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Contrapuntality and the Veil in Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West*

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Abstract

In *Culture and Imperialism,* Edward Said calls upon postcolonial readers and writers to attempt 'contrapuntality' by reimagining and rendering the imperialist text and the world. How does this call for action extend to characters in contemporary postcolonial literature—especially as the imperial gaze continues to impose itself on the real world? This article aims to study this suggestion by analysing how Muslim women as characters negotiate their relationship with what often 'defines' them according to the Saidian framework of contrapuntality. Through the character of Nadia in *Exit West* by Mohsin Hamid, this article argues that her alternate mode of experience and expression that she undertakes in relation to the veil—a defining signifier in the imperial 'structure of attitude and reference'—applies 'contrapuntality' as a means of resistance against such structure. As contrapuntality stretches its hand to fictional characters, it contributes to the renewal of the Saidian rejection of homogenising assumptions and stereotypes conveyed in Orientalist and Islamophobic discourses to this day.

Keywords: contrapuntality, postcolonial literature, female subjectivity, the veil, Islamophobia, Middle East

And no…/ the statue of liberty/ doesn't have to wear a veil … I still yearn to write poems/ I still/ love/ love/ love/ beyond your hate.

–recited by Sima Shakhsari

Introduction: A suspicious body

In 'Suspicious Bodies: Madame Bomba Performs against Death in Lebanon,' Rima Najdi discusses the performance of Madame Bomba—a character created by Raya Kazoun and enacted by Maria Kassab in 2014. Madame Bomba walks through Beirut for six hours, dressed in a hijab with face covering, sunglasses, a shirt, and pants—all in black—and a 'big, fake, red TNT vest' as an attempt 'to map the quotidian urban environment, to hear other people's reactions and responses to suicide bombing.'[1] Madame Bomba's diary entries reflect on the responses she encountered: 'Why are you telling me to wear an abaya? Is that how suicide bombers dress?'[2] This question reveals the unsettling reality that her black attire and fake bomb vest were not sufficiently terrifying to some observers. It was the absence of an abaya or veil that prevented her from fully embodying the threat perceived by others.

Madame Bomba's experiment and experience underscores the pervasive nature of Islamophobia, a form of discrimination that extends beyond religious identity to target anyone who fits the stereotypical image of a Muslim or Arab. As headlines of anti-Arab and anti-Muslim hate crimes continue to proliferate in the United States, Europe, and around the world, the question raised by Madame Bomba remains disturbingly relevant. This is not a matter of religious difference, but rather, as Edward Said argues in *Covering Islam* a

[1] Rima Najdi, 'Suspicious Bodies: Madame Bomba Performs against Death in Lebanon,' in *Bad Girls of the Arab World*, ed. Nadia Yaqub and Rula Quawas (University of Texas Press, 2017), 49, https://doi.org/10.7560/313350-007.

[2] Najdi, 'Suspicious Bodies,' 57.

'misapplied euphemism'[3] where Islam is reduced to an 'ideological label.'[4] Hate crimes are thus fuelled by what Albert Memmi calls 'the mark of the plural'[5] or what Deepa Kumar describes in *Islamophobia and the Politics of Empire* as a 'racist logic' that views 'all Muslims and those who "look Muslim"…as "people who were collectively to blame for the actions of the few."'[6]

Madame Bomba's public performance illustrates how this racist logic seamlessly transitions from the social sphere to various cultural productions. Islamophobia, as a variant of Orientalism, relies heavily on associating specific signifiers—such as names, dark skin, forms of dress (e.g., a headscarf or beard) and national origin—with an imagined '"Arab/Middle Eastern/Muslim" enemy.'[7] Consequently, it is not surprising that post-9/11 Hollywood villains are often bearded, the victimised female figure within that 'imagined geography' is veiled, and the protagonist is neither. Unfortunately, these 'caricature[s]'[8] of Arabs and Muslims as the cultural Other are not confined to contemporary media but are deeply embedded in canonical literature, as Said meticulously documented throughout his career.

