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Formulating a 'cinematic listener' for John Zorn's file card compositions

Abstract

In a 1995 interview, contemporary American composer John Zorn stated: 'I got involved in music because of film [...] There's a lot of film elements in my music' (Duckworth, 1995, p. 451). Scholars and critics have since widely noted these cinematic elements, with emphasis being placed on Zorn's genre of so-called 'file card compositions'. Whilst these studies have primarily concentrated on how the arrangement of sound blocks – the disjointed segments of Zorn's compositions – can be compared to cinematic montage, this article instead focusses on how sound blocks suggest the visual aspects of cinema.

To delve deeper into the visuo-cinematic qualities of Zorn's file card compositions, an idealised cinematic listener will be constructed, aided by various psychological, semiotic, philosophical and film theories. I will suggest that a listener occupying a hypnogogic state projects moving images, akin to those of cinema, onto what Bernard Lewin first called a 'dream screen'. These projections occur due to intertextual associations made between file card compositions and the artistic figures to whom they are dedicated. These images combine with the sounds that brought them into being to form an audio-visual diegesis, which can be considered a type of half-imagined film. The cinematic listener then actively draws out of this diegesis a narrative, via the semi-conscious process Boris Eikhenbaum called 'inner speech'. I will conclude by giving some broader justification for the methodology that brought this cinematic listener into being and suggest how the cinematic listener may be further utilised to provide musical analyses for file card works.

Can you make a film that's music – or what does that mean? (Zorn in: Heuermann, 2004)

Film is constructed in the likeness of our total psyche. To draw the truth from this proposition, we must turn it inside out, like a pocket; if the cinema is in the image of our psyche, our psyche is in the image of the cinema [...] The cinema makes us understand not only theatre, poetry, and music, but also the internal theatre of the mind: dreams, imaginings, representations: *this little cinema that we have in our head.* (Morin, 2005, p. 203)

For this article, I will formulate what I call a 'cinematic listener', who imagines moving images in relation to heard sounds. This listener is created in response to the common assertion that contemporary American composer John Zorn's (b. 1953) so-called 'file card compositions' are in some way 'cinematic'. To formulate this cinematic listener, I will primarily use a psycho-semiotic approach, appended by certain other philosophical and cognitive theories, so as to propose a listener who, whilst imaginary, is theoretically plausible. The familiar intersection of psychoanalysis and semiotics with film theory is one reason for their primary use in this article; another is the interdependence of object and subject emphasised by psy-

choanalysis, particularly as combined with semiotics in the work of Jacques Lacan and his followers, making a psycho-semiotic approach particularly appropriate for the formulation of a listener out of a corpus of works.

Zorn's music has often been labelled 'cinematic' or 'filmic' by both himself and others (Brackett, 2008; Cook, 2006; Service, 2004; Bigazzi, 1998), and for this reason it warrants investigation into *how* it may be cinematic. In an interview with William Duckworth, Zorn stated: 'I got involved in music because of film, because of the editing involved, the sense of time [...] There's a lot of film elements in my music' (Duckworth, 1995, p. 451), whilst in *Arcana: Musicians on Music*, a book edited by Zorn, he includes a 'Treatment for a Film in Fifteen Scenes' (Zorn, 2000); that Zorn's contribution to a book on music is a film treatment, further shows his confounded understanding of the two media. This distortion of medium boundaries is not uncommon to (post)modern music and art (Albright, 2000), a tradition full of 'pseudomorphs', artworks that emulate a secondary medium (Albright, 2014, p. 212), but what makes Zorn's music particularly interesting is that it emulates a medium of which music itself is generally a part.

This article works from the premise that since Zorn's file card compositions are not cinema, strictly speaking, they must *become* cinema through a receptive type of listening – that is, a cinematic listening. It is for the purposes of explicating this mode of listening that my cinematic listener is constructed – one who responds to Zorn's music in a manner shaped by the cinematic aspirations of this music, in turn elucidating how certain visuo-cinematic qualities can be attributed to Zorn's music itself. By proposing a cinematic listener, this article examines what it means for Zorn's music to emulate cinema, to explicate how this may be possible; yet, whilst Zorn's music is the genitor of my listener, its cinematic mode of listening may also be applied more broadly to the analysis and reception of other music.

