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Aural Souvenirs: temporal disruption and formal coherence in John Zorn's *Cat O' Nine Tails*

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Abstract: Commissioned by the Kronos Quartet in 1988, Zorn's string quartet *Cat O' Nine Tails* originated as a "file-card composition", but was eventually assembled as a conventionally notated score. Subtitled "Tex Avery directs the Marquis de Sade," the fifteen-minute work combines a variety of musical quotes, stylistic allusions, improvisational episodes, and noise elements in a frenetic and dramatic musical collage. A continuous play of fragmented and disjunctive referentiality, *Cat O' Nine Tails* exemplifies late twentieth century postmodernism. This paper provides an analysis of the musical structure of *Cat O' Nine Tails*. By applying music theorist Jonathan D. Kramer's hierarchy of linearity and nonlinearity as an analytical model, I attempt to address Zorn's idiosyncratic approach to time and context, and discuss how the composer simultaneously disrupts and maintains structural integrity and compositional intent. **Keywords:** John Zorn; *Cat O' Nine Tails*; Music for string quartet; Jonathan D. Kramer; Postmodernism in music; Moment form.

Souvenirs Auditivos: interrupção temporal e coerência formal em *Cat O' Nine Tails*, de John Zorn

Resumo: Encomendado pelo Kronos Quartet em 1988, o quarteto de cordas de John Zorn *Cat O' Nine Tails* originou-se como uma "composição com cartões de fichário", mas acabou por ser organizado como uma partitura grafada convencionalmente. Com o subtítulo "Tex Avery dirige o Marquês de Sade," a obra de 15 minutos combina uma variedade de citações musicais, alusões estilísticas, episódios de improvisação e elementos de ruído em uma colagem musical frenética e dramática. Como um jogo contínuo de referencialidade fragmentada e disjuntiva, *Cat O' Nine Tails* exemplifica o pós-modernismo do final do século XX. Este ensaio apresenta uma análise da estrutura musical de *Cat O' Nine Tails*. Por meio da aplicação da hierarquia de linearidade e não-linearidade do teórico musical Jonathan D. Kramer como modelo analítico, tento resolver a abordagem idiossincrática de Zorn quanto ao tempo e o contexto, e discutir como o compositor simultaneamente interrompe e mantém a integridade estrutural e a intenção composicional.

Palavras-chave: John Zorn; *Cat O' Nine Tails*; Música para quarteto de cordas; Jonathan D. Kramer; Pós-modernismo em música; Forma-momento.

During the late 1970s, American composer John Zorn began experimenting with a technique he called "file card composition". Inspired by the work of author William S. Burrows (1914-97) and film director Jean-Luc Godard, Zorn assembled compositions from lists of verbal descriptions, visual impressions, literary quotes, and independent fragments of music. Related by a single dramatic subject, these ideas were then inscribed on index cards as sonic "events." Once these events were sorted and arranged in Zorn's preferred order, the composer would take the file-card score into the recording studio, where he would assemble the piece, moment by moment and section by section; his goal: to translate visual imagery into a unified composition. Several examples of Zorn's studio collages include *The Big Gundown* (1985), *Godard*, (1986), *Spillane* (1987), and *Forbidden Fruit* (1987).

Commissioned by the Kronos Quartet in 1988, Zorn's string quartet *Cat O' Nine Tails* subtitled *Tex Avery directs the Marquis de Sade* originated as a file-card piece, but was later assembled as a conventionally notated score. Derived from Italian film director Dario Argento's 1971 thriller "Il Gatto a Nove Code", the title and subtitle pays homage to the composer of the film's soundtrack Ennio Morricone, and to one of Zorn's most important influences, cartoon music. The fifteen-minute work uses a variety of musical quotes, stylistic allusions, improvisational episodes, interludes, and noise elements in a frenetic and dramatic musical collage. A continuous play of fragmented and disjunctive referentiality, *Cat O' Nine Tails* exemplifies late 20th century postmodernism; however, the abrupt juxtaposition and

superimposition of dissimilar materials is simply a by-product of the work's main focus: the dislocation and dissolution of musical context and the temporal narrative.

By applying music theorist Jonathan D. Kramer's hierarchy of linearity and nonlinearity as an analytical model, I attempt to provide a brief analysis of the musical structure of *Cat O' Nine Tails*, address Zorn's idiosyncratic approach to time and context, and examine how the composer simultaneously disrupts and maintains structural integrity and compositional intent.