While the veil has become a symbol of suspicion and danger especially in today's mainstream discourse, it is also a signifier of a multiplicity of meanings for Muslim women and those around them. To illuminate this multiplicity against the dark backdrop of persistent racist rhetoric, contrapuntality must be reintroduced—not just as a reading strategy, but as a 'theory of trouble.' In this article, I aim to demonstrate this by analysing how the female protagonist in Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West* negotiates her relationship with the veil as a 'contrapuntal' means of resistance against what Said terms the 'structure of attitude and reference.'[9]

Contrapuntality as a 'technique of trouble'

In *Culture and Imperialism*, Said expands on contrapuntal reading as a method that highlights the paradoxical relationship between the non-European and the European within imperial discourse. This method uncovers how the perceived inferiority of the colonised is essential to the construction of European superiority, a notion explored by thinkers like Aimé Césaire, Franz Fanon, and Memmi. Said urges readers to understand how the imperial gaze operates under a 'structure of attitude and reference,'[10] relying on the supposed inferiority of the colonised to bolster the superiority of the European self.

Said points out the consequences of such 'structure' as references to the other often persist organically from 'earlier narratives that are normally not considered to have much to

[3] Edward W. Said, *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World* (Pantheon Books, 1981), 108.

[4] Said, *Covering Islam*, x.

[5] Albert Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized* (Beacon Press, 1991), 85.

[6] Deepa Kumar, *Islamophobia and the Politics of Empire: 20 Years After 9/11* (Verso, 2021) 2.

[7] Kumar, *Islamophobia and the Politics of Empire*, 6.

[8] Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (Vintage Books, 1993), 22.

[9] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 62.

[10] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 62.

do with empire and the later ones explicitly *about* it [emphasis in original].'[11] These narratives, submerged in England and Europe's imperial power reveal 'the overseas dimension' in which the ordinariness and convenience of the European quotidian heavily depends on the success of colonial conquest and imperial capitalistic ambitions in the colonies.[12]

Contrapuntal reading, therefore, is not merely recognising marginalised voices in colonial texts but also about making a concerted effort to 'draw out, extend, give emphasis and voice to what is silent or marginally present or ideologically represented'[13] in these works. This approach expands contrapuntality into a strategy that challenges ongoing discriminatory discourses, such as Islamophobia, in contemporary contexts. As such, contrapuntality can be seen as 'a technique of trouble'—a term originally used by R. P. Blackmur to criticize modernism—a theory that confronts without compromise, putting itself in the place of the author while critically revising what has been wrongfully taken for granted.[14]

Rather than fostering a mood of suspicion targeted towards the 'other,' contrapuntality seeks to confront. In his intellectual biography of Said, *Places of Mind*, Timothy Brennan describes Said's 'constant desire … to locate an original, completely indigenous, third-world theory' against the violent imperial environment of the literature he dissects in *Culture and Imperialism.*[15] Said's use of 'the musical image of counterpoint' serves to express this binary.[16] But unlike its musical metaphor, contrapuntality is not a theory of tolerance and harmony without confrontation. Instead, it is rather a polemical strategy that is 'rule-bound in a very vigorous way.'[17] Said contends that true artistry is sensitive to its environment, bearing witness to values it cannot diagnose, which means that politics of blame and dismissal do not align with contrapuntality, despite its resisting spirit. As Said argues in 'Identity, Authority, and Freedom,' 'what matters in the end is *how* a work is written and *how* it is read.'[18]

Contrapuntal attention to words and their meanings, with its insistence on polyphony, echoes Said's 'philological' approach—a practice that he becomes proficient in throughout his life and thought. The 'philological' is thus the 'detailed, patient scrutiny of and a lifelong attentiveness to the words and rhetorics by which language is used by human beings who exist in history.' This approach matures as 'a close reading of a literary text … [that] will gradually locate the text in its time as part of a whole network of relationships whose outlines and influence play and informing role *in* the text.'[19] In 'Adagio,' Homi Bhabha is somewhat startled as he reflects on the paradoxical nature of Said's approach, concluding that 'this

[11] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 75.

[12] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 75.

[13] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 66.

[14] R. P. Blackmur, 'The Techniques of Trouble,' *Anni Mirabiles, 1921-1925: Reason in the Madness of Letters* (Folcroft Library Editions, 1974), 19.

[15] Timothy Brennan, *Places of Mind: A Life of Edward Said* (Picador, 2021), 296.

[16] Brennan, *Places of Mind*, 297.

