁶⁵Edward Said, draft one of chapter one, “Overlapping Territories, Intertwined Histories,” of *Culture and Imperialism*, Edward W. Said Papers, box 74, folder 21, page 30, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University.

⁶⁶Said, draft one of chapter one of *Culture and Imperialism*, 31.

of chapter one, written around 1990, heterophony has become the central theoretical concept.

Heterophony is likewise preferred over counterpoint in early drafts for other chapters of *Culture and Imperialism*. Reference to a heterophonic reading occurs at several instances in handwritten drafts for chapter two, “Consolidated Vision,”⁶⁷ which is an extended version of the second Eliot Lecture. Here, Said argues that a “heterophonic reading must take account of both processes, that of imperialism & of resistance to it, and that can be done by extending our reading of texts to note what has been forcibly excluded.”⁶⁸ The concept figures prominently in the section “The Empire at Work” about Verdi’s *Aida*, which had previously been published as “The Imperial Spectacle.”⁶⁹ When rewriting this essay for *Culture and Imperialism*, Said emphasizes three times that he employs a heterophonic approach in his analysis of *Aida*, even though this concept is not mentioned in the article from 1987. On the first page of the new draft, Said explains that a heterophonic reading means that, in the historical analysis of the relation between culture and imperialism, he does not provide a consecutive sequence of events, trends, and works, but that artworks are seen in terms of their past and later interpretations.⁷⁰ A few pages later, the approach to the opera is described as a “heterophonic interpretation,”⁷¹ and toward the end of this section Said refers to “a full heterophonic appreciation.”⁷² However, the musical characteristics of heterophony are not discussed in this draft of “The Empire at Work.”

Heterophony is defined as a musical concept in an early draft of chapter one,⁷³ in which Said raises the question of how consent is gained within European culture for the distant rule of territories and how this authority is challenged by native resistance. Said argues:

The clearest way of answering these questions is to say that as we look back at the {*cultural*} archive we begin to re-read it not univocally, but heterophonically, with a simultaneous awareness both of the metropolitan history that in effect is being narrated, and with a sense of those other histories against which in the colonies the dominating discourse is acting. I use the notion of heterophony as distinguished from classical counterpoint advisedly. In Western classical music counterpoint assumes the stability and centering effect of a principal theme in a given tonality. In heterophony various themes play off each other, with no privilege being given to {*any particular*} one {;yet in heterophony there is concert and organization, albeit of

⁶⁷Edward Said, draft one of chapter two, “Consolidated Vision,” of *Culture and Imperialism*, Edward W. Said Papers, box 41, folder 16, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University.

⁶⁸Said, draft one of chapter two of *Culture and Imperialism*, 8b.

⁶⁹Said, “The Imperial Spectacle,” *Grand Street* 6, no. 2 (1987): 82–104.

⁷⁰Said, draft one of chapter two of *Culture and Imperialism*, 62.

⁷¹Said, draft one of chapter two of *Culture and Imperialism*, 67. In this instance the concept replaces a “sort of jigsaw puzzle interpretation.”

⁷²Said, draft one of chapter two of *Culture and Imperialism*, 84.

⁷³Edward Said, draft three of chapter one, “Overlapping Territories, Intertwined Histories,” of *Culture and Imperialism*, Edward W. Said Papers, box 42, folder 12, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University.

the kinds that derive from the interplay of the themes, not from some rigorous tonally centered principle outside the work}.⁷⁴

It is notable that Said explicitly recommends *not* to use counterpoint as a theoretical concept, even though the term had previously been employed in “Reflections on Exile” in 1984 and the Eliot Lectures in 1985. Perhaps Said discarded the concept because in *Culture and Imperialism* he attempts to move beyond a consecutive sequence of events that revolves around the metropolitan center, to instead present a narrative of the complex and uneven interactions between various cultures. In other words, the imperial organization results from encounter, domination, and resistance rather than from any preconceived subordination. Counterpoint’s principal theme in a given tonality—possibly evoking a composition like the *Goldberg Variations*—may imply that European history eventually determines the global developmental progression, where foreign territories merely constitute its supporting or embellishing voices. Heterophony, by contrast, is according to this definition not predetermined by a central theme and tonally centered principle outside the work, and in that sense it forms an antithesis to the hierarchical implications of counterpoint.

