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"Everything is Always Possible":
An Introduction to Contingency Dialectics

Abstract. This project is an attempt to think through the consequences of a non-Newtonian reality for a Marxist theory of aesthetics. From this, a compositional methodology, Fashion-Opera, is proposed in a cycle of four works: *WEAR, ROBE, WOAD* and *RUNE* (White 2018; 2021b; 2021c; 2022a).

The paper begins by contextualising itself against a historical misreading of Schoenberg, briefly showing the implications for this in a tradition of political opera. Following this critique, it offers an alternative contemporary context via concepts from Adorno (2006), Badiou (2016; 2017), Jameson (1991), Lukács (1971), Meillassoux (2007; 2009), Negarestani (2008), and the author's (2019; 2021a) previous work.

From this perspective, it combines aspects of the materialist and idealist traditions via the coming stage of capital as defined by what Dowling and Milburn (2003) have called "the second quantum revolution." This proposes a series of concepts: the Fiction Model, a materialist map of the individual's relationship to its world; the Contingent Dialectic, a form of maintained paradox; and the Contingent Subject, a trans-subjective agent composed of technology (i.e. texts) and individuals.

These are then explored in a manifesto and methodology. The former sketches an outline of the system as a whole while the latter offers an analysis of its detail. In doing so, it first asserts the epistemic practice that working with such concepts entails. It then refers to the second part of the cycle, *ROBE,* showing how the contingent dialectic organises pitch, rhythm, and structure in such a way as to affect the possibility of multiple absolutes and mutually exclusive perspectives.

Keywords: Aesthetics, Composition, Contingent Subject, Contingent Dialectic, Fashion-Opera, Fiction Model, Idealism, Materialism, Opera, Quantum 2.0, Quantum Computer, Marxism, Mutually Exclusive Reciprocal Containment.

1. Introduction

Fashion-Opera is a methodology built on irreconcilable paradox.[1] In this, spatial, interventionist art forms combine with their temporal, autonomous counterparts in a dialogue that reconciles the independence and hierarchical equality of each element with their integration into a logical whole. That is, fashion and opera, for instance, preserve their absoluteness, with neither submitting itself to the other to become mere costume or musical aura.[2] This idea extends throughout to govern all aspects of the artwork, including its realisation across (and beyond) the compositional process. The maintenance of such paradox is justified by the theory of a particular type of antagonism:

a **Contingent Dialectic**. In this, each pole of an opposition maintains its identity and integrity in **mutual exclusivity**, whilst simultaneously being made to **reciprocally contain** one another, and to be contained within larger structures that permit the paradoxical integrity of their constituents. Through these concepts and their application across all stages of the aesthetic process, it is hoped that works can be produced that rival and overcome given structures of perception, and allow for new forms of communal agency in a posthuman.

Contingent Subjectivity, that is, a transhuman agent composed of technology (i.e. texts) and individuals. It is to this—the group and its situation—that the works address themselves. While it is composed of alienated, individual perspectives, these are held to be ultimately social and biological fictions that can only be transcended in their combination and reassembly.

The Fiction Model refers to a materialist model of the individual's relationship to its world.

A **Totality** is defined as a situation that has the power of preserving and combining **mutually exclusive** elements within it: such as a society, or certain artworks.

Mutually Exclusive refers to the Hegelian conception of the dialectic, which sees an epistemological antagonism as an index of truth (Žižek 1989: 200). This is read through contemporary cosmology[3] and the work of Alain Badiou (2016; 2017) and Quentin Meillassoux (2007; 2009), further supplemented by a Marxist theory of time under late capitalism[4] and an interpretation of Reza Negarestani (2008). Together, these

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[1]   This has been proposed in an initial cycle of four works: *WEAR, ROBE, WOAD* and *RUNE* (White 2018; 2021b; 2021c; 2022a), which organise dance, fashion, music, poetry, drama and their participants (amongst other things) in contingent dialectics.

[2]   Alain Badiou (2005: 62–63) talks of the irreconcilability of dance to theatre or music due to their fundamental ontological differences. I argue that such mutual exclusivity (of the artforms involved) gains radical potential via the contingent dialectic.

[3]   That is, the hermeneutic concepts made possible by notions such as the superposition and the multiverse. I refer to the cultural possibilities that the ability to imagine such relationships makes possible. Ours is a world still in the grip of an outdated Newtonian metaphysics: I am interested in how such knowledge could transform music, society, even ourselves.

[4]   For more on this please see my writings on the dialectic of temporality and spatialisation: "Postmodern Hyperspace in Elliott Carter's *String Quartet No. 4*" (White 2019) and "Material Music: Reclaiming Freedom in Spatialised Time" (White 2021a). In

argue for the material truth of paradox and non-causality as the nature of the external world and, indeed, our contemporary, socially-determined subjective experience—particularly with regard to alienation and the spatialisation of time.

Finally, **Reciprocal Containment** refers both to a characteristic of the structures of experience and, therefore, of certain artworks. In this latter, I proceed from a reading of the historical trajectory of Western art music through postmodern conceptions of decentring and multiplicity. That is, the heart of what we might call the Western classical canonical trajectory is freedom of phenomenological perspective, where points within the work function simultaneously as both object and context: they simultaneously contain, and are contained, by one another. Central to this is the antagonism between development and polyphony.[5] Fashion-Opera develops this tradition by taking the radical separation of musical parameters, as well as the importance given to different moments in the work's compositional history, and applying them across the dramatic arts.

Taken together, these concepts comprise a system referred to as **Contingency Dialectics**: an attempt to think through the consequences of a non-Newtonian reality for a Marxist theory of aesthetics.[6]

2. Context

No wonder to art music's cultural irrelevance: contemporary technological, social, and scientific realities demand a reformulation of the cultural practices which emerged from their predecessors. Retaining models of praxis that are as out of date as the worlds in which they arose is at best disingenuous: we search everywhere to break the late-capitalist consensus only to affirm the ideological fictions by which it is maintained. The saying goes that "it is easier to imagine the end of the world rather than the end of capitalism" (Jameson 1998). Yet the world imagined here is long disproved, as 'ended' in any meaningful sense as the flat earth. Just as we cling to disproven models of the universe, we cling to outdated aesthetic strategies that have been repeatedly proved to fail, stuck in the perpetual newness of the recent, irrelevant past.