Constructed using contrasting blocks of sounds and silences, ranging from two to sixty seconds in length, *Cat O' Nine Tails* begins with a three-second instrumental shriek. Reminiscent of the female scream found at beginning of his 1987 studio tribute to Mickey Spillane, the excessive bow pressure on the strings serves the same purpose as the scream, to shock the listener into aural awareness. Moreover, the brutality of the event transforms the listener from a simple bystander to an active participant, or at the very least, an aural voyeur in the ensuing conflict. But is the fear of violence, whether real or imagined, tactile or aural, the primary narrative of the work?

As Zorn explains in his liner notes for his 1999 release "The String Quartets", *Cat O' Nine Tails* is "about the visual". Inspired by the violent antics found in the cartoon features of director Tex Avery (1908-80) and influenced by the accompanying music of composers Carl W. Stalling (1891-1972) and Scott Bradley (1891-1977), *Cat O' Nine Tails* can be thought of as a nonlinear aural representation of cartoon sight-gags and their accompanying musical cues. According to Zorn, his appropriation of these cues provides some "other" extra-musical set of relationships outside the score's musical narrative.

While a student at Webster University in St. Louis in the early 1970s, Zorn started playing the saxophone and studying composition. Explaining his fascination with cartoon music and its lack of traditional music development, Zorn told William Duckworth in an interview in 1995 that "...cartoon music is important because it follows a visual narrative... Now separate it from those images and you still have music – valid, well-made music... It's following a visual narrative – all of a sudden this, all of a sudden that". (Duckworth, 1995, p. 471). Over time, the abrupt juxtaposition of dissimilar styles and non-developmental episodes became a major characteristic of Zorn's work. For example, starting in measure 143 in *Cat O' Nine Tails* (Example 1), the passage entitled "Tyson hits Spinks," refers to boxer

The image shows a musical score for a string quartet, measures 143-144. The score is divided into two sections: "Tyson hits Spinks" (measures 143-144) and "lullaby" (measures 145-146). The tempo is marked as ♩ = 144. The score includes dynamics such as *sfff* and *p*, and techniques like "scrape to tone", "tremolo 2nd time", and "pizz.". The notation is for four staves, likely representing the string quartet.

Example n.1: *Cat O' Nine Tails*, mm. 143-144. Extra-musical narrative (m. 143).

Mike Tyson's first round knockout of Michael Spinks in 1988. Functioning as a timbral anacrusis, the violent *sforzando* string scrape modulates from noise to tone, which then leads to a passage reminiscent of Johannes Brahms's *Weigenlied*. In many of the Warner Brothers cartoons from the 1930s and 40s, when a character, either the protagonist or antagonist was struck on the head, the audience would see birds and stars circling the fictional injury, and if the character was rendered unconscious, Stallings would usually score the scene using Brahms's famous lullaby. In *Cat O' Nine Tails*, however, Zorn does not make a distinction between fact and fiction. Drawing a dark, yet humorous parallel between Tyson's real-life knockout of Spinks and the fictional violence associated with Stallings's musical cue, Zorn uses life to imitate art.

Throughout *Cat O' Nine Tails*, Zorn uses extra-musical expressive descriptors to illustrate the relationship between the written notation and the intended sound. In one such instance, the music is described in the score as a "cat and dog fight". Reminiscent of the music heard in various "Tom and Jerry" cartoons, the desired sound is depicted using various extended techniques including indeterminate triple stops in the first violin, a graphically notated improvisation in the second violin, and the cellist bowing on the tailpiece. And although the audience is unaware of the extra-musical program and expressive descriptors written into the score, the humorous effect created by the direct juxtaposition of the indeterminate "cat and dog fight" and the ensuing "country-swing" passage is not lost on the average listener, especially one that is familiar with cartoon music. Theorist JOHN BRACKETT (2008, p. xiv) refers to this type of extra-musical listening experience and its effect on the perceived structure and narrative of a given work as "associative unity". In other words, once a listener recognizes a cartoon cue in *Cat O' Nine Tails*, personal context becomes the unfolding narrative, and the primary narrative of the work dissolves.

Through the use of recognizable quotes, styles, and cues, *Cat O' Nine Tails* consists of at least two or more times and two or more musical narratives. The times include the current place of listening and the multiplicity of times and places where the quotations were first created and experienced; the multiple narratives include the perspective of the current work, the numerous ways it unfolds over time, and the extra-musical narrative. Temporal disruption occurs because the listener, who experiences an interruption of a secondary narrative, either due to the recognition of a familiar quote or musical style, is no longer simply listening in the present. And just as we expect the resolution of dissonances in tonal works from the common practice era, after we recognize a quotation or associative style in *Cat O' Nine Tails*, we expect to encounter a second familiar quote or style. Our cognitive tension increases until our personal expectations are satisfied; this type of associative evocation is what KRAMER (1995, p. 14) defines as "perceptual unity". However, *Cat O' Nine Tails* is not only about memory and how a listener creates his or her own extra-musical associations, it is also about the *manipulation* and distortion of *time* as much as it is about the "material", or aural "objects", to be developed and explored. In fact, the dislocation and dissolution of time *and* context can be viewed as the work's grand narrative.