Despite insisting on heterophony in these early drafts of *Culture and Imperialism*—and, moreover, despite explicitly distinguishing it from counterpoint—in a later draft the definition is radically revised to instead favor the latter term. The revised clarification of the theoretical perspective reads:

The clearest way of answering these questions is to say that as we look back at the cultural archive we begin to re-read it not univocally, but heterophonically *{contrapuntally}*, with a simultaneous awareness both of the metropolitan history that in effect is being narrated, and with a sense of those other histories against *{(and together with)}* which in the colonies the dominating discourse is acting *{acts}*. I use the notion of heterophony as distinguished from classical counterpoint advisedly. In Western classical music, counterpoint *{is the}* ~~assumes the stability and centering effect of a principal theme in a given tonality. In heterophony~~ *{way in which}* various themes play off each other, with ~~no~~ *{only a provisional}* privilege being given to any particular one; yet in ~~heterophony~~ *{the resulting polyphony}* there is concert and organization, albeit interplay of the kinds that derive{s} from the themes, not from ~~some~~ *{a}* rigorous tonally centered *{melodic or formal}* principle outside the work.⁷⁵

This revised definition of counterpoint closely resembles the published formulation in *Culture and Imperialism*.⁷⁶ Heterophony no longer figures as the theoretical perspective, and the effect of a principal theme and the tonally centered implications of counterpoint are similarly obliterated. Likewise, in drafts of other

⁷⁴Said, draft three of chapter one of *Culture and Imperialism*, 88.

⁷⁵Edward Said, draft four of chapter one, “Overlapping Territories, Intertwined Histories,” of *Culture and Imperialism*. Edward W. Said Papers, box 42, folder 13, page 92-93, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University. In this draft his assistant Zaineb Istrabadi misinterpreted the placing of the word “interplay,” due to Said’s confusing scribbles, when she typed out his notes in the previous draft.

⁷⁶Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 59–60.

chapters almost each reference to heterophony is replaced by counterpoint. In the section about *Aida*, Said previously proposed a “heterophonic reading,” “heterophonic interpretation,” and “heterophonic appreciation,” as quoted above, which is modified to a “contrapuntal reading,” “contrapuntal interpretation,” and “contrapuntal appreciation,” respectively.⁷⁷ In just one isolated and seemingly somewhat random instance, heterophony still occurs in the published book, when Said suggests to read “major works of the imperial period retrospectively and heterophonically with other histories and traditions counterpointed against them.”⁷⁸ Other than that, this concept does not appear in *Culture and Imperialism* or in Said’s subsequent writings, whereas counterpoint figures prominently.

The development of the theoretical concept from counterpoint to heterophony and back again raises the question of how these terms can be understood within the context of Said’s writings. According to the definition in an early draft of *Culture and Imperialism*, heterophonic music is not hierarchically structured with respect to thematic and tonal relations, in comparison to counterpoint, but it remains unclear to which kind of music Said refers. According to *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (1980), of which Said owned a copy⁷⁹:

[Heterophony’s] meaning could range from reference to minute discrepancies in unison singing or playing (even, for instance, those produced unintentionally within the first violins of an orchestra) to the most complex of contrapuntal writing. In modern times the term is frequently used, particularly in ethnomusicology, to describe simultaneous variation, accidental or deliberate, of what is identified as the same melody.⁸⁰