[17] Edward W. Said, *Music at the Limits* (Columbia University Press, 2009), 5

[18] Said, quoted in Brennan, *Places of Mind*, 299.

[19] Edward W. Said, *Humanism and Democratic Criticism* (Columbia University Press, 2004), 61.

philological commitment leads to an ironic and agonistic mode of humanistic resistance.' Bhabha writes:

> It is politically progressive and temporally recursive; historically contextual because it is aesthetically contrapuntal; secular and worldly, its feet on the ground, despite its engagement with the provisionality of the present [emphasis in the original].[20]

Perhaps the most oppositional attitude of contrapuntality—and Said's 'philological' method in general—is that it refuses to exist within the binary constraints imposed by univocal readings. No single narrative is privileged over another; Said famously calls to 'take account of both processes, that of imperialism and that of resistance to it' when he provides a practical example to contrapuntal reading in *Culture and Imperialism.*[21]

Ideologically, the question of the veil presents itself both as a source of pride and a dilemma, particularly in a post-9/11 context. Contrapuntality, as a reading strategy, emphasises the 'wholeness' of alternatives, especially as they manifest in both metropolitan and colonised societies.[22] The character of Nadia in *Exit West* embodies polyphonic negotiation in contemporary fiction, navigating her relationship with the veil while moving between home and elsewhere. Nadia in *Exit West* maintains a static relationship with her veil, making it a source of comfort and a 'mobile home,' which does not only defy mainstream meanings of the veil but also extends contrapuntality as a life component rather than a reading of a text.

The static relationship between Nadia and the veil reflects its complex role as a signifier in real life against demands of unveiling. The veil exists on the boundary between external condemnation and internal celebration, proving to be far more than a monolithic object associated with '*homo islamicus.*'[23] Nadine Naber discusses in her writings how dominant US discourses condemn Muslim women for veiling, reinforcing a binary logic of 'us versus them' and 'good, or moral, Americans versus bad Muslims.'[24] Mervat F. Hatem notes that while the veil makes hijabi women easy targets of Islamophobic and anti-Arab violence, it has also become an important expression of pride for some women, as it also served to affirm their rights 'to exercise their freedom through dress.'[25] By allowing polyphonic voices and narratives to coexist without privileging one over the other, contrapuntality not only rejects the dominant discourse but also exposes its fragility. As a 'theory of trouble,' contrapuntality is not simply a liberal attempt at plurality; it is 'a plea for "worlding the texts," institutions, and practices.'[26]

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[20] Homi Bhabha, 'Adagio,' *Cultural Inquiry* 31, no. 2 (2005): 374, https://doi.org/10.1086/430966.

[21] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 66–67.

[22] Geeta Chowdhry, 'Edward Said and Contrapuntal Reading: Implications for Critical Interventions in International Relations,' *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 36, no.1 (2007): 105. https://doi.org/10.1177/03058298070360010701.

[23] Said, *Covering Islam,* 101.

[24] Nadine Naber, *Arab America: Gender, Cultural Politics, and Activism* (New York University Press, 2012), 138.

[25] Mervat F. Hatem, 'The Political and Cultural Representations of Arabs, Arab Americans, and Arab American Feminisms after September 11, 2001,' in *Arab & Arab American Feminisms: Gender, Violence, & Belonging*, ed. Rabab Abdulhadi, Evelyn Alsultany, and Nadine Naber (Syracuse University Press, 2011), 23.

[26] Chowdhry, 'Edward Said and Contrapuntal Reading,' 105.

Nadia's black robe as a mobile home

Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West* begins in an unnamed city, but the war and turmoil it depicts are distinct and familiar. The novel follows Nadia and Saeed, who meet in a classroom and awkwardly navigate a relationship in a time of distress, ultimately leaving their country through magical doors that appear across the world. These doors transport people from one point to another, offering escape without certainty of the destination. Nadia and Saeed move from their home to Mykonos, London, and eventually California, navigating both their relationship and the changing environments. They grow apart but reconnect decades later, back in the city where they first met, but now with the option of moving anywhere else still at their hands' reach.

