Circles and Circuses: Carnivalesque Tropes in the Late 1960s
Musical and Cultural Imagination

DISSERTATION

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Abstract

Circus, fairground, carousel, carnival imagery is everywhere during the late 1960s: in cover art, song lyrics, band names and song titles, music criticism, names of music venues, festivals, movies, literature. From circus tents to clowns, from jugglers to magicians, from carousels to parades, an entire carnivalesque lexis seems to be at play in what is generally termed “psychedelia.” The current study attempts to read and offer “thick description” (Geertz) of this vocabulary as part of a larger cultural and countercultural imagination, and integrate musical manifestations of the period (popular psychedelia and avant-garde / experimental music) in a semiotic network of metaphoric representation. If language is nothing more than a chain of metaphors (Lakoff), it is nevertheless true that we often take such metaphors as “rock ’n’ roll circus,” “song-carousel,” “riot of sound” for granted, since they are so widespread and culturally shared that an explanation of their meaning may appear pedantic. But what do these word-images actually mean? What is the range of their connotations? What is the relationship between them? Why are they so frequent in the late 1960s? And how are these tropes translated or suggested musically?

One possible answer to the last question involves the broad concept of circularity, emblematic for the psychedelic era: a round melodic motive or harmonic progression,
a cyclic phrase articulation, a motoric-recurrent riff, a spiraling or whirling waltz in triple time. This waltzing nature of the music, in particular, is striking, given that the use of triple meters is relatively rare in popular music in general, and very rare in rock music specifically. The waltz becomes thus in psychedelia a characteristic gesture that has cultural resonances and ramifications, and that can emerge in music regardless of the song’s textual content, to suggest both the specific rotation of the carousel (a “carousel-waltz”) and the more general sense of circularity, spinning, spiraling, going “round and round.”

But the carousel-waltz is only one aspect of a broader semiotic vocabulary that I attempt to name here. Jacques Tati ends his *Play Time* film of 1967 with the image of a busy traffic circle which unequivocally suggests a carousel. In another film of the same year, *Week End*, Jean-Luc Godard presents the image of a nightmarish traffic jam as a carnivalesque parade. And again in 1967, John Cage makes an explicit connection between circus and collage, by coining the term *musicircus*. These are just three among many instances discussed in this study in which the sense of playfulness and the sense of confusion do not collide, but rather – playfully – coexist. The one word that seems to embody this reality comes from ancient times, and from Mikhail Bakhtin. The word is *carnival*, and the carnival’s mode of aesthetic articulation is the *carnivalesque*. The carnivalesque opens a new door of perception, which will perhaps allow us to re-experience the late 1960s experiment in Tati’s terms, as confusing playtime; and in Robert Venturi’s 1966 terms, as “messy vitality.”
Dedicated to my parents
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Overture

Play Time, Traffic, Parade, Confusion. These are the titles of three consecutive films and one unfinished project directed by Jacques Tati in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Three of these films are comedies; the fourth one is amusing. They are all French, but titled in franglais, and almost silent, without dialogues. All of them feature Tati himself, either as a hilarious, partly Chaplinesque character named Monsieur Hulot, or as a circus performer. But the most intriguing common element is that the four interrelated titles of these films seem to express something from the late 1960s Zeitgeist, or imaginarium. The present study attempts, from a more-or-less musicological perspective, to elucidate this elusive “something,” to name it, calling it at various points “carousel mentality,” “carnivalesque,” and “heteromorphy.”

As such, from the outset this study is preoccupied with “thick description” (Geertz 1973) or contextual interpretation of certain words or images, and with the complicated relationships established between these word-images, and between their literal and figurative meanings. Carousel; waltz; circus; carnival; clown; parade; traffic jam and traffic circle; rock ’n’ roll; spectacle; noise; crowds and crowded street; boisterous party; show; collage. What do these words and images mean in the late 1960s? What is the range of their connotations? And what is the relationship
between these apparently disparate verbal and visual images? Why are they so frequently encountered in the 1960s, in literal or figurative form, in artistic or critical discourse, in music, literature, or film?

Most words are verbalized images. Furthermore, we know from George Lakoff’s influential writings on metaphor that even the most abstract concepts and verbal expressions are, in fact, *metaphors*. But these metaphorical word-images are often so deeply rooted in our minds and so commonly used in everyday language that we do not notice their metaphorical value. And even if we do notice a word or verbal expression as being metaphorical, we do not stop to think what is behind that metaphor (other metaphors, of course). It is quite common to refer to the rock music show as a “circus,” to describe a song as being like a “carousel,” or to talk about a musical collage as a “riot of sound.” We all, musicians and non-musicians alike, have used and continue to use such metaphors in our informal musical descriptions. Yet, we often take these metaphors for granted, since they are so widespread and culturally shared that an explanation of their meaning may appear pedantic. In other words: we do not make a *problem* out of these metaphors.

But what if word-images such as “circus,” “carousel,” “riot,” or Tati’s titles above, would say something more, not only about a particular piece of music, but also about cultural discourses and tactics of countercultural representation in the late 1960s? Just as every language reflects through its vocabulary and syntactic flow a particular way of “seeing” and thinking about things, a style of music, a culture or a period of time
can articulate some keywords or key-images. Two concrete musical examples here would be Scandinavian post-rock music (Sigur Rós in particular) articulating a poetics of, and reinforcing a mythology around, the snowy space and “spaciness” which has been long associated with Northern countries (cf. Grieg or Sibelius); and the image of the ruin and derelict industrial spaces, so often encountered in industrial music, and particularly in Germany (cf. Einstürzende Neubauten), as a postmodern, post-industrial, less idealized but still poetic and in a way nostalgic updating of the German Romantic-gothic “ruin” trope (cf. Caspar David Friedrich, and, in a very different register, Mahler’s music, constantly described by Adorno with precisely this metaphorical word).