From the early twentieth century, starting with Carl Stumpf,⁸¹ heterophony is conventionally associated with non-European musics, in particular multivocal traditions in Southeast Asia, and frequently implies improvisation. The concept therewith moves beyond the Eurocentric connotations of counterpoint and may in that respect seem more appealing to formulate a postcolonial hermeneutic. However, in addition to designating non-European musics, heterophony sometimes refers to the “other” within Western classical music, capturing, for instance, “the alien, unruly interaction of voices in Schoenberg’s chamber music.”⁸² As early as 1908, Guido Adler described the modern art music of his day in terms of heterophony, where multiple voices “do not care about each other at all” and consequently “hurt the classically trained ear.”⁸³ With its

⁷⁷Edward Said, draft two of chapter two, “Consolidated Vision,” of *Culture and Imperialism*, Edward W. Said Papers, box 42, folder 7, page 223, 229, and 250, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University.

⁷⁸Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 195.

⁷⁹Said’s personal library has been donated to Columbia University and can be consulted in the Edward W. Said Reading Room of Butler Library.

⁸⁰Peter Cooke, “Heterophony,” *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie, vol. 8 (London: Macmillan, 1980), 537.

⁸¹Carl Stumpf, “Tonsystem und Musik der Siamesen,” *Beiträge zur Akustik und Musikwissenschaft* 3 (1901): 131–32.

⁸²Painter, “Contested Counterpoint,” 222.

⁸³Guido Adler, “Über Heterophonie,” *Jahrbuch der Musikbibliothek Peters* 15 (1908): 17.

“rudimentary, unregulated divergence of voice,”⁸⁴ heterophony constitutes a third category, next to homophony and polyphony, which can be heard both within and outside of the European classical tradition. In the drafts of *Culture and Imperialism*, counterpoint is strictly confined to Western classical music, but it is not specified whether heterophony is located outside of this tradition or occupies a different, non-tonally-centered position within it. Said’s statement that heterophony is not structured according to a tonally-centered principle suggests that, following Adler, it may be identified with early-twentieth-century compositions that question tonality. I deem it highly plausible that in the late-1980s Said was familiar with Adler’s essay on heterophony, since his friend Donald Mitchell included an English translation of this text in his recent book about Gustav Mahler.⁸⁵ Said’s ambiguous definition of heterophony may therefore be associated with “anti-tonal” compositions, to use Adler’s characterization,⁸⁶ rather than with non-European musical traditions.

The impression that in drafts of *Culture and Imperialism* heterophony relates to twentieth-century European compositions is supported by a statement in *Musical Elaborations*, written roughly contemporaneously to *Culture and Imperialism*. In *Musical Elaborations*, Said argues that the musical eclecticism of Oliver Messiaen frees the composer from orthodoxies and allows him to “think things through together, heterophonically, variationally.”⁸⁷ Interestingly, in the lecture from 1989 on which this chapter of *Musical Elaborations* is based, this passage was initially phrased slightly differently, where Said argues that Messiaen was able “to think things through together, contrapuntally, variationally.”⁸⁸ This switch from contrapuntally to heterophonically between 1989 and 1991 suggests that, at least around this time, Said associated both terms with twentieth-century composed music, such as from Messiaen and possibly Schoenberg, rather than with non-European musical traditions or Bach.

Whereas an understanding of heterophony as anti-tonal may be related to Adler’s early definition of the term, describing counterpoint as such probably derives from Said’s reading of Theodor Adorno. In particular during 1989, Said was strongly committed to Adorno’s work on music in a number of ways: that year he taught a graduate seminar on Adorno and music at Columbia University⁸⁹; he discussed Adorno extensively in the Wellek Lectures at the University of California, Irvine; and he considered editing a collection of

⁸⁴Guido Adler, “Über Heterophonie,” 24.

⁸⁵Donald Mitchell, *Gustav Mahler: Songs and Symphonies of Life and Death* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 624–34. Said refers to this book, although not specifically to Adler’s essay, in Edward Said, “Music as Gesture,” *The Nation*, January 17, 1994, 68.