From the novel's outset, Nadia stands out as 'always clad from the tips of her toes to the bottom of her jugular notch in a flowing black robe.'[27] Contrary to the Islamophobic logic that seeks to 'unveil' Muslim women to 'liberate' them, Nadia never abandons her black robe, even as she moves westward. She continues to wear it till the novel's last page, living as an 'old woman in her black robe.'[28] Nadia's unwavering attachment to her robe in this dynamic narrative challenges the monolithic interpretation imposed by dominant discourses, which often view the veil as a symbol of a lack of agency or blind obedience to patriarchal and religious rule. However, Nadia's robe is a statement of versatility and functionality; her unique relationship with it allows her to meet her needs on her own terms. Nadia's appearance, as I argue in this paper, does not conform to 'the manifold stereotypes that stubbornly cling to Muslim women.'[29] Instead, Nadia utilises her black robe to fit in, to be comfortable, and, ultimately, to feel at home.

In *Do Muslim Women Need Saving?* Lila Abu-Lughod asks, 'how can we distinguish dress that is freely chosen from that which is worn out of habit, social pressure, or fashion'?[30] Nadia's choice of clothing is unconventional. She tells Saeed that she does not pray, and when he asks why she wears 'her conservative and virtually all-concealing black robe,'[31] she responds bluntly, 'So men don't fuck with me.'[32] The black robe becomes a contrapuntal strategy, offering 'a vision of identity characterised by flexibility and relationality'[33] against the ideological biases imposed on Arab and Muslim women. Nadia does not use her robe to 'cover' but to 'fit in.' The robe protects her public image in a society that may not agree with her personal lifestyle. Nadia lives independently, rides a motorcycle, smokes, and does not pray—behaviours that could be deemed unconventional in her city. The black robe allows her to fit in and escape suspicion.

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[27] Mohsin Hamid, *Exit West* (Riverhead Books, 2017), 3.

[28] Hamid, *Exit West*, 230.

[29] Mona El-Ghobashy, 'Quandaries of Representation,' in *Arab & Arab American Feminisms: Gender, Violence, & Belonging*, ed. Rabab Abdulhadi, Evelyn Alsultany, and Nadine Naber (Syracuse University Press, 2011), 97.

[30] Lila Abu-Lughod, *Do Muslim Women Need Saving?* (Harvard University Press, 2013), 18, https://doi.org/10.4159/9780674726338.

[31] Hamid, *Exit West*, 16.

[32] Hamid, *Exit West*, 17.

[33] Sirène Harb, 'Arab American Women's Writing and September 11: Contrapuntality and Associative Remembering,' MELUS: Multi-Ethnic Literature of the United States 37, no. 3 (2012): 15, https://doi.org/10.1353/mel.2012.0044.

The flexibility of Nadia's contrapuntal choice of clothing transcends the gender roles typically associated with this mode of dress. When Saeed hesitates to visit Nadia's apartment, she hands him a black robe for protection, and he forgets to take it off even when they are alone inside. Nadia's use of the black robe shifts to Saeed, highlighting another contrapuntal possibility: the robe, as an item of comfort and protection, is not restricted to women in *Exit West*. It is fluid enough to be worn by men, who, through mainstream discourse, are often seen as the reason behind women's covering in the first place.

The contrapuntality of the black robe depends as it shares characteristics with the magical doors that allow the characters of *Exit West* to move freely without borders. When Nadia approaches the first door to move from her home to Mykonos, Greece, she is 'struck by its *darkness*, its *opacity*, the way it did not reveal what was on the other side, and also did not reflect what was on this side, and so felt equally like a beginning and an end … and without a word, she stepped through' [emphasis added].[34] By stepping in, Nadia rejects assumptions associated with darkness and opacity. The doors are inviting *because* they share the qualities of her robe, suggesting new possibilities through contrapuntality rather than constraints often linked with veiling under the Islamophobic gaze.