Unlike the Scandinavian icy “space” and the German/Romantic/gothic/industrial “ruin,” the late 1960s seem to emphasize not one, but an entire series of words and images, as listed above. To simplify, let us call these word-images or metaphors, tropes. It should be emphasized however that these tropes are only partially synonymous with those cultural “themes” articulated in literature and art. Starting at least from the late nineteenth century, the clown and the circus are indeed prominent themes, as it is the image of the “freak” (cf. Adams 2001, Bombaci 2006). The images of a traffic jam or of a busy street, on the other hand, are not widespread themes. The street though does become a privileged space of both play and contestation in the late 1960s, and the image of a traffic jam does have an isomorphic relationship with other similar conglomerations which I call heteromorphies (party, street demonstration, crowded rock ’n’ roll show, collagistic music). As tropes, both
the crowded street and the traffic jam express a sense of confusion – confusion that can be playful and exciting, anarchic and violent, or simultaneously playful and violent.

We see thus that the many word-images or tropes in our list above are in fact closely interconnected, associative variations of one another, and can be perhaps resumed by the four words in Jacques Tati’s list. Tati ends his *Play Time* film of 1967 with the image of a busy traffic circle which unequivocally suggests a carousel. In another film of the same year, *Week End*, Jean-Luc Godard presents the image of a nightmarish traffic jam as a carnivalesque parade. And again in 1967, John Cage makes an explicit connection between circus and collage, by coining the term *musicircus*. These are just three among many instances in which the sense of playfulness and the sense of confusion do not collide, but rather – playfully – coexist. The one word that seems to embody this reality comes from ancient times, and from Mikhail Bakhtin. The word is *carnival*, and the carnival’s mode of aesthetic articulation is *the carnivalesque*.

The late 1960s would appear in this light as a carnivalesque “play time” which is also a time of “confusion;” a time of congestion, “parades,” and congested parades. From hazy psychedelia to tremendous street unrest; from playful happenings and communal hippies to radical politics; from the acid-rock “theater of the mind” to the “political theater;” from the “rock ’n’ roll circus” to intertextual collages and the utopian *musicircus*; all these signal a heavy yet no less exciting and lively “traffic” of cultural
signs. The fact that this semiotic traffic is often reflected metaphorically as a “circus” or “carnival” should come as no surprise. Yet, while Bakhtin’s carnivalesque sometimes appears in cultural studies about post-1960s postmodern narrativity (Hutcheon 1983), or as a metaphor for the entire popular culture sphere (Danesi 2008, Danesi 2009) and pop music domain (Railton 2001), few have attempted to attack this problem of metaphoric representation in the late 1960s on such a large cultural scale. Certainly, some popular music scholars talk about the carnivalesque Sgt. Pepper (Marhsall 2006, Scicluna 2010), a few others talk about the carnivalesque Zappa (Antinora 2008), or make passing references to Pink Floyd’s “theater of the mind.” However, no one has connected these rock “carnivals” with other musical and artistic practices in order to arrive at an all-inclusive picture of the “late 1960s carnival.” The present study does not and cannot have such comprehensive pretensions. But we do raise the problem, open some windows, and take a broad, interdisciplinary and intertextual approach to this delicate question of metaphoric representations of the late 1960s.

When the present study invokes and generalizes the late 1960s, it clearly invokes a particular segment and mindset that were captured in certain words and indeed advanced by and through those words: I describe subcultural or countercultural manifestations of the time, but ones that have all but taken over the historical gist of that period, ones that have come to represent it and therefore be it. For one amazing moment in history, in the late 1960s the counterculture indeed seemed to be the culture. Historical decades have managed to become fairly precise signifiers even
though they involved other matters as well – historians and non-historians alike speak freely, though not glibly, of the “roaring twenties,” the “jazz age,” and the “age of anxiety.” Yet it doesn’t behoove us to try and disassemble these broader signifieds. Not everyone was anxious during “The Age of Anxiety,” certainly, but to speak of such an era in such a way shows more demarcation and distillation than tautology. Periods of time can and usually do take on particular symbolic values – in that sense the Zeitgeist is clearly though implicitly a retrogressive construct and not a chronologically authentic idea, though no less important for that – and it is doubtful that much benefit could come from bad faith attempts to tear down historiographies in order to construct history.

It would be more appropriate for us to talk about cultural imagination and especially radical imagination\(^1\) than about a symbolic Zeitgeist – this last word being sometimes correlated with an “essentialist” perspective. The carnivalesque is not exactly an “essence,” but rather the opposite. Carnival is not simply laughter; it means many things. According to Bakhtin, carnival is communal, non-official, non-hierarchic and transgressive. It is profoundly ambivalent and ironic: a feast of joy and laughter but also one of the “grotesque body,” of bodily deformations, degradations, exaggerations. A carnival operates through carnivalesque inversions, parodic turnabout, and misalliance of extremes, creating eccentric and extravagant

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\(^1\) See for instance the prominent role of the word “imagination” in Marcuse’s writings, especially his 1969 An Essay on Liberation. A new attempt at investigating this slippery but important notion of “radical imagination” can be found in a recent thematic issue of the Affinities journal, where the editors define the concept “in terms of horizons of socio-political possibility, the possibility of dynamic and shared visions animating and animated by individuals and collectives as they struggle” (Haiven 2010).
configurations. Finally, the carnival is potentially *subversive*, resisting authority, testing and contesting the established order. It is easy to see how such attributes resonated in the late 1960s. In a time of tremendous countercultural turmoil and excitement, of communal idealism, and of heightened sensitivity to various alternative, non-hierarchical, liberating forms, structures, manifestations, the carnivalesque model with its decentralized and communal configuration, playful ambivalence, eccentric misalliances, and ironic inversions and subversions appears as a natural ingredient of cultural play and countercultural resistance.