⁸⁶Adler, “Über Heterophonie,” 17.

⁸⁷Said, *Musical Elaborations*, 97.

⁸⁸Edward Said, typescript of Wellek Lecture three, “Melody, Solitude and Affirmation,” 1989, Edward W. Said Papers, box 76, folder 32, page 22, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University.

⁸⁹Edward Said, course description of “Music, Cultural Analysis and Critical Theory,” 1989, Edward W. Said Papers, box 82, folder 9, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University.

Adorno's essays on music.⁹⁰ Said may have reconsidered the relation between counterpoint and tonality due to Adorno, who in his *Philosophy of Modern Music*—discussed in detail in Said's 1989 seminar—examines Schoenberg's "Twelve-Tone Counterpoint."⁹¹ According to Adorno, "twelve-tone technique is contrapuntal in origin—for in it all simultaneous sounds are equally independent, because all are integral components of the row."⁹² Similarly, Said had previously associated counterpoint with dodecaphony in an early essay about Glenn Gould,⁹³ and in "Reflections on Exile" atonality is implied when Said explains that the experience of exile is "acting as if one were at home wherever one happens to be," and as such it is "nomadic, decentered, contrapuntal."⁹⁴ In light of these statements, it actually comes as somewhat of a surprise that Said argues in an early draft of *Culture and Imperialism* that counterpoint assumes the stability and centering effect of a principal theme in a given tonality. It is only for a brief moment in Said's work, around 1990, that heterophony replaces counterpoint as the term to designate atonal music.

A significant difference between Adorno's notion of counterpoint in relation to Schoenberg and the characterization by Adler (who does not explicitly mention Schoenberg) of heterophony is that Adorno wrote *Philosophy of Modern Music* in the 1940s, whereas Adler published "Über Heterophonie" in 1908. To the extent that Adler implicitly refers to Schoenberg, this relates to his early chamber music, in particular the first string quartet, Opus 7 (1905), as Karen Painter suggests,⁹⁵ while Adorno discusses Schoenberg's dodecaphonic compositions starting in the 1920s. If both heterophony and counterpoint are defined to encompass "anti-tonal" music, they can thus be distinguished as connoting (precursors of) free atonality and dodecaphony, respectively. At one point in *Culture and Imperialism*, Said explicitly models a contrapuntal analysis on an atonal ensemble, as quoted above, which is further specified as taking into account all sorts of "inflections, limits, constraints, intrusions, inclusions, prohibitions."⁹⁶ This description of the analytical perspective resembles dodecaphonic techniques in some respects—and arguably, it contrasts the unregulated character of heterophony—although it is impossible to deduce any definite indication of twelve-tone music from this statement, or more generally from the methodological approach in

⁹⁰Managing Director at Verso to Edward Said, July 10, 1989, Edward W. Said Papers, box 12, folder 17, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University.

⁹¹Theodor Adorno, *Philosophy of Modern Music* (New York: Seabury Press, 1973), 90–95.

⁹²Adorno, *Philosophy of Modern Music*, 90.

⁹³Said, "The Music Itself," 99.

⁹⁴Said, "Reflections on Exile," 172. In the introduction to *Culture and Imperialism*, Said again remarks that counterpoint is "nomadic"; Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, xxix. Several years later, in a conversation with Daniel Barenboim that is included in *Parallels and Paradoxes*, Said describes dodecaphony as "exiles' music," because "in the Second Viennese School, the absence of tonality is a kind of homelessness"; Barenboim and Said, *Parallels and Paradoxes*, 49.

⁹⁵Painter, "Contested Counterpoint," 222.

⁹⁶Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 386.

Culture and Imperialism. Within the context of this book, both counterpoint and heterophony imply an interaction between relatively independent and nonhierarchical voices that transform through repetition and variation, but the musical analogy remains ambiguous even when it specifically suggests atonal compositions.