The contingent dialectic is proposed as a solution to the current impasse of co-dependent pluralism. Living processes have ossified into schools and languages: a marketplace from which the composer selects and then conforms to a safely established identity, no matter how 'revolutionary.' Once diverse procedures unite in this New Classicism: the schools of Neurotic Structure, of Hysterical Negativity, of Rational Compromise. We believe in the all-encompassing realism of their fiction and recite this or that. We may, respectively: systematise; mime destruction; conform. This plurality of expression is the reification of expression, for, like digital culture more generally, the eclecticism of style ensures the similitude of the result. Self-justified systematic autonomy is no more independent than Experimentalism's (repetitions of its) rituals are iconoclastic; the middle way's compromise is structurally identical to both. Far from offering any kind of insurgent strategy, these languages remain permitted by having neutralised themselves in the museum of a subject that no longer exists. The factions depend upon one another in their surface negativity: that is, without content beyond style, other tensions must sustain. This co-dependence belies their plurality. At its heart, almost all contemporary art music is a mask play upon absence, upon the inability to muster belief beyond the local as defined by its others.

I believe this situation has arisen from a fundamental misreading that can now be rectified: namely, the nature of the dialectic implicit in Schoenberg. In a world bestowed with concepts such as multiple infinities, parallel universes and superpositions, we can return to the source of the misreading and assert the truth of the Contingent Dialectic. This will allow us, instead of being caught within the marketplace as one of its dutiful actors, to transcend its limitations and assert: neither this, nor that, yet all.

Why return to Schoenberg? Because perhaps the impasse turns directly upon this tragic misreading, for it implies that the procedures which emerged from it would eventually collapse. Over a hundred years later,

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these, I develop work by Lukács (1971), Adorno (2006) and Jameson (1991) to re-read aspects of 20th-century musical history, the relationship between modernism and postmodernism, and the meaning of disjunction within the logic of alienation.

[5]   "This could briefly be traced from the epic quality of Bach (1983), where each voice contextualises its counterparts (Barenboim 2005), to the humanist insights of Mozart (1957), where themes are developed into fully-fledged characters before being re-combined as counter-contexts for one another (Tovey 1935: 195–198), to the elevation of this a level of technique in Schoenberg (1984), where each note is able to function as both foreground and background (Adorno 2006: 45). In the music of Brian Ferneyhough (1980), through the separation of parameters, the very aspects of the musical event become events—objects—themselves and, within this, function as contexts for one another's progress" (White 2021a: 190).

[6]   With regard to 'aesthetics,' I am referring specifically to the subject/object relationship in the context of art, rather than a totalising theory of art practice.

contemporary music practices can still be characterised by their interpretation of the historical and philosophical significance of the Schoenberg event. This is partially due to their being (of course) a reaction to this; but also, because of its failure to connect the meaning of Schoenberg to living culture, contemporary music believes itself to still contain a radical potential. Whether this belief is affirmed or challenged (sometimes, via a denial of aesthetic value altogether), it remains fundamental to music's self-sustaining mediocrity. Following Richard Kurth (2001), I will read Schoenberg's conception of Hegelian *Aufhebung* as suspension rather than synthesis. This suspension, where tonality is not negated but rather hangs as a latent possibility through the tension between subjective negation and the weight of history, is the modernist origin of the possibility of the Contingent Dialectic.

The early dramatic implications of this can be seen in Schoenberg's (1917) own *Die glückliche Hand*, which Luigi Nono (1961: 421, quoted by Gilbert 1979: 22) characterised as a model for his own Marxist practice:

> *Die glückliche Hand* was the start of a modern conception of theatre. In this, 'drama,' singing and mimed action alternate and develop simultaneously, not one an illustration of the other but each characterising independently various situations. The chorus has a double function: the sonorous and purely visual-colour and form are integrated into the scene in an autonomous and symbolic use.

Such division is made possible by the modernist subject of psychoanalysis, where "the divided individual represented reality" (Harvey 2005: 48), and the subsequent fragmentation of temporal experience under late capitalism into 'Lacanian schizophrenia' (Jameson 1991; Adorno 2006; White 2019). Further to this, I would add that which the work's polemical content implies: the alienation of the subject from itself, here transmuted into a separation of music and drama.

Whereas, as Adorno (2006) suggested, in the later *Moses und Aron* (Schoenberg 1984), this suspension resolves into a reified serial logic, Berg's operas represent an attempt to sustain, albeit through a systemisation, the original paradox itself. By forcing the separate strategies of inherited, given tonality and its atonal negation together, the harmonic languages of *Wozzeck* (1955) and *Lulu* (1964) hang in an uncomfortable suspension that remains more provocative than serialism's dutifully cadential tonic-liquidation. From this, Berg uses implied non-integration to create a unifying language of irreconcilable dichotomy. These tensions have been well documented: between through-written argument and post-Symbolist discrete scenic characterisation (Weller 2005: 80); "the seemingly paradoxical fusion of technical calculation and emotional spontaneity" (Jarman 1989: 21); and even alluded to in the contrasting palettes used in vocal characterisation, orchestration and stage direction (Perle 1989: 185–187). Alan Street (2005: 94–95) argues that such an attempt to ensure "a complete correlation between the representation of personal experience and the constructive mechanisms of architectural design" is a strategy of Berg's Schoenbergian musical autonomy to "ensure that the dual dimensions of structure and selfhood would achieve a coherent synthesis" (Idem: 96). By reading it as a totality rather than a process, this fundamentally misunderstands the nature of such autonomy. Rather, the Schoenbergian process of becoming, centring around the central paradox of being and nothingness via the procedure of negated and sustained tonality, extends out into the work in a language of plurality that resists any form of integration. Indeed, George Perle (1989: 185) questions whether it is "tendentious to assume that the many different compositional procedures and techniques in *Wozzeck* must be integrated as components of a single comprehensive system," surmising that the classical tradition ill-prepared analysts to contend with *Wozzeck's* design. Thus, I read Berg's procedure as the creation of a forced integration of the unresolvable.