Let us also remember that the mid- to late 1960s was also a time that saw a tremendous post-structuralist movement of non-essentialist – if not strictly relativist – ideas, especially in France, with many theoretical voices questioning the author, the reader, and their intentions; discussing the way in which meaning is semiotically negotiated and radically disseminated; refusing any sort of reductive binarisms (Derrida’s “binary oppositions”) and seeing any “system” as being open, decentralized and non-hierarchical; criticizing “modes of exclusion” and the institutionalized power of the word, author, and ideology; deconstructing the Western “metaphysics of presence;” and promoting the key-concepts of “text” and “intertextuality.” From Foucault to Derrida, from Tel Quel and Barthes to Eco and Kristeva, from *opera aperta* to “semiotic guerilla warfare,” from “heterotopia” to the “death of the author,” from “dissemination” and “deconstruction” to “intertextuality” – all these ideas were in the air *at that time*. This frenzy of revolutionary ideas which appeared all in just a few years does look like a sort of hallucinatory carnival. And
this analogy is not entirely forced. A special note should be made at this point regarding Julia Kristeva’s influential notion of “intertextuality.” As it appears in her classic *Semeiotikè* (1969), and even earlier in her 1966 dissertation, Kristeva’s “intertext” was clearly a radicalized reworking of Bakhtin’s polyphonic dialogism and heteroglossia, and Bakhtin’s “carnival” and “carnivalesque” concepts features prominently in *Semeiotikè.*

Rooted in Marxist, Freudian and Bakhtinian grounds, Kristeva’s carnivalized intertextuality was, of course, more than a literary tool or intellectual concept; it was “a means of ideological and cultural expression and of social transformation.”

It was a tool of revolution.”

It was, in other words, a metaphor, just like collage, the carnival, and the carousel are metaphors for what Tati calls Play Time, Traffic, Parade, and Confusion.

Now that the circular game of metaphors is on, I should at this point talk in more precise terms about the current project. My investigation did not start with Tati’s series of titles, nor with this broad cultural framework. It started with a more modest yet no less captivating observation, namely the fact that circus, fairground, and carousel imagery is everywhere during the late 1960s: in cover art, song lyrics, band names and song titles, music criticism, names of music venues, festivals, movies, literature. From circus tents to clowns, from jugglers to magicians, from carousels to parades, an entire carnivalesque lexis seemed to be at play in what is generally termed

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2 For an account of the influence of Bakhtin on Kristeva’s conception of intertextuality in *Semeiotikè*, as well as a discussion of the complications in the reception of Kristeva’s book in France and in the U.S., see Orr 2003: 20-31.


4 Giere 2009: 3-4.
“psychedelia.” Two questions naturally started to haunt me: why this lexis? And how are these images translated or suggested musically? One possible answer to the second question, explored in our Preludium, involves the broad concept of circularity, emblematic for the psychedelic era: a round melodic motive or harmonic progression, a cyclic phrase articulation, a motoric-recurrent riff, a spiraling or whirling waltz in triple time. This waltzing nature of the music, in particular, is nothing less than striking, given that the use of triple meters is relatively rare in popular music in general, and a sort of diabolus in musica for rock music specifically. The waltz, often accompanying the motion of the merry-go-rounds and other fairground rides, becomes thus in psychedelia a characteristic gesture or topos that has cultural resonances and ramifications, and that can emerge in music regardless of the song’s textual content, to suggest (rather than unequivocally denote) both the specific rotation of the carousel and the more general sense of circularity (mechanical or not), spinning, spiraling, going “round and round.” Borrowing Teresa Magdanz’s term (Magdanz 2006), I refer to this late 1960s psychedelic waltz as a carousel-waltz.

On the other hand, some music can be “round” even in the absence of waltzes and triple meters. I address a number of such examples, starting with Michel Legrand’s “The Windmills of Your Mind” (1968) – a blatant instance of circularity in a solid duple time, and a case that shifts the rules of the circle game toward some extrarhythmical subtleties: cyclic melodic and harmonic progression, timbral universe, metrical/temporal flow, fluidity, continuity. I close the Preludium by advancing the loose metaphor of a “music-(as)-machine,” a music constructed as a machine, where
ostinati and *perpetuum mobile*, additive processes, and in some cases waltz quotations (the waltz, like the march, does have sometimes mechanistic connotations), would provide and sustain circular-spiraling-frantic momentum to the music.