As it pertains to the juxtaposition of "Tyson" and lullaby, and "the cat and dog fight" and country swing passages, compositionally, both sections are effective not because the listener may or may not, directly or indirectly, recognize one or both of the juxtaposed musical "objects," but because both passages focus on a more fundamentally important artistic concept, *contrast*. In both cases, violent and harsh noise leads to music written with a tonal center, and fortunately for the listener, supplies the work with structural unity through the consistent use of timbral disparity.

Concerning the material and objects that comprise the composition, *Cat O' Nine Tails* consists of five types of events, including noise, collage, passages of directed improvisation, cartoon music, and interludes. As illustrated in Example 1, “noise” refers to notated scrapes, scratches, and crunches, while passages of improvisation are generally notated using graphic notation. Zorn uses the term “improvisational” in a very broad sense. He uses it to describe written cadenzas, passages that feature some limited improvisation, and/or events that explore the various instrumental combinations provided by the string quartet. The impetus for this final designation can be found in Zorn’s earlier “game pieces”. Essentially, the basic form for each of his game pieces was derived from all of the various combinations of performers that his ensemble could provide, and as Zorn told Duckworth in 1995, “When we had finished all the permutations of players, the piece was over” (Duckworth, 1995, p. 473). In *Cat O' Nine Tails*, however, the work does not simply stop with the last available performer permutation, but it ends with a slow interlude that features harmonics in all four parts. Generally, interludes consist of slow and melodic passages or moments of silence lasting longer than three seconds in duration. Collage events include modified musical quotations, and passages that are composed in specific *popular-art* music style, including tango, blues, and country-swing.

Example 2 best illustrates Zorn’s use of “acknowledged” quotation; the term “acknowledged” is used to differentiate between passages that identify a specific composer being quoted or the style of music alluded to, and other passages left unnamed. Starting in measure 183 in Example 2, the viola and cello parts consist of four separate fragments extracted from Arnold Schoenberg’s Third String Quartet (1927). The first and second measures of the viola part in *Cat O' Nine Tails* are taken from Schoenberg’s first, second, and third movements, while the cello part is extracted from the final two measures of Schoenberg’s fourth movement. Serving as a common-tone between the first and second fragments, the C-natural in the viola is the sixth member of Schoenberg’s original 12-tone row, however, the second fragment does not complete Schoenberg’s original series or any of its permutations. An example of stylistic counterpoint, the superimposed material attributed to Greek composer Iannis Xenakis (1922-2001) in the first and second violins looks similar to the rhythms found in the late composer’s composition for string orchestra, *Pithoprakta* (1956), however, the pitch material has yet to be located.

Example n.2: *Cat O' Nine Tails*, Extracted fragments from Arnold Schoenberg’s *String Quartet No.3*, Op. 30 (1927), “acknowledged” quotation.

Regarding his use of modified quotation, Zorn told Cole Gagne (1993),

...sometimes in my string quartets I'll have one of my own lines in the first violin part; the second violin, I'll say, "improvise using glissandos"; the viola part will be from Boulez's *Le marteau [sans maître]*; and cello part will be a retrograde inversion of Stravinsky from some orchestra piece. All stacked in one bar. (p. 527).

And as it applies to *Cat O' Nine Tails* (Duckworth, 1993, p. 427), "One section is the pitches from a melody by Ives broken up the way Webern would do it. Then an improv section. Then something I completely wrote out that's mine. Then a section dealing with noise. So the piece is kind of like five different things going on, but intercut from one to the next."¹

Overall, the identification of collage events was somewhat problematic. In several interviews Zorn stated that each block or "event" occurs twelve times, and the piece contains 60 events,² but once all 12 of the "acknowledged" quotations and stylistic allusions were accounted for, it left twelve events that look similar in construction to the "acknowledged" quotations unidentified. One such occurrence involves the use of snap pizzicatos and syncopated triple-stop figures that can be easily attributed to a single measure found in Bela Bartok's Fourth String Quartet (1928), as shown in Example 3.³ Although the metrical placement of the viola and cello has been reversed and the snap *pizzicato* in the violins has been transformed from a unison, double-stop *pizz* (F-G) to a four-note chromatic cluster *pizz* (F-G, vln. I and F#-G#, vln. II), Zorn's measure is clearly derived from Bartok, yet is left "unacknowledged" in *Cat O' Nine Tails*.