My cinematic listener is fictional in nature, not based on empirical observations of 'real' listeners, nor on the personal listening experiences of myself. Instead, this listener is a theoretical one, proposed to explore one potential way Zorn's music may be experienced. Whilst this listener is unavoidably constituted by the author's subjectivity, it nonetheless incorporates direct observations of Zorn's music and takes into consideration objectives made explicit by the composer. In this sense the cinematic listener is similar to Michael Riffaterre's idealised 'archreader' (Juvan, 2008, p. 112) or Wolfgang Iser's 'implied reader' (Iser, 1974) – the latter having been adapted to music by Eero Tarasti as the 'implied listener' (Tarasti, 2002). However, given the comparison made here between file card compositions and film, the closest theoretical precursor may in fact be the 'spectator' commonly referred to in psychoanalytic film studies, who is not 'a flesh-and-blood individual, but an artificial construct, produced and activated by the cinematic apparatus' (Stam, Burgoyne & Flitterman-Lewis, 1992, p. 147). Similarly, the cinematic listener constructed here is

not made of 'flesh and blood', but is 'artificial', 'activated' by the file card works and their cinematic aspirations.

The cinematic listener is hence like a conceptual machine, gradually assembled in the discussion that follows; or, if a more organic analogy is preferred, it is like a homunculus, an incomplete human being created by a theorist. Particular use will be made of psychoanalysis and semiotics in the construction of this cinematic listener's inner workings, particularly as they intersect with film theory in the ideas of Jean-Louis Baudry, Christian Metz and Joan Copjec, amongst others. Justification will be given for placing this listener in a hypnagogic state where, upon listening, they project, onto what Baudry called a 'dream screen', moving images intertextually related to the dedicatee/s around whom Zorn constructs his file card works. The sounds being heard and the visual imaginings they evoke then combine to form a disjointed audio-visual diegesis, which is linked together by the cinematic listener via an unconscious narrating process Boris Eikhenbaum called 'inner speech'.

Once my cinematic listener has been assembled, I will conclude by discussing the general benefits of my methodology and suggest how the cinematic listener may be further used to analyse file card compositions. First, however, a description of Zorn's file card works and their creative process is given, followed by a brief discussion of previous comparisons between file card compositions and cinema.

File card compositions

Of the work in Zorn's oeuvre, that which is most commonly referred to as cinematic – and on which this article will focus – are the so-called file card compositions (Service, 2004; Bigazzi, 1998). The two earliest file card works – *Godard* (1985) and *Spillane* (1986) – epitomise the disjointed aesthetic of file card compositions, as well as Zorn's filmic interests (*Spillane* is an homage to film noir based on pulp-fiction writer Mickey Spillane's novels, and *Godard* to the French New Wave director Jean-Luc Godard). Zorn has since experimented with the boundaries of his compositional process for file card works; for instance, *Duras* (1996) discards the abrupt changes between sound blocks common to earlier file card compositions, and instead overlays sound blocks via a crossfade technique. Yet despite such experiments, a group of file card compositions that maintain the style of the original two does exist, the members of which could be labelled 'pure' or 'ur' file card works. Along with *Spillane* and *Godard* these include *Femina* (2009), *Interzone* (2010), *Dictée* (2010) and *Liber Novus* (2010), as well as (though these works contain slight abnormalities in their creative processes compared to previous mentions) *Elegy* (1990), *Grand Guignol* (1990) and *The Satyr's Play* (2011).

The creative process for *ur* file card compositions begins with Zorn researching the life and work of a chosen dedicatee, who is generally an artistic figure. Zorn

draws from the work and aesthetics of this dedicatee to frame his composition, annotating impressions, instructions or quotations related to the dedicatee onto a series of file cards (i.e. index cards). These file cards are then arranged in a specific order by Zorn, who realises them only once, as a recording (these works are almost never performed live),[1] in collaboration with hand-picked improvising musicians. Whilst the file cards Zorn and his ensemble realise in-studio are sometimes appended with musical notation, they are generally imprecise in nature, including only vague musical instructions or allusions to the work's dedicatee. This allows the musicians who work with Zorn creative input in what is a collaborative process. Each of these file cards, once recorded, are heard as what Zorn and others have called sound blocks. Sound blocks are distinct, short segments of music, which each feature a unique style or are radically different from one another so as to warrant the perception of segmentation and contrast. By having their genesis in dedicatee-oriented file cards, each sound block is intentionally relevant to the dedicatee in question; as Zorn states, regarding his file card work *Spillane*: 'For every single section [sound block] of that piece I can tell you, specifically, what image I was thinking of and how it related to Spillane and his world' (Duckworth, 1995, p. 465). Each sound block of a file card work is therefore like a small vignette or cinematic 'shot', related to the dedicatee of the work in question.