The fact that this circularity and the carousel-waltz were part of a broader cultural semiotics that extends beyond music and psychedelia is already implicit in the Preludium, but becomes explicit only in the second part of the study. This Fugue articulates an intertextual counterpoint of two basic themes: Bakhtin’s idea of the *carnivalesque*, on the one hand; and my notion of *heteromorphy*, on the other hand. I define the half-concrete, half-abstract heteromorphy from a thermodynamic perspective, as a dense, clustered structure, space or configuration that is “far from equilibrium” and maintains a potential open door to the primordial chaos or the informal. In more philosophical terms, the heteromorphy would correspond to a Nietzschean “will to disorder,” prominent in the late 1960s. As Magdanz shows in her study about the “celluloid waltz,” film, as a popular medium that works directly, unmediated with concrete visual images, is probably more efficient than other arts when it comes to disseminating and ingraining conceptual images or metaphors such as “carousel-waltz” or “carnival” in the cultural imagination. Therefore, in order to exemplify in a clear manner the extent and ramifications of the carnivalesque, and the fundamental interplay between carnivalesque and heteromorphy, I chose to look closely at two films of 1967, Tati’s *Play Time* and Godard’s *Week End*, films that represent two contrasting, perhaps opposite sides of the carnivalesque realm: joyful and innocent anarchy; and respectively, orgiastic violence or eschatological carnival.
Tati’s and Godard’s films will reveal a series of keywords, images, and tactics associated with the carnivalesque. Both these films are spectacles or parades of various heteromorphies (crowds, urban street, boisterous party, traffic circle, traffic jam, etc.), heteromorphies which are – naturally – disruptive, loud, noisy.

Furthermore, Godard’s political film is particularly provocative, ironic and ambivalent. Noise (in both its Attalian and literal sense), spectacle, provocation, irony, ambivalence, are the keywords that dominate the remaining of our Fugue. First we address the complicated and ambiguous relationship between provocative subversion and carnivalesque spectacle in late 1960s rock music. Is this rock music socially and politically engaged? Is it really rebellious? Is it carnivalesque? And what exactly does that metaphor mean, “rock ’n’ roll circus”? A number of nuanced correlations are made at this point, between Godard’s political provocations, the Rolling Stones’ sarcasm, the Beatles’ carnivalesque Sgt. Pepper, Guy Debord’s theory of the social spectacle and the situationist “situation” and détournement, Henri Lefebvre’s concept of the “moment,” and finally, Jefferson Airplane’s Godardian “guerilla gig” in NYC, 1968. The heteromorphies of the street and of the crowd make the subject of this Fugue’s closing section, where we explore the relationship between literal and metaphorical “noise,” taking as case study a musical-visual counterpoint: Julie Driscoll’s “Czechoslovakia” (1969), and Ralph Steadman’s grotesque-clownesque cover-art to Brian Auger’s and Driscoll’s Streetnoise album.

The Coda is an extension of our intertextual and allegorical reading of “Czechoslovakia” / Streetnoise in the realm of avant-garde, modernist or post-
modernist music. More precisely, we discuss the experimental collage as a prime example of heteromorphy, arguing that a collage is always “far from equilibrium,” even when the collage is quotational, intertextual, structured and “composed.” A sort of musical lingua franca in the 1960s, and definitely the product and mirror of a generalized experimentalist and/or politicized milieu where both Kristeva’s “intertextuality” and Hendrix’s “Are You Experienced?” break frontiers, collage was practiced in equal measure by academically-trained composers and by daring popular musicians, especially those dabbling in radical forms of psychedelia and incipient progressive rock. Regardless of the various specific functions and motivations of a collage, two broad classes of collages can be discerned: one quotational, intentional and intertextual; the other one, non-quotational and indeterminate. Both these types of collagistic designs are not only (thermo)dynamically unstable, and fragmented from a Gestalt point of view, but also susceptible to being metaphorically associated with a circus, parade, or carnival. We dive first into the Mahlerian waters of Berio’s well-known third movement from Sinfonia (1968), to consider the various images and metaphors generated by the piece’s intertext, metaphors ranging from “forest” and “river” to “fractals” and “network,” from schizophrenia to alienation, from the “deafening traffic of mundane affairs” to the “murmur of the crowd,” from “waltz-machine” and peripezia to “magic theater” and “penny show.” We then continue with a review of the negative connotations of the word “collage” in high-modernist circles, where this practice is portrayed as a surrealistic parade or as a sensuous anarchy that is detrimental to musical “composition.” And we conclude with Cage’s self-explanatory musicircus.
The opposite of a monographic investigation, this study and its interpretations are fundamentally and necessarily intertextual, interdisciplinary, and, of course, risky.

Our project bridges not two, but several domains: pop and rock music, popular and art music, sound and visuals, musicology and film studies, cultural studies and the theory of the imaginary, aesthetic and political theory. Multiple methodological and conceptual influences can thus be discerned in our text, ranging from Gestalt and experimental psychology (circularity and the carousel-waltz) to semiotics and linguistic theories of metaphor, from post-structuralism (“intertextuality”) to contemporary theories of thermodynamic chaos and complex systems (“heteromorphy”). Above all these influences, the most prominent one is perhaps that Jungian semi-conscious or unconscious repository of images, metaphors and symbols called cultural imaginariurn or “imagination,” a fascinating terrain charted by the French “myth-analytic” school of Gaston Bachelard and Gilbert Durand. Given the vast and cross-domain territory covered in these pages, a summary review of “the most important” scholarly literature would be impractical. A number of musicological or non-musicological texts were, however, particularly instrumental, shaping in direct or indirect way my own conceptual imagination and understanding, confirming my intuitions or providing me with valuable conceptual tools. A few of these names and titles were already mentioned: Bakhtin’s writings on Rabelais, Dostoevsky, and the “dialogic imagination;” Foucault’s “archaeology of knowledge;” and the “heterotopia” concept in his “Of Other Spaces” essay; Attali’s political economy of “noise;” Kristeva’s and Monelle’s “intertextuality;” Prigogine’s “dissipative structures;” Debord’s situationist theory; Magdanz’s dissertation on the “celluloid
waltz;” Boone’s discussion of the psychedelic mandala; Danesi’s investigation of mythic symbolism in popular culture; Watkins’ and Metzer’s cultural examinations of collage. Not to be forgotten are the all-important “film-texts” of Jacques Tati, Jean-Luc Godard, Federico Fellini, Luis Buñuel, Peter Greenaway, Claude Lelouch, Guy Maddin, and many others.