The image displays two musical staves side-by-side. The left staff is from Bela Bartok's String Quartet No. 4, Mvt. 4, m. 51. It features four staves (Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Cello/Double Bass). The first two staves have a dynamic marking of *sf* (sforzando) on the first note, followed by a *p* (piano) marking on the second note. The Viola and Cello/Double Bass staves have a *pp* (pianissimo) marking. The right staff is from John Zorn's *Cat O' Nine Tails*, m. 83. It also features four staves. Above the first staff is a tempo marking 'fast' with a quarter note equal to 144. The first two staves have a *sfz* (sforzando) marking. The Viola and Cello/Double Bass staves have a *mf* (mezzo-forte) marking. The word 'evenly' is written below the Viola and Cello/Double Bass staves.

Examples n.3: Bela Bartok, *String Quartet No. 4*, Mvt. 4, m. 51 (left), and John Zorn, *Cat O' Nine Tails*, m. 83 (right): "unacknowledged" references

Additionally, *Cat O' Nine Tails* features passages that use compositional techniques associated with the Second Viennese School, specifically Arnold Schoenberg (1874-1951) and Anton Webern (1883-1945). As shown in the first measure of Example 4, a descending three-note motive corresponding to set class (016) descends sequentially in the first and second violins,⁴ while the unordered tetrachord (0123) in measure 49, expands and contracts to create two opposing rhythmic gestures that emphasize B-natural as an important pitch center. Reminiscent of the tetrachords that comprise the original 12-tone row of Anton Webern's String Quartet, Op. 28 (1938), and the trichords found in Schoenberg's Third String Quartet, Zorn's unordered tetrachord in measure 49 and the sub-set trichords in measure 48, respectively, are manipulated and developed throughout the course of the work.

The image shows a musical score for measures 48 and 49 of John Zorn's *Cat O' Nine Tails*. The score is written for four staves: Violin I, Violin II, Cello/Double Bass, and Bass. The tempo is marked as $\text{♩} = 120$ for measure 48 and $\text{♩} = 72$ for measure 49. The score includes various performance instructions such as *staccatissimo as fast as possible*, *arco*, *ced.*, *ff*, *p*, and *slow gliss.*. Several musical structures are highlighted with boxes and labeled with numbers in parentheses: (016) and (012) are trichords, while (0123) and (013) are tetrachords. The notation includes complex rhythmic patterns, including sixteenth and thirty-second notes, and dynamic markings.

Example n.4: *Cat O' Nine Tails*, m. 48-49, primary trichords and tetrachords.

Zorn's use of unacknowledged references poses an interesting question as it applies to postmodern composition: When does a particular style, instrumental technique, or specific passage of music become so ingrained in a composer's memory that it eventually becomes part of his or her style?

After 1945 many composers associated with modernist serial tenets proclaimed the work of Anton Webern as the future of music. Pointillism and integral serialism proliferated. Even now, one can hear the strains of the second Viennese school in contemporary composition. But is this overt use of Webern's compositional language considered stylistic allusion or musical appropriation, or is it just accepted study? If we accept that the appropriation and assimilation of one composer's style by another is an important step in the pedagogical process, then we must accept any music composed by the latter as original, unless indicated to the contrary. How many composers have used material, be it actual musical passages or techniques of orchestration, which can be attributed to Palestrina, Bach, or even Stravinsky?⁵ But as theorist Tom Service (2002) points out in his analysis of Zorn's solo piano piece *Carny* (1989):

Discovering the original sources behind every element in the work would open a significant window for interpretation. But this spot-the-quote approach could reduce the piece to an exercise in musical detective work. It would have little to say about the juxtapositions in the piece, and the context and function of each passage.

Nevertheless, given Zorn's history of musical appropriation and modification, and his affinity for games, "sly quotes and secret codes" (Zorn, 1999, liner notes), and in light of the fact that he clearly identifies all specific sources in *Cat O' Nine Tails* with a composer's name, I decided in my initial analysis that any passage that looked similar to a specific composer's work and left unnamed in the score would be considered just a passing reference to years of listening and score study by Zorn, and thus deemed original. Subsequently, since the unnamed passages are still considered collage events, and in interview Zorn affirms that the work consists of only five specific types of events, we have to modify our original structural analysis. Regardless of origin, the number of collage events increases from 12 to 24 and the total number of juxtaposed and superimposed events in *Cat O' Nine Tails* increases from 60 to 72.