Sound blocks and montage

Zorn has mentioned how his file card method is derived from the use of storyboard cards by film directors such as Alfred Hitchcock, Orson Welles, Fritz Lang and David Lynch (Zorn, 1999), and Zorn's role in realising file card compositions has been compared to that of an auteur film director – given his active involvement during recording, where he 'directs' musicians in-studio (Service, 2004, p. 33). Zorn has himself noted similarities between this process and that of a film director by stating how the milieu in which he realises his file card compositions 'can be compared to the film industry, where specialized talents are contributed to create a work much richer than what one mind could create alone' (Zorn, 1987).

Comparisons have also been made between Zorn's music and film's unique aesthetic nature. The most discussed of these comparisons is between Zorn's sound block style and filmic montage (particularly as theorised by Russian filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein). Zorn has himself explicitly compared his music to montage by stating that it 'is put together [...] in a very filmic way, [like] montage. It's made of separate moments that I compose completely regardless of the next, and then I pull them, cull them together' (Brackett, 2008, p. xvi).[2]

Musicologist John Brackett has additionally associated Zorn's sound block style with the editing together of discrete shots in filmic montage. Relying heavily on

the theories of Eisenstein, Brackett notes that Zorn's sound blocks do not randomly follow one another, but layer on top of one another to provide 'the temporal unfolding' of the composition's 'dramatic principle' (Brackett, 2008, p. xvi). Using Eisenstein's 'montage of attractions' theory, Brackett explicates the co-dependence between Zorn's wish to give formal unity to his works and the disjointed surfaces of his sound block style: two features that may otherwise appear incompatible. Nicholas Cook has similarly connected Zorn's sound blocks to filmic montage, though he posits this in relation to broader aesthetic trends that use juxtaposition and collage. Like Brackett, Cook draws on the montage theories of Eisenstein, discussing how a unified whole can come forth by placing contradictory parts next to one another in the space of a single work. However, in language somewhat contrary to Brackett, Cook argues that 'juxtaposed blocks do not "unfold" in a successive formation, a gradual order – they replace one another' (Cook, 2006, p. 125).

Despite potential disagreements, both Brackett and Cook agree that there is a clear link between Zorn's sound block style and filmic montage. These observations will be readdressed once my cinematic listener has been developed: a development that works from the assumption that moving images are as integral a part of film as is the disjunction of montage.

Hypnagogia and the cinematic listener's dream screen

The remainder of this article will focus on my theoretically constructed cinematic listener who imagines moving images in relation to the sound blocks of Zorn's file card compositions. These moving images are akin to Kendall Walton's imaginings: mental images that are evoked by a perceiver in relation to the 'prompting' features of an artwork (Walton, 1990) – in this case the sound blocks of file card compositions.[3] These images are not only evoked for, but are also witnessed by, the listener, since once imagined they are internally perceivable in the listener's 'mind's eye', with what Colin McGinn calls 'mindsight' (McGinn, 2004).[4] The ideas of Jean-Louis Baudry suggest that the cinematic listener projects these images onto a 'dream screen' whilst in a hypnagogic state. Baudry's correlation of the cinematic spectator with the dreamer will also be used to help clarify the nature of the cinematic listener, who will be shown to occupy a space *between* the cinematic spectator and the dreamer.

For a cinematic listener to have moving images educed, they must first be in a state receptive to imagining them. This entails that they have their eyes closed, for if moving images are to be evoked in relation to the sound blocks of Zorn's music, this would occur most readily if they were not forced to compete with external visual stimuli (McGinn, 2004, p. 106).[5] The cinematic listener could then enter a hypnagogic state – between sleeping and wakefulness – where imagined visual phe-

nomena are known to readily present themselves (Mavromatis, 1987). According to Henri Delacroix, the visual phenomena experienced in a hypnagogic state 'is a little like watching a succession of lovely forms on a cinematograph screen' (Delacroix in: Mavromatis, 1987, p. 14), and Andreas Mavromatis has noted how auditory phenomena can evoke visual images in this state (Mavromatis, 1987, p. 14).