By 'clamping' mutually exclusive compositional approaches against one another, (a procedure made possible by the non-human, machinic logic of Berg's contemporary industrial reality), great expressive potential becomes available. Each bears its counterpart's negativity as an active mechanism of expression, like a scar, a sense of permanent incompleteness, which testifies to the plight of the characters and their world. The experience of modernist community is here conceptualised: the monadic interiority of an extra-conceptual/hyper-objective (Morton 2013) urban sprawl, which finds voice in the sense of reciprocal objectivity that each subjective procedure bestows upon the other: two strangenesses in one another's homes.[7] Ultimately, this functions at a phenomenological level in an expressionist, humanist appeal for its characters, translating the moral discomforts of a cruel society into the musical language. In this, the crystallisation of suspension is

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[7]   This sense of the Uncanny can itself be read as a development of Wagner's (1986) semanticisation of sound via leitmotif in the *Ring*, particularly with regard to the tetralogy's environmental theme on the colonisation of the natural world (the unity of the Imaginary, the home, made strange by Symbolic technological systematisation).

metonymic rather than metaphysical. It is not, like *Tristan und Isolde* (1973), a musical theory of being, but rather an expressive tool with which to articulate a polemical howl of pain that should be read in the same romantic modernism as Marx (2008). Functioning only as a device in the service of such commitment,[8] it is perhaps not surprising that it represents an endpoint rather than an opening.

Marxist opera's failure to engage the autonomy of this has led to its being subsumed within the structures it was attempting to overcome. Nono's (2013) *Intollerenza 1960* engages the dialectics of alienation, but becomes instead caught in spatialised time through a disjunction that contains (rather than being contained by) the work). Dallapiccola's eclectic language unifies diversity into synthesis and so neutralises it. Henze continues this line, representing a form of musical capitulation to sense rather than the active attempt to remake its possibilities. Here, what is offered is that which can be conceptualised, when surely the point of any Marxist art is to remake the possibilities of perception itself.

The failure of such 'political' music rests upon two errors. Firstly, that resistance may constitute anything less than transcendence. Adorno (2007) has shown how there is no way out of capitalism, of the givenness of perception, by fighting it hand to hand, in places, piece by piece. It will always adapt and subsume the strategy within itself. All such posturing masks a reciprocally self-sustaining negotiation. Secondly (and especially when attempting such transcendence), it assumes the limits of the social. Contemporary music is unforgivably content with its position, even in Adornian 'autonomy,' as a "complacently tolerated ghetto" (Lachenmann 2002: 25). Meillassoux has taught how contingency declares: everything is always possible.[9] The challenge of this is nothing less than the proximity of revolution, the knowledge that—even tonight—the world could change utterly, into a beautiful, wonderful thing for all. What has not been considered is that *this is exactly what is at hand*.

The postmodern spatialisation of time (Adorno 2006; Jameson 1991; White 2019; 2021a), and the modernist alienation[10] from which it arises, foreground the possibility of contingency in our historical moment: by embedding non-relation and disjunction as fundamental constituents of the contemporary individual, and defining its relationship to itself, its others and its world. As capital splits the subject into a paradox of mutually exclusive pieces depending on the task they are instructed to perform—a mouth, a hand, an ear—a significant experiential ground arises. This has been alluded to by Reza Negarestani (2008: 195–207), who contrasts the openness that "comes from the outside" against negotiated, "economical openness." I read this polemic as claiming: the exteriority of transcendence is not achieved through false claims to liminality or compromise, but rather the submission of the individual to its nonhuman alienation. **The Contingent Subject** becomes possible in a society where the social fiction of the individual is both *absolute,* and *absolutely disproven.* This is given pressing relevancy by the historical ground of the coming stage of capital, which in its quantum technological revolution unveils **The Fiction Model** within its cultural dominant. Finally, it is justified by the ontological ground of Cantor, whose demonstration of multiple infinities forms the basis of Badiou's (2016) ontology of multiple, processive truths. Taken together, these allow for the possibility of **mutually exclusive reciprocal containment** and, in turn, **The Contingent Dialectic**. In these, we may conceive of the unimaginable: that which lies outside the givenness of ourselves. Such an endeavour is the only true heir to the meaning of Schoenberg, the composer who understood and captured the materiality of the beyond.

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[8]   By commitment and autonomy, I am referring to Adorno's (2007) use of the terms.

[9]   "I will call *contingency* the property of an indexed set of cases (not of a case belonging to an indexed set) of not itself being a case of sets of cases; and *virtuality* the property of every set of cases emerging within a becoming which is not dominated by any pre-constituted totality of possibles… If we maintain that becoming is not only capable of bringing forth cases on the basis of a pre-given universe of cases, we must then understand that it follows that such cases irrupt, properly speaking, *from nothing*, since no structure contains them as eternal potentialities before their emergence: *we thus make irruption* ex nihilo *the very concept of a temporality delivered to its pure immanence* … time creates the possible at the very moment it makes it come to pass, it brings forth the possible as it does the real, it inserts itself in the very throw of the dice, to bring forth a seventh case, in principle unforeseeable, which breaks the fixity of potentialities" (Meillassoux 2007: 71–74).

[10] "In this environment where time is transformed into abstract, exactly measurable, physical space, an environment at once the cause and effect of the scientifically and mechanically fragmented and specialised production of the object of labour, the subjects of labour must likewise be rationally fragmented" (Lukács 1971: 90).

3. Contingency Dialectics

3.1. The Fiction Model

The quantum computer heralds a dramatic change in our relationship to reality: capital's normalisation of quantum weirdness from specialist knowledge to everyday use-value will have far-reaching superstructural effects. "The first quantum revolution gave us new rules that govern physical reality. The second quantum revolution will take these rules and use them to develop new technologies" (Dowling and Milburn 2003: Introduction). To this should be added: those technologies, in turn, will create a revolution in culture and thought via the establishment of their own cultural logic (Jameson 1991). As subtle, nuanced and reciprocal as we know the base/superstructure relationship to be, the 'vulgar' Marxist insight that the modes of production are the ultimate determinants of cultural experience[11] is essential in its austere understanding. For, as technological forces incorporate extra-perceptual transcendence, it allows us to read the stage of capital defined by quantum technology as a moment of great opportunity for reimagining aesthetic form and the limits of the possible.[12] I hold that the nature of this coming epoch demands artists propose a model of how their work intervenes within the structures of experience.[13]

Although there are as yet no conclusive descriptions of our universe to satisfy a Marxist aesthetics fully, what there is agreement upon among a majority of physicists is that "there exists an external physical reality completely independent of us humans" (Tegmark 2014: 271); following Max Tegmark, I accept that this entails the demand for a distinction between the external reality described by recent scientific advances and the 'consensus reality' of evolutionarily determined human perception (Idem: 239).[14]