In summary, this study provides an introduction to the hardly explored terrain of carnivalesque allegorical representation in late 1960s music and culture. I suggest intertextual, circular and metaphorical ways of “seeing,” “reading,” and hearing the musical experiments of the late 1960s as part of a larger carnivalesque and heteromorphic cultural climate. This door of perception will perhaps allow us to re-experience the late 1960s experiment in Tati’s terms, as confusing playtime; and in Robert Venturi’s 1966 terms, as “messy vitality.”
PRELUDIUM

The Circle Game:
Circularity and the Carousel-Waltz in Psychedelia

For some time I have been intrigued by the unusually high frequency of circus/fairground images and verbal descriptions in the band names, song titles, lyrics, cover art, and musical criticism of late 1960s popular music. As visual depictions and textual references, one can encounter everything from circus performers (clowns, contortionists, acrobats, jugglers, magicians, tightrope walkers, fire-eaters, strongmen, snake charmers, lion tamers) to physical locations and fair/fairground/funfair rides and events (fixed circus amphitheaters, the tents of the traveling circus, carnivals and street parades, carousels, roller coasters, motion platforms, funhouses, halls of mirrors), with the clown and the carousel taking center-stage in this lexis. And so, the questions of “why” and “how” started to surface into my head: why is this so, and how are these visual-textual images translated or suggested aurally into sound and music? Can we hear the clown and the carousel? Can we have a ride on the musical carousel?
Leaving the clown aside, this introductory chapter seeks not necessarily to answer but to circumscribe and flesh out the “why” and the “how” of what can be called the “carousel mentality” of (much of) the psychedelic generation. Preliminary observations led to the fact that some of the images above are almost always associated with circular musical figures and motions: a round melodic motive or harmonic progression, a cyclic phrase articulation, a motoric-recurrent riff, a spiraling or whirling waltz in triple time. This last aspect, the waltzing nature of the music, is nothing less than striking, given that the use of triple meters is relatively rare in popular music in general, and a sort of diabolus in musica for rock music specifically. But soon I realized that the waltz is not just a simple indexical sign (as Peirce would call it) for illustrating the word “waltz” in a song, but a resembling icon, and, furthermore, a topos or characteristic gesture that has cultural resonances and ramifications, and that can emerge in music regardless of the song’s textual content, to suggest (rather than unequivocally denote) both the specific rotation of the carousel and the more general sense of circularity (mechanical or not), spinning, spiraling, going “round and round.”

As such, our focus in this Preludium is primarily on temporal/metrical circularity, involving notions of rhythm, flow, fluidity-continuity, mechanicism, and motorism in music that is strictly measured (I completely disregard here, for practical reasons, the other half of psychedelic music, the equally important free-flowing, jam- and space-jam music of a Grateful Dead or Pink Floyd, as well as the implications that collage can have for a fractured, irregular, disjoined, and hybrid conception of psychedelic
musical time; the problem of collage will be addressed separately, in the Coda). As variations on the same theme of circularity, three working hypotheses-hypostases\(^5\) of musical temporality are explored below: (i) the explicit circularity of triple times (hypothesis: psychedelic music has a penchant for triple meters, often translated in the form of a carousel-waltz); (ii) the implicit, subtler cyclic and rotational quality in duple times (hypothesis: psychedelic music can be “round” even in the absence of triple meters); and (iii) the loose metaphor of a “music-(as)-machine,” a music constructed as a machine, where ostinati and perpetuum mobile, additive processes, and in some cases waltz quotations (the waltz, like the march, does have sometimes mechanistic connotations), would provide and sustain circular-spiraling-frantic momentum to the music (hypothesis: the music-machine is one way of bridging the dialectic between psychedelic sensoriality and prog-rock constructivism).

By their nature, these “hypotheses about hypostases” are incomplete, associative, and subjective, being primarily based on my own musical intuitions as a listener rather than as theoretician. But I hope this introduction may offer starting points for further discussion, and a glimpse into and musical substantiation of some less visible, subterraneous cultural connections that are, as far as I know, unexplored in a more systematic way. The “rock-music-as-a-circus” and the “song-carousel” mental pictures are easy to grasp on an intuitive level, and we all, musicians and non-

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\(^5\) Devoid of any Christian theological connotations, the word “hypostasis” is taken here in its Neoplatonic philosophical sense of hidden essence and inner reality (the Latin and Greek etymologies of the word include substance, sediment, support, foundation), which fits well with the hypothetical, speculative, and “under the hood” nature of much of my discussion. In some Latin languages, as for example in Romanian, “hypostasis” is commonly used as another word for “(essential) aspect/instance/manifestation.”
musicians alike, have made and continue to make use of these metaphors in our
informal musical descriptions, and especially when it comes to describe music from
the late 1960s. This suggests that the nexus between circus/fairground/carousel and
musical expression is not arbitrary and not entirely conjectural, but rather hidden and
deep-rooted somewhere in both the cultural logic of the late 1960s, and in our
ongoing collective imagination.