Via Baudry's ideas these imaginings can be related to cinema's moving images – as well as the imaginings of a dream. According to Baudry, the cinematic spectator and the dreamer are alike, since both are in a state of 'regression' triggered by the situatedness of a dark space that enforces a sense of isolation (whether this be the movie theatre or sleep) and the relative inhibition of motor functions (Baudry, 1980, p. 51). This relaxed, semi-oneiric position is associated with the *chora*: an in-between space Julia Kristeva connected to the state of a child before entering the realm of the Symbolic (Kristeva, 1980) – in its 'postnatal state and even inter-uterine existence' (Baudry, 1980, p. 45). Baudry then goes on to develop observations made by psychoanalyst Bernard Lewin (Lewin, 1946), arguing that dreamers project their visions onto a 'dream screen': a space simultaneously separate from and yet a part of the perceiver – which occupies an ambivalent status between Self and Other (Baudry, 1980).[6] This is, of course, replicated by the cinema, where images are projected onto a screen in front of an immobile viewer who is positioned in an enclosed dark space. Being in a hypnagogic state, the cinematic listener also occupies Kristeva's liminal space of the *chora* and may therefore project onto a dream screen images related to the external sound stimuli of a file card composition.

Whilst the dreamer, the cinematic spectator and the cinematic listener all occupy the space of the *chora* – where, as Baudry claims, there is 'a lack of distinction between representation and perception [...] between active and passive [...] a function of the interior with the exterior' (Baudry, 1980, p. 54) – the space of the cinematic listener is in many respects itself in-between the two liminal states of dreamer and cinematic spectator. The cinematic listener is, on the one hand, closer to the dreaming subject: With eyes closed and images projected onto an interior dream screen within their own mind, their visual phenomena are produced by, and for, them as a single subject alone – images are not directly supplied by another, nor can they be experienced by anyone else. However, the cinematic listener is less like the dreamer, in that they never really fall asleep and always register external stimuli (the aural stimuli of the music). In this sense they are more like the cinematic spectator, who (ideally) does not fall asleep and remains actively engaged in the externally present film. The cinematic listener therefore occupies a medial space in the continuum between dreamer and cinematic spectator.

For the dreamer, both aural and visual phenomena are entirely personal imaginings, whilst for the cinema-goer they are externally present stimuli: To quote Christian Metz, 'one would say that what characterises filmic perception is that it

requires a stimulus, whereas oneiric "perception" does not' (Metz, 1980, p. 379). The cinematic listener for Zorn's file card compositions, however, is in-between these two positions – of the dreamer and the cinematic spectator: Aural stimuli are perceived as being external, yet images take form as inner, primarily subjective (though not totally, given their own reliance on the sounds heard), imaginary phenomena. It is hence as though the cinematic listener receives the sounds of a film, yet must imagine, or dream, the images.

Intertextually oriented images

Intertextuality aids the evocation of images for – and by – the cinematic listener. I will now address how this is the case, tangentially noting the difference between *poietic* and *esthesic* intertextually and explicating a *mimetic* mode of intertextual listening along the way.

Each file card composition has one or more dedicatees, around whom the work is constructed. Zorn states: 'Using a dramatic subject as a unifying device […] ensures that all the musical moments, regardless of form or content will be held together by relating in some way to the subjects' life or work' (Zorn, 1999). The written instructions or descriptions provided by file cards therefore relate to the dedicatee/s of the work, and by extension so do the sound blocks into which these file cards eventuate.

Zorn makes the importance of dedicatees semantically clear by explicitly naming file card compositions after either the dedicatee or one of their artistic works, as well as through indications on the packaging of file card albums. This packaging includes album art, quotations and liner notes, operating as what Cook would call a 'domestic Gesamtkunstwerk' (Cook, 2007): a multi-media product that provides numerous references to the compositions' dedicatee. Zorn intends that this extra-musical material disposes the listener towards hearing his music in relation to the dedicatee, so that the listener makes connections between the music and the dedicatee's world (Gagne, 1993, p. 531). Whilst a composer's intentions may always be refuted by a listener, and many file card works are available through rival means that contravene their albums-as-physical-objects (streaming services, pirating etc.), the listener constructed here will be considered to hear file card works via their albums-as-physical-objects. This is for the sake of exploring how the mode of consumption intended by Zorn impacts the understanding of the cinematic listener, who is after all being formulated in direct response to Zorn's work.