Bill Ashcroft and Pal Ahluwalia metaphorically describe the Saidian strategy of resistance as 'the ability to make the "voyage in," to write back to imperialism … the potential for humans to negate their experiences, to imagine another world, a better world in which the colonizers *and* the colonized work towards liberation' [emphasis added].[35] This 'voyage in' counters the imperialist 'oversees dimension' and lust for expedition and, in its play on words, allows 'the incorporation and the "movement of Third World writers, intellectuals, and texts into the metropolis and their successful integration there."'[36] Nadia, on the other hand, literally makes the 'voyage in' through the door and arrives in Mykonos with Saeed, keeping her black robe on. In her book, Lila Abu-Lughod mentions Hanna Papanek, an anthropologist who describes the burqa as a 'portable solution' that allowed women in 1970s Pakistan 'to move out of segregated living spaces while still observing moral requirements of separating and protecting women from unrelated men.'[37] While this aligns with Nadia's justification of the robe in her city ('so men don't fuck with her'), Abu-Lughod complicates Papanek's idea, and describes robes as 'mobile homes.'[38] The blackness of Nadia's robe, imagined as her mobile home, evokes Bedouin tents (بيوت الشعر or *buyuut ash-sha'r,'* houses of hair). Like Bedouins, who lead a nomadic life, Nadia carries her most valuable possession—her black mobile home—everywhere she goes.

Nadia's black robe remains her mobile home as she moves through the doors from one place to another. The contrapuntality in Nadia's attachment to her mobile home, despite her constant migration, is that it does not prevent her from engaging with those who do not

[34] Hamid, *Exit West*, 103–4.

[35] Bill Ashcroft and Pal Ahluwalia, *Edward Said* (Routledge, 2001), 116. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203137123.

[36] Lhoussain Simour, 'The Postcolonial in Motion: *Hijra ila ardi al-ahlam* and the Construction of Postcolonial Counterdiscourse,' *Middle East Journal of Culture and Communication* 3 (2010): 297, https://doi.org/10.1163/187398610X538669.

[37] Abu-Lughod, *Do Muslim Women Need Saving?* 36.

[38] Abu-Lughod, *Do Muslim Women Need Saving?* 36.

look like her. Her black robe does not confine her to spaces reserved for women in black robes. On the contrary, Nadia adopts a universalist and humanist approach in her migration, exploring new places 'as if they were tourists.'[39] The universality of her experience extends to London, where she lives in a mansion with people from Nigeria, Somalia, and 'a family from the borderlands between Myanmar and Thailand.'[40] As tensions rise between nativists and migrants in London, the mansion becomes populated by Nigerian migrants. The elders of the community hold meetings as 'the council' and 'the only obvious non-Nigerian who attended was Nadia.'[41]

During those meetings, Nadia learns about the diversity within the Nigerian council members, who come from different religions, places, and linguistic backgrounds. They also speak different 'Englishes,' and 'when Nadia gave voice to an idea or opinion among them, she did not need to fear that her views could not be comprehended, for her English was like theirs. One among many.'[42] In 'World Englishes: Agony and Ecstasy,' Braj B. Kachru emphasises how the term 'Englishes' stresses 'the *WE-ness* among the users of English, as opposed to *us* vs. *them* (native and non-native) [emphasis in original].'[43] Nadia later wonders why she has a 'special status' with the younger Nigerians and speculates that it might be 'because they saw her with their elders, or perhaps because of her black robe.'[44] Her black robe becomes a symbol of universalism rather than suspicion, helping her fit into societies that once seemed distant but are now part of her migrant experience.

However, what Amira Jarmakani calls the 'paradoxical framework of being simultaneously invisible and hypervisible'[45] must not be naïvely portrayed without considering the consequences of dress in direct interaction with those who subscribe to the dominant logic that contrapuntality attempts to dissolve. When Nadia moves to Marin, California, she gradually distances herself from Saeed as he marries a Muslim African American woman, and as she finds herself attracted to the cook at the food cooperative where she works. In the cooperative, Nadia's black robe becomes visible for the first time, as 'although she was a woman, and the cooperative was run and staffed predominantly by women, her black robe was thought by many to be off-putting, or self-segregating.'[46] Nadia wonders if her robe is the reason nobody offers her a room in the building, despite their availability.

Her black robe is also terrorised for the first time when 'a pale-skinned tattooed man had come in while she was working the till and had placed a pistol on the counter and said to

[39] Hamid, *Exit West*, 113.

[40] Hamid, *Exit West*, 123.

[41] Hamid, *Exit West*, 147.

[42] Hamid, *Exit West*, 148.

[43] Braj B. Kashru, 'World Englishes: Agony and Ecstasy,' *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 30, no.2 (1996): 135, https://doi.org/10.2307/3333196.