Table 1 provides a brief summary of the form of the first thirty-eight measures of *Cat O' Nine Tails*. In general, the "acknowledged" quotations and Zorn's original material are atonal or non-tonal, and explore the chromatic aggregate in a time-compressed

fashion; the allusions and cartoon music are tonal centered; and the interludes and improvisations are either pitch centric, non-tonal, atonal, or include noise or silence. For the sake of analytical clarity, collage (or tribute events) and cartoon events are abbreviated with a “T” and “C,” respectively. Furthermore, events are divided into sub-events. For example, the second collage event, labeled T2, is divided into three sub-events, labeled T2.1, T2.2, and T2.3, respectively. Divided by differences in texture and performance technique, T2 and its sub-events are followed by a three-second grand pause in the last measure of the system. Generally, all six of the grand pauses included in *Cat O' Nine Tails* perform a specific structural function: they separate collage events from other collage events or cartoon events from collage events. Therefore, the grand pause that follows T2 is identified as a “non-sounding” interlude and is labeled I1 in the analysis.

Event Abbreviation Legend:

- N = Noise Elements
- T = Tribute: “Acknowledged” Quotation, Stylistic Allusions, “Unnamed” References, and Original Music.
- P = Improvisation and Permutation of Performers
- C = Cartoon Cues
- I = Interludes: Slow and Melodic, and Grand Pauses
- Q = Quarter note
- H = Half note

- Description:** - “torture/turning screws” = Quotation marks indicate Zorn’s written expressive descriptions.
 - (Tango) = Parentheses indicate a style alluded to but not acknowledged.
 - Event 1/ Event 2 = a slash indicates superimposed gestures.
 - Gesture 1; Gesture 2 = a semi-colon indicates the juxtaposition of gestures.

- Style:** - (X) = Tonal center implied.

Table n.1: Formal outline of the first thirty-eight measures of *Cat O Nine Tails*.

Event	Sub-event	Measure Nos.	Tempo/ Duration	Description	Style
N1		1	3 seconds	“torture/turning screws” Hard scrape, fortissimo	Noise
T1	T1.1	2		Chromatic aggregate, contrapuntal	Atonal
T1/P1	T1.2	3	5 seconds	“virtuoso freak out” improvisation based on previous event	Atonal
	T1.3	4	Faster	“delicately” Pizzicato, pointillistic, chromatic	Atonal
P2		5	5 seconds	“virtuoso freak-out”; end with AMm7	Non-tonal
C1	C1.1	6	Q = 110	Chord Progression ii ⁶ -I ⁶ -vii ^{o6} -I in BbM	Tonal center: Bb
	C1.2	7		First appearance of Motive A (O148)	Non-tonal
	C1.3	8		A Major scale, <i>sul pont.</i>	Tonal center: A
	C1.4	9-10	Faster, accel.	Descending eight-note sequence and ascending four-note sequence emphasizing B min.	Tonal center: B
T2	T2.1	11		Chromatic segment (O123) with minor 2nd trills	Non-tonal
		12	Q = 120	“goofy”, Webernesque pizzicato, quasi-serial technique/11 note series minus G in cello	Atonal
	T2.2	13		Ascending, sixteenth-note cluster, F-A to A-C	Non-tonal
	T2.3	13		High indeterminate harmonics	Non-tonal
I1		14	3 seconds	Grand Pause	Silence
C2		15		“Cat and dog fight”	Non-tonal; noise
T3	T3.1	15	H = 110	“Country swing”, vacillating “a-e” vc line.	Tonal center: A major
		18		Bi-tonal expansion of swing section, A7/F-C dyad, <i>sul pont.</i>	Tonal center: A

Event	Sub-event	Measure Nos.	Tempo/Duration	Description	Style
	T3.2	19	A little faster, H = 125; Very fast	Chromatic cluster, interlocking thirds; Glissando: unison C to six octave span C	
C3	C3.1	21		"Dizzy", Superimposed C-G dyad and Db pentatonic figure, B-D# dyad in vla and vc.	Tonal center: B
	C3.2	23		Motive A.1 (0147)	Tonal center: B
	C3.3	24 25 29	<i>poco accel.</i> <i>poco rit.</i>	"Brightly" "Wrong-note" <i>spiccato</i> figure in vln I & II/ slow glissando from D and B to Bb and D in vla and vc.	Tonal center: (D)
I2		30	Q = 60	"slow, dark and brooding," G min.- B min.- Eb min.- G min.- B min. chord succession, 1/2 step oscillation (f# leading tone to (tango))	Tonal center: G
T4		31-38	Q = 116	(tango) in G minor; ends on V7/V HC	Tonal center: G