Since it is intertextuality that allows sound blocks to be associated with elements from the dedicatee's 'world' – their life, works, aesthetics and the discourse around them – this necessitates that the cinematic listener has knowledge of the dedicatee. As such, the cinematic listener constructed here is also an intertextually inclined one: being aware of the life and work of the file card compositions' dedicatee/s. The

cinematic listener is able to associate sound blocks with what they know about the dedicatee/s, and in turn these associations evoke images.[7]

Despite the idealised nature of the cinematic listener modelled here, something that must still be considered is the distinction between the poietic intertextuality Zorn employs to create file card works and the esthesic intertextuality through which a cinematic listener perceives them. Division between poietic and esthesic levels of artistic products (Nattiez, 1990) means that even a listener responsive to a file card album's paraphernalia, approaching the work intertextually, is unlikely to recognise the exact same intertextual referents Zorn had in mind during the creation of his work. Despite Zorn's assertion that he can describe the images *he* had in mind for each sound block of a file card composition, he also admits that '[s] ometimes my explanations as to why something [a sound] is there [in the work] may be so oblique you don't even understand what I'm talking about' (Duckworth, 1995, p. 465). The cinematic listener is therefore still expected to bring their own associations to their understanding of file card compositions, even when these remain fixated around the work's dedicatee.[8]

There are numerous ways sound blocks can remind the cinematic listener of a file card work's dedicatee. Whilst a taxonomy of these modes is not to be made here, one especially prone to evoking mental images – and which is applicable to many sound blocks of file card works – is *mimesis*. Sound blocks with mimetic associations evoke either an object (in a loose sense of the term) that makes sound – for example a dog, which barks, or a situation in which particular sounds are commonly heard such as a crowded bar. Objects and situations such as these tend to be most readily apprehended in visuo-spatial terms (Stokes & Biggs, 2014) – that is, as three-dimensional images – and so it is not unreasonable to suppose that the sound of a dog barking, for instance, would evoke the moving image of a dog and its barking.[9] Images induced in this manner are then refined via intertextual associations to the dedicatee; for instance, the third sound block of the file card composition *Spillane* – whose dedicatee is the novelist Mickey Spillane – contains the sounds of dogs barking, police sirens and people talking in hushed tones. As film music scholar Robert Miklitsch notes, these are all common aural markers of film noir (Miklitsch, 2011): a genre for which many Spillane stories were adapted. The sound block in question therefore readily evokes a sequence of moving images common to film noir, where a crime has been committed, the dogs disturbed, the police arrive, the neighbours are stirred from their beds and gossip. A scene like this is clearly comparable to one from a film, although by being internally situated in the cinematic listener it is also akin to hypnagogic imagery or a dream.

Sound/image blocks

The images *evoked* in a cinematic listener via intertextual associations are also then *perceived* by the listener on a dream screen through mindsight. This results in a vertical montage, or type of conceptual fold-back, between the sound blocks heard and the mental images they create. I shall consider this process in more detail showing how it forms an audio-visual diegesis for the cinematic listener, yet one which – as is often the case with a dream – has no clearly discernible narrative.

Sounds not only cause images to appear in the mind of the cinematic listener, but are also perceived as emerging out of these images or as occurring in direct relation to them (as sounds do in relation to the images of a film, either emerging 'out of' them as sound effects or complementing them as non-diegetic score).[10] For instance, the sound of a dog barking forms the image of a dog barking, but this sound is also subsequently considered to emerge out of that image. The dog's bark is heard from the imagined dog, even though the sound itself created the imagined dog in the first place. Here, sound begins as what Louis Hjelmslev called an *expression*, the *content* of which is the image it evokes (Hjelmslev, 1961, pp. 48-49); however, the expression is itself very much a part of its content (the dog's bark is a part of the dog it suggests), and so the relationship between them is effectively *synecdochical*.[11]

Imaginings do not follow sounds at a great distance, but occur as part of their very realisation: as part of their meaning. To quote Jean-Luc Nancy, 'meaning and sound share the space of a referral, in which at the same time they refer to each other' (Nancy, 2007, p. 8); sound and image therefore occur alongside one another, interacting through a two-way system, creating a unique semi-imaged audio-visual experience for the cinematic listener. According to Pavle Levi, this 'circular feedback [is] characteristic of all opto-phonetic works: sounds visualised and/or images given to be auralised' (Levi, 2012, p. 12). It is therefore not simply sound that is subjected to a montage-like effect by Zorn and his sound block style (as Cook and Brackett suggest), but intertextually oriented, semi-audio-visual imaginings. Together, the sound blocks heard by the cinematic listener and the images they evoke may be referred to as *sound/image blocks.*