[44] Hamid, *Exit West*, 149.

[45] Amira Jarmakani, 'Arab American Feminisms: Mobilizing the Politics of Invisibility,' in *Arab & Arab American Feminisms: Gender, Violence, & Belonging*, ed. Rabab Abdulhadi, Evelyn Alsultany, and Nadine Naber (Syracuse University Press, 2011), 227.

[46] Hamid, *Exit West*, 215.

her, 'So what the fuck do you think of that?'[47] As vocal and active as Nadia is throughout the novel, she finds strength in silence during this moment, 'not challenging his gaze but not looking away either.'[48] Her choice of silence in response to such a terrorising moment aligns with her choice to wear the black robe as she moves across geographies. Although it does not appear to be fitting, it is meant as a tool for fitting in, feeling comfortable, and being at home.

Contrapuntality is a multi-faceted strategy. There is power not only in defying norms and stereotypes within dominant discriminatory discourses but also in defying what these discourses consider 'the norm' in responding to them, such as taking the veil off, moving somewhere else, or even saying something at all. In a way, Nadia's contrapuntality in managing her alterity completes the imagined world Hamid creates in his novel. Sirène Harb writes that 'the viability of [contrapuntality] as a framework mainly results from the stress it causes on sites of historical overlap and difference in order to carve a broader perspective on forms of interaction and unusual linkages.'[49] Nadia's contrapuntality in her choice of clothing does not only represent opposition to what is considered dominant in our neo-imperialist and neo-orientalist world but rather it focuses on the variety of what is considered alternative, and the linkages between each possibility.[50]

Conclusion: Contrapuntality beyond the veil

While the exploration of Nadia's relationship with her black robe in *Exit West* offers a compelling example of how contrapuntal reading can unravel the complexities of the veil as a symbol, her story is not the sole representation of this approach. Nadia's journey, marked by her steadfast attachment to her robe, serves as a microcosm of the broader contrapuntal strategy—one that defies not only the stereotypes but also the conventional responses to those stereotypes. Kamila Shamsie's *Home Fire*, as a side example, presents another alternative through the Pasha Sisters—Isma and Aneeka—who adopt the veil with flexibility, according to their needs. For them, as for Nadia, the veil transcends mere dress or symbolism; it becomes a mode of survival and belonging. Contrapuntality excels in not only imagining these diverse alternatives but also in exploring their interconnections without hierarchy, whether real or imagined, turning the veil into both a shield and a weapon against dominating narratives.

The contrapuntal process also becomes what Bhabha calls a 'democratic practice' that extends beyond the veil in which it expresses 'the feelings and aspirations of several peoples; and that the combination of subjects and structures ensures that each voice is answered.'[51] Najdi's examination of Madame Bomba's social experiment highlights this by including a 'stranger's monologue' alongside her diary entries. The monologue's harsh remarks mock Madame Bomba as an art project and despise the purpose behind it. The stranger's phrases like 'what an idiot,' 'does she know the misery we live in,' 'she needs to die,' and 'she wants to make us afraid. I am not afraid. Are you afraid?'[52] only reiterate the fragility of

[47] Hamid, *Exit West*, 216.

[48] Hamid, *Exit West*, 216.

[49] Harb, 'Arab American Women's Writing and September 11,' 17

[50] Harb, 'Arab American Women's Writing and September 11,' 17.

[51] Bhabha, 'Adagio,' 380.

[52] Najdi, 'Suspicious Bodies,' 61.

Islamophobic and misogynist thought on her positioning in the world, but also her inability to escape the borders of people's thoughts on her body. Through contrapuntality, one's choice or mode of being in the world becomes an act of defiance, or 'trouble' which must exist—like the musical counterpoint—along with other alternative voices and narratives and with dominant ones.

By examining the veil through a contrapuntal lens, we open our eyes to a myriad of perspectives, each contributing uniquely to the broader discourse. These perspectives intersect and resonate, enriching our understanding of the world and our experiences within it. Said urges his readers in *Culture and Imperialism* to remove themselves from discourses of 'fear and prejudice' that insist on 'separation and distinctiveness.' He concludes, 'it is more rewarding—and more difficult—to think concretely and sympathetically, *contrapuntally*, about others that only about "us" [emphasis added].[53]

[53] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 336.

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