The resultant 'unknowability' of that external reality is the nexus of a contradiction between idealism and materialism, and it is through a reformulation of this principle that transcendence can be grounded in revolutionary possibility. K. K. Theckedath (1974) responds to quantum physics' problematisation of the concept of objective reality by arguing that, rather than returning to idealist notions of unknowability, we should apprehend quantum noumena through the dynamic, relational approach of dialectical materialism. T. Jayaraman (1975) develops this by further impressing the problems of idealism's answer to quantum science by emphasising its ideological function as bourgeois philosophy to distort the truth and prevent change. However, if we take Tegmark's (2014: 5, 299) argument that the unknowability of reality is evolutionarily determined by the practical demands of Darwinian selection, we can reformulate the concept of 'unknowability' by figuring the limits of our sensual understanding as themselves part of a knowable process of evolution. Extending the domain of knowledge (as a widespread cultural dominant) beyond the realms of the immediate and the individual[15] would be the great prize of the second quantum revolution: the death of both post-truth (an inversion of this, where the individual defines truth as its limited, selected knowledge) and the Newtonian liberal subject-monad (the lie of the individual as a rational, complete perspective). And, indeed, Theckedath and Jayaraman's insistence that physics adopt dialectical materialism carries as much truth when posited the other way around: Marxist critiques must necessarily incorporate aspects of the idealist tradition, or, by ac-

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[11] "In the social production of their existence, men inevitably enter into definite relations, which are independent of their will, namely relations of production appropriate to a given stage in the development of their material forces of production. The totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which arises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political and intellectual life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness" (Marx 1999: 2 of 3).

[12] Indeed, already, all around us, popular culture reinvigorates forms and franchises with the dramatic potential of the multiverse. See, for instance, *Loki* (2021), *Rick and Morty* (2013–2021), or *DEVS* (2020). Of course, this is only used to shore up existing structures through novel content. What if we pursued its implications at a formal level?

[13] Much has already been written about the implications for music in the context of dialectical materialism. Bruno Deschênes (1991) has mapped how modern scientific theories such as Hologram theory and relativity can change our approach to listening. Brian Cox (2015) has argued for Messiaen's (1942) compositional methods as exemplified by *Quatuor Pour La Fin Du Temps* as being a superstructural expression of a base reality, the novelty of Cox's argument being to replace Marxism's social conception of an underlying reality in a society's modes of production with the fundamental processes of the physical universe: in this case, the concept of inflation. Similarly, Judy Lochead (2001) has argued music's critical role in navigating our relationship to a non-Newtonian reality.

[14] It should be noted that this distinction is separate from, and in no way dependent upon, Tegmark's notorious theory of a 'mathematical universe'. Rather, this represents the most conservative presumption regarding the implications of contemporary cosmology.

[15] "Dialectics as *living*, many-sided knowledge (with the number of sides eternally increasing), with an infinite number of shades of every approach and approximation to reality… Human knowledge is not (or does not follow) a straight line, but a curve, which endlessly approximates a series of circles, a spiral" (Lenin 1979: 186).

centuating consensus over external reality, become quasi-idealist denials of scientific knowledge themselves. Stephen G. Brush (1980) has shown the historical irony of how culture-bound accustomedness to mechanistic materialism has brought about the same cultural resistance to the scientific theory that idealist religiosity had to Copernicus and Galileo's materialism. A Marxist theory of aesthetics is no different: a philosophy that attempts its utopian ideals through the demystification of false consciousness must incorporate this layer of illusion into its framework.

In doing so, we can construct a model of imposed fictions that arbitrate our relationship to reality.[16] Thus, Louis Althusser's (2008) concept of ideology as the reproduction of the relations of production through the imposition of false consciousness upon the subject must ultimately be dependent upon the subject's psychology, which Daniel Kahneman's (2012) work has revealed to be an evolutionarily determined machine of necessity that employs processes which privilege pre-formed bias over rational enquiry. Psychological bias is therefore inseparably linked to the imposed ideology by which the economic base reproduces superstructural beliefs in its citizens. Because it is the same evolutionary necessity that is ultimately responsible for the collapsing of external reality into consensus reality, all three levels can be understood as interrelated to the point of dependence, working together to weave an intricate series of imposed fictions that the subject experiences. That is, the Marxist conception of ideological fiction can no longer be limited to the social sphere, but extends into the flesh, the bowels, the double helix, the most basic units of identity's data: on an evolutionary, rather than historical, temporal scale.[17] Materialist analysis leads, via recent cosmological discovery, to the idealist division of the subject from the real. I call this expanded scheme of false consciousness 'the fiction model.'

The significance of this to Marxist aesthetics must be understood through value's relationship to knowledge, as Terry Eagleton (1990: 227) explains: "What the fact/value dichotomy fails to account for ... is emancipatory knowledge ... In the understanding and the transforming of reality, 'fact' and 'value' are not separable processes but aspects of the same phenomenon." According to the Hegelian and Marxist traditions (Churchich 1994: 275), we can define emancipatory knowledge as the dialectical counterpart to the fiction model's arbitration of our knowledge of reality in that it (the fiction model) is ultimately determined by evolutionary necessity. Freedom is simultaneously dependent on and opposed to necessity, as Engels (1996: Chapter 11) argues: "Freedom does not consist in any dreamt-of independence from natural laws, but in the knowledge of these laws, and in the possibility this gives of systematically making them work towards definite ends." Therefore, if we understand necessity according to modern scientific appraisals of our relationship to 'natural laws,' we must similarly reformulate the concept of freedom and emancipatory knowledge. By expanding the concept of false consciousness into the fiction model, we can understand the discrepancy between external and consensus reality itself as being a locus of forces of emancipation and subjugation, dictated by hard-won truth and conditioned falsehood. The axiom that "there are certain kinds of knowledge which we must at all costs obtain in order to be free" (Eagleton 1990: 226) thus loses its historical relativity.[18] Nietzsche's (1957) understanding that the consequences of the confines of our subjectivity must themselves be surmounted is given new meaning through a Marxist appropriation of a historically re-invigorated Kantianism, where "the subject lives not in divided and distinguished worlds but at the anoretic intersection between the two, where blindness and insight, emancipation and subjection are mutually constitutive" (Eagleton 1990: 80). This, the contradiction of the Kantian idealist-materialist split (Lenin 1908: 198), is the contingency at the heart of the second quantum revolution.