As I have demonstrated in this section, the use of counterpoint as an analytical concept in *Culture and Imperialism* carries strong connotations of atonality, especially when statements in the book are read in juxtaposition with early drafts and Said's contemporary publications; however, in the previous section I have argued that, based on interviews from the 1990s, Said's definition of counterpoint seems to derive specifically from Bach's *Goldberg Variations*. Consequently, as has previously been noted,⁹⁷ Said's writings present at least two versions of counterpoint, tonal and atonal—and each can be further subdivided. Moreover, my analysis of drafts of *Culture and Imperialism* reveals that in fact two different musical concepts informed Said's theoretical framework. In the next section I suggest that, rather than attempting to reduce these terms and definitions to a singular understanding of musical concepts in Said's work, it is more productive to acknowledge and appreciate this variational multiplicity. In other words, I propose to read Said's texts heterophonically.

Reading heterophonically

Counterpoint seems an appealing concept to formulate a theoretical perspective within postcolonial studies, particularly due to its implications of multiplicity, repetition, transformation, overlap, and memory. In Said's writings, counterpoint synthesizes the musical, theoretical, and political themes in his career and is generally considered as crucial to an understanding of his work and legacy. Moreover, his theoretical utilization of the concept demonstrates how it can form a site of debate in interdisciplinary encounters, and specifically how, in Said's words, music can become "a mode for thinking through or thinking with the integral variety of human cultural practices."⁹⁸ Especially in *Culture and Imperialism*, the concept carries several connotations that are productive in formulating a historical perspective to analyze the relation between the arts and empires. One connotation is the element of overlapping and closely related voices as they interact in imperial encounter. Rather than studying these voices monophonically as a chronological sequence of European accomplishments, Said redirects the attention to their mutual interference, dissonance, and domination. A second connotation derives from the Latin origin of counterpoint, *punctus contra punctum*

⁹⁷Bartine, "The Contrapuntal Humanisms of Edward Said," 72.

⁹⁸Said, *Musical Elaborations*, 105.

(note *against* note), which recurs in the book by devoting attention to resistance to imperial structures. Third, in Said's definition, counterpoint conflates the past and present through playing with repetition, transformation, and memory; in *Culture and Imperialism*, artworks are thus seen in terms both of their own past and of later interpretations. In short, Said's emphasis on overlap, opposition, and repetition in *Culture and Imperialism* can be related directly to his notion of counterpoint—defined either in terms of Bach's *Goldberg Variations* or of Schoenberg's dodecaphony—and consequently, within the context of this book, counterpoint is arguably more suitable as a theoretical concept, in comparison to heterophony.

Regardless of whether counterpoint is associated with Bach or Schoenberg, the technique is grounded in an ideal of compositional unity. Both European classical music (especially the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Austro-Germanic compositional practices) and the academic discourse usually desire a structural unity by which each part can be related to the whole. But while writing *Culture and Imperialism*, Said attempted to withstand the suggestion of a preconceived homogeneity in the study of imperial history. He suggests in several interviews that the attempt to move beyond a homogeneous notion of imperial relations can be interpreted as a direct response to criticism of *Orientalism*, according to which he argues that the orientalist discourse is "homogeneous and has a unitary essence."⁹⁹ He took "great exception" to this criticism, and, in response, "thought it was important to stress the changing, and the constantly modified, structure of this material both in [*Culture and Imperialism*] and retrospectively in *Orientalism*."¹⁰⁰ To this end music became important when he tried to model the later book, not on "a powerful scholarly form," but on an artform of "a kind of exfoliating structure of variation."¹⁰¹ Whereas *Orientalism* is chiefly structured historically, he argues, *Culture and Imperialism* is organized by recurring and varying motifs, instead of "just moving forward to make a simple, chronological argument."¹⁰² The question is whether either counterpoint or heterophony is suitable as a theoretical concept to represent such variational heterogeneity.