However, these semi-imagined sound/image blocks are still highly disjointed. Since sound blocks are constituted by musical materials markedly distinct from each other and are generally short in length, the moving images they evoke would also be conceptually discrete, suggesting abrupt shifts in environment or place. As Tom Service mentions, it is highly unlikely that file card compositions have obvious narratives that take the form of 'a simple "translation" of a generic [...] story into sound' (Service, 2004, p. 58).

The sound/image blocks of file card works may therefore be more akin to dreams than to films after all, for as Metz states: 'The diegetic film is in general considerably

more "logical" and "constructed" than the dream [which is instead] a "pure" story, a story without an act of narration, emerging in turmoil or shadow, a story that no narrative process has *formed*' (Metz, 1980, p. 392). And yet, sound/image blocks are perhaps most like surrealist depictions of dreams in film, where 'nonchronological syntagms' (Metz, 1974, p. 127) join together, forming a montage of interruption. In any case, what is important is that no intention seems to have been made by Zorn to provide a clearly discernible narrative for file card compositions.

The term diegesis is therefore relevant here: It is what Metz calls a 'homogeneous pseudo-world', and on what Robert Stam elaborates in describing 'an imaginary construction, the fictive space and time in which the film operates' (Stam, Burgoyne & Flitterman-Lewis, 1992, p. 38). Diegesis is hence not to be equated with a film's narrative, but rather the floating world in which a narrative can potentially occur. Any story for a file card work is therefore not given to the listener by sound alone, nor is it given by the disparate images that these sounds evoke. Sound/image blocks provide only an audio-visual diegesis, out of which the listener must extract a narrative via their own volition. As a result, narrative is always ascertained by the cinematic listener in a largely subjective manner.

Inner speech

The disjointedness of sound/image blocks suggests a supplementary process on the part of the listener that would string them together into a narrative or some other explanatory system. Although it is possible that a listener could forego this process, simply accepting sound/image blocks as totally disparate, it is worth taking into consideration the mind's general proclivity to provide coherence for disparate materials. As Levi notes: 'When properly stimulated, the mind will itself perform an ersatz cinematographic synthesis, stitching together and animating disparate imagistic fragments it encounters' (Levi, 2012, p. 138).[12] This amounts to a type of 'allegorical interpretation' (Walton, 1990) which the cinematic listener applies to sound/image blocks, and one way to theorise this process – in keeping with the analogy between file card works and cinema – is via Boris Eikhenbaum's notion of inner speech (Eikhenbaum, 1974).

Succinctly defined by Stam as 'a kind of discursive glue which holds the meaning of films together in the spectator's mind' (Stam, Burgoyne & Flitterman-Lewis, 1992, p. 12), inner speech is a semi-conscious linking apparatus that mediates between the disconnected shots of cinematic montage. Related to the everyday experience of interior monologue proposed by cognitive theorist Lev Vygotsky, inner speech is ultimately egotistic, taking on a personal and subjective role (Vygotsky, 1962, p. 18). When experiencing sound/image blocks a cinematic listener uses inner speech to account for the disjunction between them, providing a narrative or theme that

links them together. It would be in keeping with the intertextual proclivities of file card compositions if the listener's inner speech focussed itself around dedicatees; this would allow narratives to emerge via intertextual association in much the same way as the evocation of images did. As Ronald Levaco mentions, 'for Eikhenbaum the stylistic structuration of cinematic syntagma [...] requires a discursive or narrative model, a conceptual scaffolding, and a regulating principle, to ensure that they can be read' (Levaco, 1974, p. 55), and the dedicatee of a file card work would act as such a 'conceptual scaffolding' for the inner speech of a cinematic listener.

This helps suggest further comparisons between the cinematic listener and the cinematic spectator, since the cinematic spectator *enunciates* a film as they perceive it, managing an internal split between unconscious and conscious operations (Stam, Burgoyne & Flitterman-Lewis, 1992, p. 159). Similarly, a cinematic listener creates images related to sound blocks via an unconscious process of intertextual association and then perceives these images consciously in the mind's eye. These images and their associated sounds are then filtered through a second unconscious process, that of inner speech, which likewise can become consciously apprehended.