The advent of such a moment allows us to collapse both traditions into a theory of the artwork as a political event. Self-actualisation (dependent upon knowledge) occurs in the interplay between subject and object, a process that is arbitrated by evolutionary-biological and socio-ideological processes, and freed from

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[16]   This differs from similar 'transcendental materialisms' such that of Žižek (1989) or Adrian Johnston (2014) in that at its heart it is nothing more than a structuralist Marxist politics redefining itself via the stage of capital represented by the quantum computer. Though, like theirs, my thinking is informed by the work of Jacques Lacan (2006), I have made the decision to omit this perspective as a frame of reference regarding the establishment of the Fiction Model. I wish to grasp the meaning of this historical moment from as simple a reading as possible, based on nothing more than widely accepted data. The point, ultimately, is the implications for a cultural dominant. For more on my understanding of Lacanian concepts as applied to contemporary music via a Marxist re-reading, please see my writing on Finnissy (White 2018).

[17]   This is not to assert a biological determinism; Catherine Malabou (2019) has shown the reciprocal interplay between the social, psychological and biological, even genetic, allowing for us to conceive of this reciprocity as a site of intervention.

[18]   The achievement of utopia, if it were ever possible, would still not resolve the struggle that originates at the very heart of what it means to be a knowing subject.

these by creative practices that resist the passive inheritance of necessity. Art is the most important of these because it reconciles the individual to the social within a practice that is primarily concerned with the subject/object division and relationship, allowing it to engage with the fiction model at every level: from the limits of experience and an awareness of their modalities, through sensation and bias, to reason. The concept of freedom as defined against the fiction model's necessity thus becomes a measurement of revolutionary and aesthetic value,[19] and art can be seen as a dialectical process towards the imperceptible (Kant 2007: 143) that transforms the material world, ourselves included (Marx 1999: 6 of 18) "by render[ing] the indiscernible immanent," as Badiou (2016: 361) so memorably puts it: "the all powerfulness of a truth is merely that of changing what is."

3.2. The Contingent Subject: A Manifesto

Defining terms as: 'the individual' as that which is imposed by non-human structural necessity; 'the subject' as that which is freely created in an ongoing process of self-actualisation; and 'a totality' as a complete situation that can combine mutually exclusive elements (ie. other totalities) within it.

The individual experiences a totality of imposed fictions[20] and is composed of constitutive fictions.[21]

The imposed fictions are a negation of reality, and combine into a series of totalities through the establishment of a rigorous immanent structure that incorporates their contradictory elements.

Art is a fiction, which, when operating under the same mechanics, may function as a negation of those very fictions: a structurally cohesive and immanently complete artwork that contains and justifies its own contradictions can function as an aesthetic totality (beyond and outwith the social totality) in which non-conditioned encounters can take place.

Such art operates as a negation of the imposed fictions' negation of reality to reveal the positive content of that negation, thereby moving us to the limits of our phenomenal experience: the edge of the noumenal real.

Freedom (and therefore subjectivity) is possible through the restructuring of the structures that create us as unfree.

Transcendental intersubjectivity here gains new life: as the imposed fictions' filtration of external reality into constitutive fictions. Communities of observers share different elements of consensus reality and ideological interpellation, while at the same time being constructed as absolutely separate from one another by that same biological construction and historically-determined social conditioning; in the artwork, we gain the possibility of transcendental community in our constitutive fictions being engaged and overcome.

The artwork of the future is that in which the subject is re-assembled by being incorporated into a community of meaning-creation: from individual to the constituent of a machine that reveals the arbitrary nature of imposed individuality.

That is: an aesthetic totality can function as a social totality by recombining mutually exclusive wholes (human and aesthetic) within it. Structural immanence gives this meaning; this immanence can organise information too great to be apprehended by a single consciousness, and allow it to contain structural breaks and arbitrary elements as fundamental constituents of truth. Functioning in this way, the aesthetic totality can incorporate the individuals perceiving it within its structure as fundamentally necessary for its meaning production (and therefore integral to form). Combining mutually exclusive individuals outside of the social totality creates the possibility for a new form of subjectivity: an intersection of technology (ie. texts, artworks) and individuals: what has been termed 'the Contingent Subject,' a trans-subjective agent assembled from multiple semiotic and psychological structures through aesthetic procedures.

Negation of imposed fiction occurs simultaneously in the assembly of individuals into a trans-subjective agent: truth and community are, as processes, indistinguishable.[22]

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[19]   To be clear, this is absolutely not a teleological appeal to the extra-aesthetic, as used by much modern political art to justify its own absence of value. Rather, the aesthetic and the political align in the fiction model's transplantation of the aesthetic into the political sphere, and vice versa. The aesthetic is political; politics occurs at the level of the aesthetic.

[20]   By evolutionary necessity that mediates data input and psychological process and drives, the resultant social ideology which mediates drives and thought content, and the random intersections of these which determine their realisation upon the individual, and then the relationship between this and its realisations in 'the other' at all levels of social interaction, real and otherwise.

[21]   By these as their sedimentation into a monadic, material 'individual.'

[22]   This manifesto, and parts of the analysis of *ROBE*, first appeared in "Heaven's Rose: ROBE and the Philosophy of Fashion-Opera" (White 2020).

3.3. The Contingent Dialectic: A Methodology

3.3.1. Theory

Such combinations are achieved via the **Contingent Dialectic**: a paradox that organises **mutually exclusive reciprocal containment**. As argued previously, it is made possible by a historical moment defined by disjunctive alienation, and the experiential ground for nonhuman transcendence that this makes possible; where we are required to imagine multiple infinities, superpositions, even a catalogue of multiverses; and where we may deploy contingency (Meillassoux 2007; 2009), and an ontology of multiple truths and worlds[23] (Badiou 2016; 2017).

This demands a methodology which does not distinguish composition and research, yet maintains the irreconcilable autonomy of both. Here, theoretical enquiry becomes absorbed completely within composition's multi-dimensional procedure only to proceed via its logic separately and disinterestedly. Similarly, practice does not diligently elucidate the demands of theory but, instead, by riding roughshod over its claims, ends up showing them to be all the more integral.[24]

Just as it combines diverse epistemological practices, this project affirms the independence and truth of various philosophies of music regarding the site of the aesthetic event, utilising their contradictory musical strategies within various hierarchic levels. Fundamentally, as part of this, it holds that both the artwork and knowledge production can be understood as object and process. Materialist-idealist reconciliation, which Lenin (1908: 198) identified in Kant, and which Badiou (2016) attempts, is here affirmed.