Eventually *Culture and Imperialism* presents a relatively homogeneous account of imperial relations, similar to *Orientalism*, despite broadening the geographical scope and granting attention to resistance in the later book. As Said explains in the introduction, he omits an analysis of the Austro-Hungarian, Russian, Ottoman, Spanish, and Portuguese empires, and concentrates instead on the British, French, and American, not because the others are any less imperialist, but because "the British, French, and

⁹⁹Neeladri Bhattacharya in Said, "In Conversation with Neeladri Bhattacharya, Suvir Kaul and Ania Loomba," 84.

¹⁰⁰Said, "An Interview with Edward W. Said," 2.

¹⁰¹Said, "An Interview with Edward W. Said," 3.

¹⁰²Edward Said and Agha Shahid Ali, "The Art of Criticism," 1993, Edward W. Said Papers, box 179, folder 15, page 13, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University.

American imperial experience ... has a unique coherence and a special cultural centrality.”¹⁰³ He specifies that “the idea of overseas rule ... has a privileged status in these three cultures,” and as such “[t]here is something systematic about imperial culture therefore that is not as evident in any other empire as it is in Britain’s or France’s and, in a different way, in the United States.”¹⁰⁴ By suggesting the presence of this coherent and systematic “deep structure”¹⁰⁵ of the imperial culture in these three empires, the perspective indeed seems contrapuntal rather than heterophonic.

In addition to approaching culture and history from a contrapuntal perspective, Said also considered his own life and work in these terms. In the autobiographical essay “Between Worlds,” Said explains that he became politically involved as a consequence of the Arab-Israeli war in 1967, which prompted him “to think and write contrapuntally, using the disparate halves of my experience, as an Arab and as an American, to work with and also against each other.”¹⁰⁶ I propose to comprehend Said’s work and legacy precisely as such—that is, to recognize the overlap, interactions, and conflicts between his multiple voices. However, as I have argued with respect to the travels of musical concepts in his work, it is impossible to establish a structural unity of definitions, associations, and theoretical appropriations. Said discussed counterpoint in different contexts throughout his career, where the term suggests either simultaneous voices in a canon, variational structures in the *Goldberg Variations*, or early-twentieth-century atonal music, although the musical features frequently remain unspecified; besides, as discussed in the previous section, drafts of *Culture and Imperialism* reveal that in fact two different musical concepts informed its theoretical framework. These transformations and parallel notions of concepts are irreducible to a univocal understanding of their definitions and functions within Said’s work. Instead, several musical, theoretical, political, and historical themes repeat, transform, overlap, and interact, without a central theme in a given tonality or any other principle that guarantees a structural cohesion. I therefore believe that, even though Said recommends a contrapuntal reading of himself, his writings actually require a heterophonic reading that does not presuppose a unity.

A heterophonic reading is comparable to Said’s contrapuntal approach in that it concentrates on the repetitions and transformations of themes between various voices; however, from a heterophonic perspective, the resulting cohesion between voices is not necessarily guaranteed according to detailed compositional prescriptions. Heterophony is, in Adler’s account,¹⁰⁷ multipart music without rules, where the cohesion between voices is frequently left to chance—a

¹⁰³Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, xxv.

¹⁰⁴Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, xxv–xxvi.

¹⁰⁵Said, “In Conversation with Neeladri Bhattacharya, Suvir Kaul and Ania Loomba,” 84.

¹⁰⁶Edward Said, “Between Worlds,” *London Review of Books*, May 7, 1998, 6.