Related to issues of temporal disruption and formal dislocation, almost all of the events in the composition end with either a written rest or "non-sounding" interlude. In some places, the break is brief and does not disrupt the musical narrative, but in other places, the break is longer and intensifies the disjunctive character of the work. Upon first listening, the initial grand pause in measure 14 creates a feeling of anticipation in the listener. However, when these non-sounding moments increase in frequency and are combined with the constant shifts in style and musical language the expectations of the listener become saturated, and in some cases, negated. Problems of structural recognition become apparent. And although *Cat O Nine Tails* provides an alternative mode of listening, one that is more akin to the way we process visual media in contemporary society, the question for the inexperienced listener becomes not "what is next?" but may be replaced by "who cares".

Structurally, points of repose are created through timbre, texture, dynamics, and register. Interestingly enough, when cadences associated with functional tonality do appear, they serve as *aural souvenirs* rather than structural signposts. Starting in measure 6 of Example 5, the first cartoon event, labeled C1, progresses through a series of root position and inverted triads. The overall movement outlines a common cadential formula in Bb major. Resolved accordingly, the progression is inserted between an improvisational "vir-

P2-----C1.1-----C1.2 (Motive A)

Example n.5: *Cat O' Nine Tails*, mm. 5-7, non-contextual cadences.

tuosic freak-out” based on the chromatic aggregate and the second cartoon sub-event, C1.2 (Motive A). An example of contextual dislocation, the harmonic progression in Bb marks the beginning of a cartoon event rather than signaling the end of a tonal phrase. By shifting the placement of the cadence from the end to the beginning of a phrase, and by placing the sub-event at the end of a non-tonal improvisation, Zorn again subverts our established cultural expectations. Nevertheless, no matter how abrupt and disjunctive *Cat O' Nine Tails* sounds to us upon first, second, or even third listening, the work employs four main devices that help establish limited formal cohesion.

P2-----C1.1-----C1.2 (Motive A)

virtuoso freak-out $\text{♩} = 110$

5 5'' whip arco

arco sul tasto vibrato

pizz. arco

$BbM: ii^6 I^6 vii^{06} I$ Motive A

Example n.5: *Cat O' Nine Tails*, mm. 5-7, non-contextual cadences.

First, the pre-compositional limitations imposed by the specific number and types of events Zorn selected provide a structural framework; the inserted quotes, disparate styles, and “secret codes” in his work serve as unifying devices and create structural integrity.

Secondly, many of the aforementioned *popular-art* music allusions are related by tonal centrality. Consider Table 2. Described as “country swing,” “swing,” and “swinging,” events T3.1, T12, and T17, respectively, begin in A-major, while the tango and “lullaby” end on an A major-minor seventh chord and an A-minor triad, respectively. Almost all of the allusions are written in a major or minor tonality. The only exception is event T18, “Hardcore.” Referring to a sub-genre of late 1970s and 1980s punk rock, the distortion of the tone in T18 is more important than the notated tonal center.

Table n.2: Allusion and Tonal Center.

Event	Measure Nos.	Description	Tonal Center
T3	15	“Country swing”	A Major
T4	31-38	(Tango)	G minor – ends on A7
T8	72-81	(Dance)	A minor
T10	109-110	“bluesy”	G minor
T12	125-127	“swing”	A Major
T15	144-145	“lullaby”	Dm – ends on Am
T17	149-151	“swinging”	A Major
T18	152-154	“Hardcore”	C
T24	188	“bluesy”	D minor

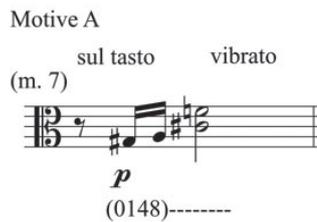
Third, some events are connected by functional harmonic progressions and common-tone transitions. In Example 6, the descending D major scale in measures 107-108 leads to a D-A dyad. Due to the abundance of written rests and abrupt interruptions found in previous events, one expects the goal of the passage to be the dyad in measure 108 and the subsequent rest. With the entrance of the viola on beat 2 in measure 110, however, the missing F# appears and resolves to the subsequent g-minor "blues" allusion. The D-major scalar passage in Example 6 functions as a dominant anacrusis, and yet again our established expectations are circumvented. And although some events employ this type of progression, most events are connected by common-tone transitions and tonal center, including Zorn's cartoon events and passages that feature the chromatic aggregate.