For the sake of illuminating and contrasting various aspects of this recurrent theme of
circularity, our abundant references, illustrations and digressions range from purely
psychedelic rock music to related, surrounding popular idioms of the late 1960s
(including pop, folk, soul, funk, and progressive rock, with the expected
contaminations between these genres), and we also refer tangentially to a number of
art music examples. A couple of terminological and conceptual clarifications are in
place here: I use “prog” interchangeably with progressive rock, and “psych” (as in
psych-prog or psych-folk) as short for psychedelic. Throughout this chapter, I take the
term “psychedelic” (or “psychedelia”) itself in its broader sense, not just as a strict
musical style of rock music (what is sometimes referred to as “acid rock”), but as a
cultural mindset and modus operandi that affected much other non-rock music, a
significant cultural-musical moment placed roughly in time between the Dylanesque
folk-revival and the nascent progressive rock (overlapping both), or, more exactly,
between 1965 and 1972, with a peak of evolution of just three years between 1967-69.
Circus/fairground, and psychedelia – some brute evidence

The predominance of circus imagery in the psychedelic culture of the late 1960s could be partly explained by looking first at the circus (and more generally, the funfair or fairground) as a door to “the other realm:” a locus of the fantastic and the fantasmagoric, of something that transcends the everyday experience. Dwarfs and jugglers, acrobats and clowns, monkeys and elephants, tattooed exotic women and fortune-tellers are strange, curious creatures putting on a thrilling show of illusions and communal joy, a spectacle of the unexpected and the miraculous, of wonder, bewilderment, meraviglia.\(^6\) While the traditional circus show displays a wide palette of emotions, from comic to tragic-comic and the grotesque, it may be this last aspect that had the most profound impact on 1960s sensibilities. The grotesque, strange, spooky, freaky, dark, supernatural, but also liberating, cathartic dimensions of the circus/fairground were what the psychedelics were mostly interested in. This is, after all, the time that saw the revival of Hermann Hesse’s novel *Steppenwolf* (1927), whose fantasmagoric, mind-bending “Magic Theater” served as inspiration for a number of musical pieces of collagistic nature, including George Rochberg’s *Music for the Magic Theater* (1965) but also United States of America’s Ivesian “The American Metaphysical Circus” (1968), Steppenwolf’s exercise in avant-garde noise-drone “For Madmen Only” (1971), Drum Circus’ polystylistic sound-canvas “Magic

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\(^6\) The Italian word “meraviglia” (wonder, astonishment, excited surprise) has deep conceptual roots and ramifications, going back to the Aristotelian (and Cartesian) sense of “wonder” that moves the passions, and being cultivated as a poetic/literary trope (*il meraviglioso*) in Giambattista Marino’s poetry, Baltasar Gracián’s writings, and the surrounding mannerist madrigals and incipient operatic culture (especially the *intermedi*) of the early seventeenth century. By the time of Lully, *le merveilleux* referred essentially to various scenic and plot artifices (deus-ex-machina) involving elaborate stage machinery: in a word, the supernatural element. In his classic study on mannerism, *Die Welt als Labyrinth* (1957), Gustav René Hocke refers to some of these conceptual views.
Theatre” (1971), and May Blitz’s more straightforward, hard-rocking “For Mad Men Only” (1971). Following in the footsteps of the cult films of Tod Browning (The Unknown, 1927; Freaks, 1932), a series of British Hammer and mystery movies were produced in the 1960s, displaying the circus in the best tradition of the horror-exploitation genre, as the setting for terror, suspense, trembling fear: Circus of Horrors (1960), Circus of Fear (1966), Berserk! (1967), and Vampire Circus (1971) are just a few of these examples. Carnival of Souls (1962, released in the same year as, and resembling in several respects, Ray Bradbury’s novel Something Wicked This Way Comes) brings us closer to the matter at hand, presenting a classic danse macabre of zombies waltzing in a circus. Other arthouse films of the era present the circus as either a phantasm, a dreamy vision (as in the surreal, psychedelic haze of Jean-Gabriel Albicocco’s highly stylized Le Grand Meaulnes, 1967), or as an allegorical space, a metaphor for artistic freedom (as in Alexander Kluge’s hermetic Die Artisten in der Zirkuskuppel, 1968). In the same visual department is the cover-art of many 1960s rock albums, which contains striking circus/fairground images, from the most famous (The Doors, Strange Days, 1967; Jimmy Campbell, Half Baked, 1970) to the most obscure (The

7 Besides Tod Browning’s movies, other early cinematic traditions have relied heavily on the circus-terror, the carnival-fantasy, and the freak show imagery: one could mention here the psych-cinema of the German expressionism (Robert Wiene’s Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari, 1920; Paul Leni’s Das Wachsfigurenkabinett, 1924), as well as the silent, pre-Bergman Scandinavian melodramas, with their sensationalist and tragic plots dominated by “fatum” and by the circus in its incarnation of both meraviglia and “teatrum mundi” (see for instance the Danish films of Alfred Lindt and Eduard Schnedler-Sørensen, ca 1912). See Rado 2006, chap. 4, esp. pp. 77-80. This tradition contrasts strongly with the existential and ritual function of the circus in Ingmar Bergman’s films, and with the more burlesque, carnivalesque and many times “clownesque” depiction/suggestion of the circus/carnival/fun-fair in the movies of Federico Fellini, and especially, Jacques Tati.
intertextual irony (Zappa’s and Cal Schenkel’s parody of Peter Blake’s *Sgt. Pepper’s* cover), or just cartoon-like (Tea & Symphony’s debut album cover, a “wonderland” canvas typical of the era, combining the vivid colors and shapes of a Peter Max with some quintessentially English themes straight out of Lewis Carroll).