Fundamentally, it holds that different approaches and methods of enquiry can stand arbitrarily alongside one another, intersecting and interrupting, and combine together into an agency beyond the scope of any of their limits. In this, it affirms their diversity and contingency rather than their synthesis.

3.3.2. Practice

Of course, contingent dialectics organise their artworks, also: in fashion-opera's combination of various art forms as absolutes; their material, structure and form; stages in their history; and the perspectives of the individuals participating (as audiences or creators).

And though this last is difficult to demonstrate (certainly in the ineffable power of a full auditorium) it can be seen in a limited way in the following example of contrasting analyses of *ROBE* by the critics Henry Fogel (2021) and Lynn René Bayley (2021). In her review, the latter claims that the work "doesn't have any harmonic variety, being largely confined to one atonal scale," while the former argues that it is "a random collection of notes that never coalesce into any kind of entity" and that no note "is the logical successor to the note that precedes it, nor the logical predecessor to the note that follows." Value judgements aside, there is an irreconcilable paradox here: both these descriptions of the music cannot be true; and both are.[25] [26]

This is achieved, crucially, not by a postmodern abdication of meaning to the whims of subjective response: the possibility for mutually exclusive plurality is built into the work itself.[27] I hold that meaning ultimately exists in neither of the critics' perspectives, but rather in the space between them: their contingent dialectic. The relation's support is not in the individuals; yet it cannot be said to be virtual, due to its material origin in the work.[28] This, then, is evidence for the materiality of relation: one composed of neither inherent confluence nor virtuality. It is a space—between—that is more efficacious than the points it demarcates, and, in originating beyond the limits of the (social) totality in which its points exist, contains an agency greater than that of the

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[23]   While this methodology proceeds from Badiou's (2016; 2017) concepts of truth, world and the event, it is in opposition to his theory of both the point and the relation. This has been further explored in a forthcoming article (White 2022b).

[24]   It thus develops Ferneyhough's (1995: 41; Fitch 2005: 205) notion of 'depth perspective' to incorporate: extra-musical abstract theoretical enquiry; post-compositional interpretation; deconstructive rehearsal; insurgent performance; and the practical intervention of press and promotion: all as fundamental stages within the compositional process, while still asserting their total discreteness from one another.

[25]   Though beyond the scope of this study, it is also worth mentioning a similar instance with regard to texture: between Christopher Ballantine's (2021: 1050) description of a "monochromatic palette"; and Claire Seymour's (2021) listing of contrasting textures to argue that "the experience of the score is anything but [schematic]." Mutually exclusive, these are nevertheless both the case—and even require one another.

[26]   While audiences are expected, even required, to disagree about the meaning of artworks, these examples represent an ontological, rather than hermeneutic, contradiction.

[27]   It is this that allows the perspectives to unconsciously contain one another, as shall be shown in the technical demonstration.

[28]   Note that this is merely an origin: the site of the relation is between the original perspectives that the individuals generate; it is not that they participate in a pre-existing relation, but rather manifest a new one in the totality of the work.

individuals that comprise it: the contingent subject.[29] In participating, therefore, such a combination allows its limited, given perspectives to be transcended. While the final result is effected by infinite combinations of points within the artwork serving as a ground for infinite pluralities of participating perspectives,[30] the following analysis serves to explicate the nature of the paradox quoted above: that is, at a technical level within the music alone.

Central to these questions is the idea that, by rivalling the nature of the structures of imposed fictions through the combination of mutually exclusive totalities, a work can negate them and, in doing so, participate in the creation of the contingent subject. To achieve this, *ROBE* takes the only eight 12-note all-interval mirror[31] chords: those which contain a tritone at their centre and repeat their intervals in inversion on either side, either as perfect retrogrades or perfect repeats. Diachronically, these imply a single structure in motion in that they map an emergence of structure from the chromatic scale, to its partial inversion that gives the all-interval chromatic pitch wedge with its intervals in an inverted retrograde, to these, the all-interval mirror chords with their intervals in repeat and retrograde; synchronically, they give a plurality of perspectives on a single object: they thus simultaneously suggest unreconciled plurality and fundamental unity.

One way of mapping them would be:
1. Chromatic scale (1, 1, 1, etc.)
2. Chromatic wedge (12345 6 789te)[32] (cf. Nono's (1957) *Il Canto Sospeso*),
   obtained by combining the chromatic scale with its inversion
3. [A*]   14235 6 e8t97
4. [A1*]   53241 6 79t8e
5. [A]   14325 6 7t98e
6. [A1]   52341 6 e89t7
7. [B*]   43125 6 89et7
8. [B1*]   52134 6 7te98
9. [B]   41352 6 t79e8
10. [B1]   25314 6 8e97t

These chords generate three opposing structures (please, see diagram on next page): a matrix of chords derived from Boulezian multiplication (as well as a related matrix of the same chords polychordally stacked); intervallically-defined Carterian character rows (and their derivations); and polychords (and their constituent triads and tonal associations);[33] all of which, in turn, transform into one another.[34] Thus, the structure itself is an object in motion, defined by opposition, negativity and contingency but also logic, meaning and lines of relation; that is, by mutual exclusivity and reciprocal containment. A contingent dialectic.

These three structures are not merely ways of organising and generating pitch but imply three fundamentally opposed (exclusive) understandings of the phenomenology of music which nevertheless may be composed of (contain) one another: intervallic technique sees pitch as an edge used to define a space, a procedure in which the listener's apprehension is paramount; multiplication sees it as a point, a material object that exists outwith human perception; tonally-based triadic groupings imply a historical tradition which sees them as components of a functional system, like a grammar. By interweaving not only these techniques but the ideologies and interpretive mechanisms they imply—and thus effecting various levels of establishment, dissolution and combination—the work gains a considerably effective tool in its creation of structures that rival those of imposed social, psychological and biological fictions.