C10-----T10-----

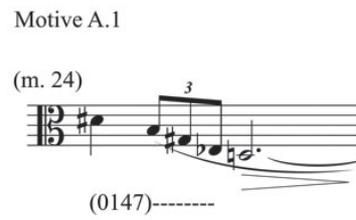
D Major-----D-A---F# g minor
 (V-----i)

Example n.6: *Cat O' Nine Tails*, mm. 107-110, tonal cadences and transitions.

Fourth and finally, *Cat O' Nine Tails* uses motivic transformation as an important unifying device. In Example 7.1, an ascending four-note motive, identified as set class (0148) and labeled Motive A, first appears in the viola part in an otherwise isolated texture. Later, the motive recurs in the same type of texture and is written for the same instrument, even though, as shown in Example 7.2, it is inverted and condensed. Moreover, as illustrated in the interval vector in Table 3, both fragments lack an interval of a major second, and although Motive A.1 is different in terms of interval content, its use as a solo fragment in a somewhat frenetic soundscape is clearly based on the first appearance of Motive A. Usually performed as part of a cartoon event, Motive A and its subsequent transformations emphasize the interval of a tritone and a major or minor third. Whether the motive appears as an ascending or descending line, performed *legato* or *staccato*, or by one or two instruments, any subsequent transformation of Motive A retains its distinct character. The importance placed on this motive as a structural signpost within the seemingly open-ended and disjunctive episodes makes the gesture a strong musical anchor that a listener can easily recognize.



Example n.7.1: *Cat O' Nine Tails*, m. 7, vla



Example n.7.2: *Cat O' Nine Tails*, m. 24, vla.

Table n.3: *Cat O' Nine Tails*, Motive A and motivic transformations.

Motive	Textural Reduction	PC Set	Interval Vector	Location
A		(0148)	<101310>	Section: C1 Page 3, m. 7, vla.
A.1		(0147)	<102111>	Section: C3 Page 5, m. 24, vla.
A.2		(0246)	<030201>	Section: C4 Page 7, mm. 52-53, vc./vla.
A.3		(0136)	<112011>	Section: P4 Page 8, m. 55, vc. cadenza
A.4		(0136)	<112011>	Section: C7 Page 11, m. 92, vla./vc.
A.5		(0146)	<200121>	Section: C9 Page 15, m. 131, vla.
A.6		(0146)	<111111>	Section: C11 Page 16, m. 141-142, vln. II
A.7		(0136)	<112011>	Section: C12 Page 20, m. 169, vln. II

So, after all of the events and motives in *Cat O' Nine Tails* have been examined and re-examined, several questions remain: How do we attempt to reconcile this contradiction of musical form and function? How do we classify this piece? How do we explain Zorn's aesthetic and discursive narrative to the uninitiated, or do we need to, especially in the age of Google, the iPod, and hundreds of other nonlinear, stream-of-consciousness, multi-tasking, digital devices?

In an article entitled "New Temporalities in Music," the late Jonathan D. Kramer (1981) eloquently explained the importance and need for new modes of listening,

Thus music has become progressively more discontinuous in recent generations. The temporality of 20th century music, like the temporality of inner thought processes, is often not linear. We constantly project fantasies, hopes, and fears into the future; we recall and juxtapose more-and less-remote pasts; we turn our attention from one thought chain to another, often without apparent reason. The temporality of the mind is seemingly irrational. But time in our daily lives is basically ordered – by schedules, clocks, and causal relationships. It is only against this backdrop of order that the increasing discontinuities of daily life are understood as nonlinear. (p. 544).

Although *Cat O Nine Tails* seems nonlinear and anti-climactic, Zorn's self-imposed limitations on musical materials and his use of recurring motives and tonal centers denotes a conscious effort on the part of the composer to create a unified structure. Therefore, on one hand, we have a form that somewhat resembles a modified, albeit fragmented, variation-rondo, and on the other hand, we have a work that exhibits qualities resembling "moment form". First described by Karlheinz Stockhausen during an interview with West German Radio in 1961 (Stockhausen, 1964, liner notes), a work exhibiting moment form: consists of two or more

independent musical events, which avoid goal-directed climaxes; eschews introductory, transitional, developmental, and cadential stages; emphasizes formal unpredictability through discontinuity of time and content; and concentrates on formal stasis. In other words, what occurs *within* each event is more important than the overall succession of events. Therefore, when one tries to categorize Zorn's work, both terms, moment form and the aforementioned variation-rondo, seem simultaneously *apropos* and archaic, and limiting at best.