Consulting catalogues of band names, and album and song titles from the late 1960s, one would be stunned by the high frequency of words like “circus,” “carousel,” “fairground,” “merry-go-round,” “clown,” and, not surprisingly, “zoo.” Even if not the most immediate, lasting, or substantial elements in the way in which we perceive, make sense and recall music, the cover art, band names, and song and album titles should not be regarded as superficial tokens; indeed, they often provide us with possible “keys” to understand the music, and, by extension, they tell us something about the time.

Beyond these visual and textual references, the connection between circus/fairground and music in the late 1960s is further consolidated by the common-shared and intuitive view that associates the rock concert, festival, or tour, with a circus show, carnival, or fair (“Run away with the rock ‘n’ roll circus and have a good time” is heard in Roxy’s “Rock and Roll Circus” of 1969). Even if many rock concerts do take place in circus rings or are part of public fairs and carnivals, more significant for understanding this equivalence is its basic logic of resemblance: with its dizzying sights and sounds, a rock concert is like a circus performance, a carnival parade, or a Renaissance fair (traditions which were all common in the ’60s) in that they all are
meant to *entertain* and *display* something; they are all communal “shows;” their common function is the sensorial spectacle. And further: like the itinerant circus performers, or the gypsy caravan, the touring rock band is a “traveling band.” This logic is so simple and intuitive, and yet so powerfully ingrained in our minds, that few would really stop to reflect on its basic assumptions. Here are just a few plain but significant examples of this equivalence, out of a thousand others. *The Million Volt Light and Sound Rave*, the art happening organized by Binder, Edwards & Vaughan in early 1967 at the Roundhouse Theatre in London, was also known at the time as *The Carnival of Light Rave*. It was for this event that Paul McCartney contributed the enigmatic and, so far unreleased, “Carnival of Light” – a 14-minute sound collage, described by Paul himself as a “happening” (along with Paul’s piece, the event also included tape music by Unit Delta Plus, a BBC Radiophonic Workshop avant-garde offshoot). The second edition of the famous Glastonbury Festival (UK, 1971) had run initially under the “Glastonbury Fayre” heading. The “Festival Express,” the hippie train traveling from the U.S. to Canada in 1970, caring among others The Grateful Dead, The Band, and Janis Joplin, has been compared to a “traveling circus.”

Many rock music venues in the late 1960s had the “circus” or “carousel” words in their name: The Electric Circus in New York (1967-71); the Carousel Ballroom in San Francisco (to become Fillmore West in 1968); the Retinal Circus in Vancouver (opened in 1967); and Le Rock ’n’ Roll Circus in Paris (1969-72). And how about those quintessential events of the 1960s known as happenings, for which John Cage coined the term *musicircus*? Cage first applied the term in 1967 for one of his

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8 This is the title of the first chapter on the DVD documenting the event (*Festival Express* is the name of the rockumentary, made in 2003).
improvisational “events” at the University of Illinois. Later he extended the meaning of the (musi)circus, to denote any composition based on extravagant juxtapositions, as for instance *Apartment House 1776* (1976) and the “Irish Circus” *Roaratorio* (1979).

The release in 1998 of a 6-volume packaged as 4-CD set significantly titled “Circus Days,” a Nuggets-like compilation documenting a wide range of British psychedelic obscurities between 1966-1972, offers another strong confirmation of my suspicion that the circus theme of much psychedelic music is not fictional, but rather an integral yet hidden part of the late 1960s. In 2007, it was time for a 2-CD set titled after The Pretty Things’ 1970 song, “Cries from the Midnight Circus,” to be released, this time focusing on the Londonese Ladbroke Grove rock underground at the end of the ’60s. Even a rock magazine of the time, Gerald Rothberg’s *Hullabaloo*, changed its name to a more appropriate *Circus* at the height of the psychedelic era, in 1968. And one final bit: the poster for the 1966 teen-exploitation flick *Hallucination Generation* invited the moviegoers to a pill party where they will “experience every jolt…every jar of a Psychedelic Circus.”

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9 Released on the obscure UK Bam Caruso label, the compilation was the product of Phil Smee, one of the editors of the short-lived *Strange Things Are Happening*, a British rock fanzine active between 1988 and 1990, focused especially on the 1960s music.
Waltzing in the Psychedelic Circus

\textit{Circles, my head is going round in circles}
\textit{My mind is caught up in a whirlpool, draggin’ me down}

The extra-musical evidence presented so far is, by its nature, “soft,” and making a hard case out of this psychedelic circus/carousel discussion is difficult, even if and when we get into intrinsic musical matters. And it is difficult, because of this discussion’s essentially intuitive, conjectural, speculative basis. Rather than constructing a rational, logical, hard theoretical model of the reality of the psychedelic carousel, my aim for the moment is to take into account the possibilities of its existence: not how things are, but how they could be; not an infallible theoretical thesis, but a listener-based open hypothesis. In such an approach, the psychology of perception (gestalt and experimental psychology) is an invaluable tool, because it gets us a step closer to the experience of the psychedelic music itself.