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[29]   Like Badiou's (2016) event, itself developed from Lacanian (2006) structuralism, the contingent subject is a break in the structure of being that reorganises (or, in this case, transcends) a world's possibilities. In this, I refer also to Meillassoux's (2007: 71–74) previously quoted argument regarding contingency and the emergence of the 'seventh case.' Made possible by rigorous, immanent structure (of the (aesthetic) totality), and grounded in its materiality, it is in opposition to the virtual Deleuzian (2013) assemblage, machine and "mechanosphere."
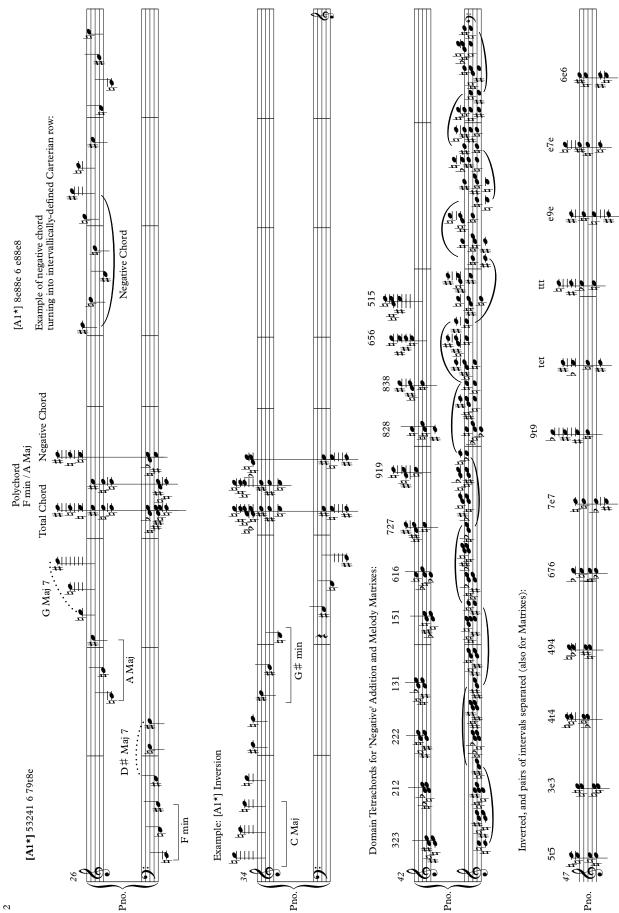
[30]   Badiou's (2017) definition of a world as a closed set permitting infinite relations has been instructive here.

[31]   'Mirror' here is a shorthand for the various forms of repetition of the intervals (as inversions) that the chords contain.

[32]   Please note: t=10; e =11.

[33]   For instance: '[A1*] Prime' transposed to C contains a polychord of Fmin / Amaj, which gives a negative, or remainder, of [8e88e] which can be extended into a row of [8e88e6e88e8].

[34]   Each mirror chord contains a polychord and intervallically-defined row; each intervallically-defined row contains one of the multiplication-matrix's domain tetrachords; the domain tetrachords imply polychords; furthermore, the primary multiplication structure may transform into the derived chords from the intervallically-defined rows, and into polychords through the polychordal 'stacking' or addition (as opposed to multiplication) of its domain tetrachords.

2

[A1*] 53241 6 79t8e

G Maj 7

D# Maj 7

A Maj

F min

Polychord
F min / A Maj

Total Chord   Negative Chord

[A1*] 8e88e 6 e88e8

Example of negative chord
turning into intervallically-defined Carterian row:

Negative Chord

Example: [A1*] Inversion

C Maj

G# min

Domain Tetrachords for 'Negative' Addition and Melody Matrixes:

323   212   222   131   151   616   727   919   828   838   656   515

Inverted, and pairs of intervals separated (also for Matrixes):

5t5   3e3   4t4   494   676   7e7   9t9   tet   ttt   e9e   e7e   6e6

26

34

42

47

Pno.

The work's form is that of separate dramatic sections which are coloured by the demands of the above structure: in how it continually interrupts, develops into and recontextualises itself. This 'turning,' like tilled earth, is dramatically related to the undulations and interruptions of the various levels of reality which structure the world of the opera: myth, cyberspace, artificial intelligence, public life and the traumatic intensity of personal experience. The contingency of these interpolations is unified through temporal progression in rhythmic development and thematic integrity: there is a musical narrative at work throughout in which complexity surges and peaks before being broken down, from the flux and cascade of immediate experience into apprehendable semantic units which are then reassembled into meaning. For instance, from the way in which the intervallically-defined rows emerge from their negative space in Neachneohain's speech[35] (where the musical conceit is aligned to dramatic concerns and rhetorical devices) to their development in The Storyteller's myth of the ROBE[36] (where these are in turn aligned to dramatic and musical structure), to their sedimentation into separate but syntagmatic semantic units which form the discourse of EDINBURGH.

Rhythm works as a counter to this, functioning initially as a parametric signifier (of character and situation), before being gradually developed into structural complexity in a course that tracks the relationship between the individual, its perceptual apparatus, and its world. For instance, the moment in Act 1 when Beira is warning Rowan of the horrifying realness of the world beyond cyberspace:[37] until this point, each section has been defined by the use of motivic rhythmic ratios which work to define and demarcate; however, during this aria, as her descriptions of the 'real world' become causally related to its emergence, Beira's 3:2 relationship gradually more complex through a self-multiplication that eventually produces a series of nested irrationals that problematise motivic clarity. These relationships then form the structural grid for Rowan[38] and Neachneohain's[39] visions in their following section, before these two models of the rhythmic organisation become combined in a tentative resolution: in Beira's final vision[40] that ends the opera.

Between these, the work attempts to negotiate, incorporate and combine antagonisms of temporal perception that have emerged as socio-historical effects. These are time as a developmental process in which one's subjectivity is crucially involved; and time as a series of arbitrary, concatenated events, which may be either a regressive 'spatialisation' of our temporal experience (an effect of late-capitalist production which serves to disempower the subject by removing its agency for change, that is, for its involvement in those temporal processes), or a radical affirmation of contingency and the ever-present possibility of total revolution. Like the ideologies of pitch structures and their capacity to constitute historically-laden signifiers, structures of listening, and raw material for new musical potentials, these three understandings of musical temporality are used throughout the work in various ways. For instance: how the tension between line and paragraph and their dissolution through arbitrary lacunae can be related to large formal structures and motivic integrity; how that (temporal) logic of motivic signification is dependent upon the (spatial) irrational arbitrariness of division; and how temporal perception itself can be made to bear dramatic meaning and thus incorporate the fictions which our biological limitations impose upon us, as well as the modalities by which they are imposed, within the work. By containing mutually exclusive instances of these within the same piece, the work offers the possibility of their being transcended.