Using Kramer's hierarchical levels of linearity and nonlinearity as a model, we can position Zorn's music within a more appropriate context. KRAMER (1981, p. 539) defines linearity as any music that is tonal and goal oriented; it progresses by means of a system of complex hierarchic pitch relationships and established rules of harmonic tension and release. Nonlinearity, on the other hand, is generally defined as a type of music that "is not oriented toward climax" (p. 540-541).

As shown in Table 4, the foreground level of *Cat O' Nine Tails* is both linear and nonlinear; some events are connected by motivic design, tonal centrality, harmonic progression and traditional voice-leading, while other events lack any clear transition or connection. For example, the stylistic allusions and motivic variations listed in Tables 2 and 3, respectively, provide the piece with a few brief, yet observable moments of linear unity. On the other hand, while continuously waiting for the arrival of a "related" motive or event, the constant juxtaposition of discontinuous events creates formal stasis, and thus makes the foreground nonlinear.

Concerning the background level, the work lacks a central climax and is therefore nonlinear. Since both the foreground and background exhibit a high degree of formal ambiguity, it leaves the middle ground level and what KRAMER (1981, p. 542) calls "nondirected linearity" to address issues of form and function.

Table n.4: *Cat O' Nine Tails*, Hierarchical levels of linearity and nonlinearity.

Structural Levels	Associative Modes		
Foreground	Linear (Motivic unity, shared tonal centrality, and traditional voice-leading)		Nonlinear (Lack of transitions, stylistic discontinuity, formal stasis)
Middle ground		Nondirected Linearity (Immediate successive events create formal continuity/discontinuity)	
Background			Nonlinear (No central or goal directed climax)

In nondirected linearity, the implications in the middle ground of the work are localized: each self-contained event results from associations heard only in the *immediately preceding event*, not in the general structure of the work. For example, starting at measure 15 in *Cat O' Nine Tails*, the juxtaposition of the event labeled "cat and dog fight" with the "country swing" allusion corresponds to the appearance of "Tyson hits Spinks" and "lullaby" in measures 144 and 145 (see Example 1). In both cases, noise progresses to tonal allusion. Additionally, both sets of events are preceded by a grand pause and rest, respectively, and as result, generate a larger three-event structural unit. And although it can be difficult to perceive the long-range associations that exist between the two units – due to the numerous intervening events and the extended length of time occurring between the two units (approximately 7:30 minutes) – the deliberate use of a repeated pattern of silence, noise, and tonality does provide an important structural middle ground, one that focuses not only on direct compositional contrast, but also on a protracted secondary formal connection. So, rather than a strict "moment form", where unrelated moments *cease to be* rather than end,

or a variation-rondo, where design and the teleological process determines the narrative, *Cat O Nine Tails* convinces the listener that each section is unrelated temporally, yet maintains a sense of nonlinear continuity and interrupted progression.

Conclusions

The complex juxtaposition and superimposition of the aural and visual, the present and the past, and the continuous and discontinuous create moments of temporal and contextual disruption in *Cat O' Nine Tails*. An archetype of postmodern referentiality, the abundant use of short breaks and extended silences, and the constant interruption of the musical and extra-musical narrative render the gap between these stylistic disjunctions perceptible. Nevertheless, *Cat O' Nine Tails* achieves *limited* formal cohesion not only by recurring tonal centers, common-tone transitions, and motivic transformation, but also by Zorn's self-imposed limitations of compositional materials and associative unity. The sonic equivalent of a visual montage, Zorn's processes pose several questions concerning the distinction between the familiar and the unfamiliar, and how it creates not only a type of cognitive musical structure based on style, but also a secondary cultural narrative derived from the experiences and the personal connection of the listener. Regardless of the musical edifice constructed, the style(s) emphasized, or the content contained, *Cat O' Nine Tails* is a compositional milestone for Zorn. An important work, it marks the transition from the composer's early avant-garde improvisational and graphically notated games pieces to his more mature and traditionally notated postmodern works.

Notes

- ¹ The rhythm is the only part of the "quotation" that can be attributed to Charles Ives (1874-1954); it is found in his *String Quartet No. 2* (1913).
- ² According to Kronos's program notes for *Cat O' Nine Tails*, there are only 51 distinct moments.
- ³ Bela Bartok, *String Quartet No. 4*, Mvt. IV, m. 51.
- ⁴ Throughout the analysis, set classes are used to label pc sets belonging to the same Tn/TnI type, instead of Allen Forte's classification system. For example, even though the two sets identified in the top left of Example 4 share the same prime form 016, they are not pitch class sets 016, in terms of normal form.
- ⁵ We recall Stravinsky's famous quote concerning musical theft, "A good composer does not imitate; he steals." (Yates, 1980, p. 41).

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