Sologamy of the cinematic listener/file card composition

The very absence of images or a clearly defined narrative in Zorn's file card works is what activates the cinematic listening process; and it has been conjectured that cinematic experience is likewise dependent on absence and a desire for its fulfilment (Metz, 1982). A file card composition's disavowal of images is the very thing that allows the cinematic listener to create them and the same goes for a file card composition's narrative. Since file card works are built, as many films are, 'on the principles of fragmentation, elliptical structuring, and disjunctive montage' (Levi, 2012, p. 144), they enable the activation of a listener's inner speech to compensate for their disjointedness. Regarding both images and narration, a general lack in file card works is precisely what allows their active formation in, for and by the cinematic listener: This instigates a listening process where sonic objects are not just passively perceived, but are rather (even if only semi-consciously) actively realised. This process amounts to a type of *suturing* of the listener to the file card work.

A Lacanian term, since adopted by psychoanalytic film theorists, suture refers to a process by which the subject is '"stitched" into the chain of discourse [of language, film, or in this case, music] which both defines and is defined by the work of the unconscious' (Stam, Burgoyne & Flitterman-Lewis, 1992 p. 169). The cinematic listener is sutured to the file card composition they are hearing, since 'the chain of discourse' – Zorn's music – 'defines' the listener's initially unconscious inner speech; and yet, in reciprocation Zorn's music is defined by – receives its meaning from – this inner speech that it itself formed in the listener. Given the complexity of this

situation, I will elaborate by adapting quotes from two psychoanalytic film theorists on suture to the functions of the cinematic listener so far described.

In suture's initial theorisation for film, Jean-Pierre Oudart claimed that the disjointedness of shot/reverse-shot montage was what provided the subject with the 'imaginary plenitude' that sutured them to a film (Stam, Burgoyne & Flitterman-Lewis, 1992, p. 170). This process can be adapted to the cinematic listener:

> For, if two consecutive [sound/]image [block]s do not tend towards articulation together, but instead function initially as autonomous cells [as all sound/image blocks do] [...] then their articulation can only be produced by an extra-cinematic element (i.e. a linguistic inonce [inner speech]) or by the presence of common signifying elements [intertextual references to the dedicatee] in each [sound/]image [block]. (Oudart, 1978, p. 36)

More recently, Joan Copjec has described suture as supplying 'the logic of a paradoxical function whereby a supplementary element is *added* to the series of signifiers in order to mark the *lack* of a signifier that could close the set' (Copjec, 2015, p. 174). In the cinematic listener's case, the series of signifiers are the sound blocks to which are *added* the *lack* of images and narration to 'close the set' of the file card work's cinematic aspirations. Copjec further notes that the 'imaginary relation' invoked by a cinematic experience 'is defined as literally a relation of *re*cognition. The subject reconceptualises as its own concepts already constructed by the Other' (Copjec, 2015, p. 22). The Other for the cinematic listener would be Zorn's music and the intertextual web of its dedicatee's world. Indeed, like the big Other of the Symbolic order, the dedicatee's world pre-exists the listener and yet lies within their unconscious, shaping their listening experience and providing sound blocks with meaning.[13]

The disjointedness of sound blocks therefore provokes the active involvement of the cinematic listener's unconscious knowledge of a dedicatee's world, which provides both images and inner speech narration for file card works. This active involvement results in the suturing of the cinematic listener to the file card work: a two-way process where both realise or 'define' one another.

Conclusion

In the foregoing, a theoretical framework has been constructed to explain how Zorn's file card works can be cinematic in a multi-sensual manner – that is, cinematic in the sense of being audio-visual. Since a visual element is lacking in the file card compositions themselves, it is fantasised by the cinematic listener via intertextual associations related to the dedicatee/s of the work, who are indicated by the composition's title, album paraphernalia and sound blocks.

Returning to an analogy made at the beginning of this article, the cinematic listener is like a machine, conceptually constructed to realise a certain hypothesis: that file card compositions activate an audio-visually cinematic experience. This hypothesis has been assembled from Zorn's statements, scholarly discourse and the file card compositions themselves. The creation of this 'machine' does not aim to show that file card compositions are *objectively* cinematic, nor does it suggest that listeners really perceive file card works in this way, but rather demonstrates how a certain hypothesis or assertion (that file card works are cinematic) can itself parturiate a listener. Additionally, this machine, or parts thereof, may be used to understand other works, particularly those that seem applicable to a 'cinematic' mode of understanding (certain works of *musique concrete* and other electroacoustic forms come to mind).