4. Conclusion: Everything is Always Possible

It could well be asked: as capital drives us inexorably towards nothing less than the apocalypse, what sense is there in imagining such potential? Recent history is littered with laughable predictions on the significance of technology. Why should quantum 2.0 be any different?

Firstly, as every fortune-teller knows, to predict the future is to create it. The act of naming gives materiality even to the non-existent. Cynicism is nothing more than the policeman of the limit, and in the old proverb where "we plan, God laughs," the nature of his joy is not made clear. It is praxis enough to say: this will happen.

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[35]   See *ROBE* (White 2021b): track 3, "Neachneohain's Speech."
[36]   See track 5, "Song of Silk" and track 9, "Song of Heather" (ibid.)
[37]   See track 7, "Beira's Speech" (ibid.)
[38]   See track 10, "Rowan's Vision" (ibid.)
[39]   See track 12, "Neachneohain's Vision" (ibid.)
[40]   See track 19, "Beira's Vision" (ibid.)

Secondly, all limits are imaginary, even the end of the world. At any moment we decide, we can dream something different: a society without the madness and greed of endless accumulation, or the horror of its abattoirs. We imagined this, and we can un-imagine it: all we have to do is speak the words.

In everything—from the dance of quanta to the roll of the dice, from the devastation of accidents, or love-at-first-sight, to the whirligig of history and its everyday revolutions—we are reminded that even tomorrow, the world could change utterly, into a beautiful, wonderful thing for all.

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„Viskas visada yra įmanoma": įvadas į kontingencijos dialektiką
Santrauka

Fashion-opera – tai metodika, pagrįsta nesuderinamu paradoksu. Čia erdvinės, intervencinės meno formos susijungia su savo laikiniais, autonominiais atitikmenimis dialoge, kuris suderina kiekvieno elemento nepriklausomybę ir hierarchinę lygybę su jų integracija į logišką visumą. Ši metodika atskleidžiama pirminiame keturių kūrinių cikle: *WEAR, ROBE, WOAD* ir *RUNE* (White 2018; 2021b; 2021c; 2022a), jame susijungia šokis, mada, muzika, poezija, drama ir (be kita ko) patys kūrinių dalyviai. Svarbu tai, kad kiekvienas jų išlaiko savo absoliutumą, nė vienas nenustelbia kito, kad taptų (tarkim) tik kostiumu ar muzikine aura. Ši idėja apima visus kūrinio aspektus, įskaitant jo įgyvendinimą visame kompoziciniame procese. Tokio paradokso išlaikymas pateisinamas specifinio antagonizmo teorija.

Kontingencijos dialektika. Čia kiekvienas opozicinis polius išlaiko savo tapatumą ir integralumą **abipusio išskirtinumo** atžvilgiu, kol tuo pačiu metu yra padarytas taip, kad **abipusiai sutalpintų** vienas kitą ir būtų įtrauktas į didesnes struktūras, leidžiančias paradoksalų jų sudedamųjų dalių vientisumą. Tikimasi, kad naudojant ir taikant šias koncepcijas visuose estetinio proceso etapuose gali būti sukurta kūrinių, kurie meta iššūkį tam tikroms suvokimo struktūroms ir leidžia atsirasti naujoms postžmogiškų bendruomeninių tarpininkavimų formoms.

Kontingentinis subjektyvumas – tai tarpžmogiškas veiksnys, kurį sudaro technologija (t. y. tekstai) ir individai. Kūriniai save kreipia būtent į grupę ir jos situaciją. Nors grupę sudaro atsiskyrusios, individualios perspektyvos, jos laikomos socialine ir biologine fikcija, kuri gali būti peržengta tik per jų rekombinaciją.

Fikcinis modelis – tai materialistinis individo santykio su savo pasauliu modelis.

Visuma apibrėžiama kaip situacija, kuri gali išsaugoti ir sujungti **abipusio išskirtinumo** elementus, tokius kaip bendruomenė ar tam tikri meno kūriniai.

Abipusis išskirtinumas yra nuoroda į hėgeliškąją dialektikos koncepciją, kuri epistemologinį antagonizmą regi kaip tiesos indeksą (Žižek 1989: 200). Visa tai perskaitoma per šiuolaikinės kosmologijos (t. y. hermeneutinių konceptų, kuriuos įgalina tokios sąvokos, kaip superpozicija ir multivisata) ir Alaino Badiou (2016; 2017), Quentino Meillassoux (2007; 2009) darbų prizmę; juos papildo marksistinės vėlyvojo kapitalizmo laikotarpio teorijos (Adorno 2006; Jameson 1991; Lukács 1971; White 2019; 2021a) ir Reza'os Negarestanio (2008) interpretacija. Kartu šie autoriai įrodinėja materialią paradokso ir nepriežastingumo tiesą kaip išorinio pasaulio prigimtį ir, tiesą sakant, mūsų šiuolaikinę, socialiai nulemtą subjektyvią patirtį, ypač pabrėždami susvetimėjimo ir laiko suerdvinimo svarbą.

Galiausiai, **abipusio sutalpinimo** sąvoka aprėpia tiek patirties struktūrų, tiek pačių meno kūrinių ypatybes. Straipsnyje remiamasi Vakarų meninės muzikos istorinių trajektorijų interpretacija per postmodernias decentravimo ir daugialypiškumo sampratas. Tai reiškia, kad to, ką galėtume pavadinti Vakarų klasikine kanonine trajektorija, esmė yra fenomenologinės perspektyvos laisvė, kai kūrinio taškai vienu metu funkcionuoja ir kaip objektas, ir kaip kontekstas – jie tuo pat metu ir talpina vienas kitą, ir patys yra talpinami vienas kitame. Svarbiausia čia yra antagonizmas tarp vystymo ir polifonijos (White 2021a: 190). *Fashion-opera* metodas plėtoja šią tradiciją, radikaliai atskirdamas muzikinius parametrus ir skirtingiems kūrinio kompozicijos istorijos momentams suteiktą svarbą, taip pat pritaiko juos visose dramaturginio meno srityse.

Apibendrinant galima teigti, kad šios sąvokos sudaro sistemą, vadinamą **kontingencijos** (atsitiktinumų, *red. past.*) **dialektika** – tai bandymas mąstyti apie *neniutoniškosios* tikrovės pasekmes marksistinei estetikos teorijai.