¹⁰⁷Adler, “Über Heterophonie,” 21.

description that resembles Said's, when in drafts of *Culture and Imperialism* he argues that the organization in heterophony derives "from the interplay of the themes, not from some rigorous tonally centered principle outside the work."¹⁰⁸ A significant difference between the definitions by Adler and Said is that, whereas Said contends that in heterophony there is not one central theme, Adler argues that there is a main tune (*Hauptweise*), which the voices "wind around, resulting in neighboring and passing tones that may sound either in consonance or dissonance with the main tune."¹⁰⁹ Similar to Adler, the *New Grove* describes heterophony in terms of simultaneous variation of the same melody, as quoted in the previous section, and Said's notion of heterophonic music thus seems somewhat at odds with the standard definition. Perhaps, if Said had considered heterophony as music that is structured by a main tune that is "able to multiply and proliferate in all kinds of ways"¹¹⁰—as he eventually characterized counterpoint instead of heterophony—it may have been productive as a theoretical concept in *Culture and Imperialism* after all. In that sense, a heterophonic perspective could have consolidated two arguments in the book, about heterogeneous variation and about recognizable patterns, while underlining that the coherence in imperial relations does not develop from a preconceived structural unity; instead, it develops through the recurring theme of the crucial function of knowledge formation (in *Orientalism*) and the arts (in *Culture and Imperialism*) with regard to foreign domination.

I certainly do not mean to suggest that, following Adler, heterophonic music does not rely on any rules. Heterophony obviously adheres to musical conventions as established within particular traditions, although it could involve improvisation, and the impression of its unregulated character probably says more about the (possibly colonial) ear of the beholder than about the music itself. Yet, even if its structuring principles are taken into account, heterophony is not reducible to a compositional homogeneity that can easily be captured in words—and that is precisely what makes it pertinent to scholarly writing. The main challenge of writing in the humanities is not to determine coherent structures; it is to adequately represent cultural and historical heterogeneity in the linear and static medium of text. When considering Said's legacy, for instance, it would be reductive to presume a sustained coherence throughout his writings, or even within individual publications. The travels and transformations of musical concepts in his work, and indeed within drafts of *Culture and Imperialism*, are paradigmatic in this respect.

¹⁰⁸Edward Said, draft three of chapter one, "Overlapping Territories, Intertwined Histories," of *Culture and Imperialism*, Edward W. Said Papers, box 42, folder 12, page 88, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University.

¹⁰⁹Adler, "Über Heterophonie," 18.

¹¹⁰Said, "In Conversation with Neeladri Bhattacharya, Suvir Kaul and Ania Loomba," 84.

Throughout Said's elaborations on counterpoint, the common theme is that multiple voices interact; they are irreducible to one another, but cannot be separated either as they resonate with each other in the historical, political, biographical, or musical experience. This theme proliferates in Said's work in all kinds of ways, sometimes with rather unexpected and possibly improvisatory transformations. There is no preconceived tonal or dodecaphonic structure that determines the relations between these variations, nor can I discern a coherent developmental progression. To paraphrase Adler, the repetitions and transformations of this theme may hurt the classically trained ear; arguably, in Said's statements about counterpoint, "often tonally directly opposing tone rows are welded together, which could virtually be designated with the expression 'anti-tonal.'"¹¹¹ Despite ample analyses of Said's theorizations of counterpoint,¹¹² this anti-tonal and heterophonic development of musical concepts in his work has not been discussed in previous studies about his legacy, since it only becomes apparent through a close reading of unpublished drafts in juxtaposition with publications, lectures, and interviews. In other words, to recognize the heterophonic interplays in Said's work, it is essential to reconceive his legacy by moving beyond the structuring principle of published writings and to consider different textual forms as overlapping and potentially dissonant voices that are irreducible to a structural cohesion, developmental progression, or harmonic resolution.

Acknowledgments

I thank Rebekah Ahrendt, Rokus de Groot, Julia Kursell, Markus Schmitz, Floris Schuiling, Barbara Titus, and the two anonymous reviewers of this journal for their kind and helpful feedback on earlier drafts of this article. My archival research of the Edward W. Said Papers in New York was enabled by a Fulbright Scholarship. I am also grateful to Columbia University's Music Department, and in particular to Benjamin Steege, for hosting me to conduct this research.

¹¹¹Adler, "Über Heterophonie," 17.

¹¹²See note 5 and 20 above.