The benefit of this process is that it provides a listener who does not simply correspond with the subjectivity of the theorist using it – avoiding solipsistic interpretations of file card works that, to quote Zorn himself, 'speak more about the interpreter than about the work being perceived!' (Gagne, 1993, p. 525). This is thanks to the derivation of an original hypothesis from sources external to the theorist's own personal listening, distancing the theorist's immediate perception of the work from the listener they create. However, the process is also a translucent one that does not aim to objectively or universally posit '*the* listener' of a work: The created listener is always provisional, intended for a specific purpose. Finally, this process (perhaps surprisingly) marks a return to the primacy of the object (the composition), away from the subject (the listener), for it focusses not so much on a composition's real-life perceptions, but rather on the *virtual potentialities* of how a composition could be perceived.[14] The work is considered to not only be held in perception, but also to create them.

Regarding more specifically the cinematic listener created here, its future purpose may be to provide analyses of file card compositions that are aligned with the hypothesis that they are intrinsically cinematic. A theorist could perceive file card compositions through their cinematic listener, whose faculty of inner speech would lead to analytic interpretations of file card works. This would involve the theorist putting themselves into the skin of their cinematic listener: researching potential intertextual origins for sound blocks, positing related images and linking these together via inner speech transcribed as a type of musical analysis. This puts the cinematic listener to use as a tool for providing analyses that purvey a distinctly cinematic mode of listening, therefore displaying the 'cinematicity' (Geiger & Littau, 2013) of file card works. In doing so, however, the ontological nature of these compositions would effectively be changed, and the analyses would not so much be of *musical* compositions, but rather of half-imagined *films.*

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Notes

1   A Walker Art Centre poster exists that suggests *Spillane* was performed once, in 1986, although this may simply have been a premiere playing of the recording.

2   Compare with Eisenstein's ideas on montage as collision or as 'the conflict of two pieces in opposition to each other' (Eisenstein, 1949, p. 37).

3   However, Walton also questions music's proclivity to evoke images and dismisses cross-modal imaginings (Walton, 1990, pp. 331-335), two points this article implicitly disputes.

4   This of course implies that the cinematic listener is not an aphantasiac.

5   The cinematic listener's mode of listening is therefore (at least initially) an essentially *acousmatic one*, as their closed eyes shut out any actual source for the sounds they are hearing; however, whether or not this remains the case throughout the imagining process that then follows is debatable.

6   See also Eberwein, 1984.

7   Mavromatis notes how not only sound, but also thought associations can easily evoke hypnogogic images (Mavromatis, 1987, p. 45).

8   Indeed, Zorn himself states that 'I think what I put into a work and what the work becomes are really on different levels' (Gagne, 1993, p. 525).

9   Mention of mimetic sound has precedents in Raymond Monelle's music semiotics (Monelle, 1992, p. 5) and Chion's study of film sound (Chion, 1994, pp. 25-28). What Chion calls 'causal listening' can itself be traced back to the écouter mode of listening described by Pierre Schaeffer (Schaeffer, 2017, p. 75), which has since been adapted to more recent electroacoustic music by Dennis Smalley (Smalley, 1996, p. 84), where he refers to 'Mimesis in music' and its 'conscious and unconscious imitation or representation of aspects of nature and culture'.

10   The interactions between heard sounds and imagined images may also be subjected to a taxonomy. One type of interaction briefly worth mentioning evolves from Zorn's common use

of spoken narration over other sounds in his file card compositions – particularly prevalent in *Godard*. These 'voice-overs' may very well interact with imagined images in ways similar to Chion's *acousmetre* (itself present in Jean-Luc Godard's films) or other types of cinematic voices (Chion, 1999).

11   Although Umberto Eco would use the term metonym (Eco, 1979, p. 210).

12   See also Bergson, 1912, p. 322.

13   For more on the idea of 'suture', see Žižek, 2001, pp. 31-34.

14   The general impetus of this move back to the object is sympathetic with (though not dictated by) the philosophical trend currently being made by object-oriented ontology (Harman, 2018).