Everyone would agree that sensorial stimulation and the specific “feel” of a song are crucial elements in popular music in general, and in psychedelia in particular. Typical psychedelic sensations such as elation, spiraling circularity, and chaotic disorientation, can be either evoked or enhanced by music, so that a song can feel circular, or chaotic. Before any mental construction of musical meaning takes place, we first experience these sensations psychologically, even physically. But this notion of “feel” is totally intangible, elusive, and its \textit{a posteriori} meaning cannot be but metaphoric.
One such metaphor that I “feel” it is important for our current discussion is that of *circularity*. After all, to state the obvious, a circus is a round amphitheatre or tent, a dizzying carousel is constantly moving in circle, and a vertigo-inducing roller coaster is curvilinear. It has been argued that circularity and, more generally, curvilinearity, are central tropes of the psychedelic mindset, reflected in everything from fashion design to cover and poster art. Circles and semicircles, curves, spirals, spheres, cones, these shapes and forms are seen everywhere during this era. Much less prominent are the references to linearity, flatness, and quadratic geometry: straight lines, squares, cubes, and any sort of angularity are minimized and absorbed. This emphasis on the circular, the concentric and the curvilinear, conveys in turn the rolling and *cyclic* nature of things, as opposed to a unidirectional, developmental, teleological impetus. Highlighted now are mandalic and fractal geometries, which, in their axial, nucleic design and potential infinite expandability, are also signaling a circular, spiraling, cyclic modus operandi. The increased psychedelic sensibility toward archetypal, metaphysical, symbolic and mystic/cosmological meanings, along with a revalidation of the age-old and universal transcendentalist philosophy of wholeness and completeness (whether this holism is of Hindu, Tibetan/Buddhist Zen, Muslim/Islamic, or just Christian origins), could explain this shift toward circular/curved/cyclic geometry, and it is not the place here to address these already discussed issues.¹⁰ But I think there is also a purely psychological reason behind this

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¹⁰ For an excellent introduction to the significance of mandala and mandalic design and philosophy in the psychedelic culture generally, and particularly in the music of the Grateful Dead, see the two chapters signed by Graeme Boone in Tuedio 2010 (at the time of finishing this chapter, I did not have Tuedio’s recently published book in my hands, and I want to thanks Prof. Boone for providing me with the manuscript copies of his two articles). Even if a mandala pattern does incorporate a square
psychedelic fascination with circular motifs and templates: it is proved that rapid circular motion, constant rotation, is the easiest way to induce trance-like, hallucinatory or hypnotic states (after all, the famous circular dance of the swirling dervishes is not only a rite, but also a “ride”). With its swirling, spiraling, circular, dizzying movements, sights, sensations, and sounds, it is not very difficult to see how the circus/fairground trope, including carousels, roller-coasters and many other types of rides, fits into the psychedelic imagination.

The best evocation of a circular feel in music is through the use of triple meters, that tempus perfectum that was once symbol for wholeness, and was notated mensurally through a full circle. Psychologically, a dance music in triple time (waltzes, minuets, mazurkas) feels in general more light and elegant, and perhaps more naturally flowing than a duple meter dance (the sensations of “flow” and “floating” are essential for the psychedelic “high” ride.) As the most iconic formal triple dance, with a long and convoluted history, the waltz had a particularly intense relationship with the circus world, and, indirectly, with the psychedelic musical universe. One should also recall that waltzes and other dance music (the Tango, for instance) have been (symbolizing the material world), the square is always in conjunction with an inner- or outer-circle (the alchemic rotundum, symbolizing the spirit), resulting in either an encircling of the square, or, as Jung put it, a “squaring of the circle.” Cultivated by both Hinduism (the yantra) and Buddhism as a trance-inducing visual aid for spiritual meditation and a mystic representation of the metaphysical cosmos, and adopted or westernized by Jung as an “archetype of wholeness” with self-healing properties for the unconscious self, mandalas, along with other similar labyrinthic and circular or encircling/surrounding/enveloping figures, frames and symbols, were indeed, as Boone notes, an “integral part of the [psychedelic 1960s] landscape, conveying Buddhist, hermetic, holistic, or hallucinatory themes.” And he continues: “The depiction of circles as motive forces, visual mazes, worlds, or cosmic environments was ubiquitous, as we see in the welter of peace symbols, moiré patterns, zodiac maps, planetary images, Taijitu yin and yang diagrams, light-show patterns, and other circular imagery common in concert posters and other artworks of the era. One can see, or project, mandalas in many of these images” (Boone, “Mandalas and the Dead,” p. 7 of the manuscript).
always connected to the popular, ephemeral, light repertoire of dance halls, salons, vaudevilles, variétés, cabarets, revues – in a word, to what Carl Dahlhaus, in a more or less Adornian tone, calls “Trivialmusik.” ¹¹ Along with screamers (fast marches), foxtrots, polkas and other dances, the waltz is one of the predominant musics traditionally heard in circuses and fairgrounds, either live or on barrel-organs, and, most importantly, a music specifically associated with, and evocative of, the mechanical circular motion of the carousel: a round music by definition. ¹² Furthermore, along with its unmistakably circular triple time and spinning dance, the waltz has gained in time an impressive baggage of cultural associations, and not always of the most enjoyable kind: in its relatively long history the waltz has been used as conveying everything from death and morbidity (the danse macabre) to bitter irony, sweet nostalgia and moody melancholy (hence the valse triste, as well as those nobles et sentimentales), bourgeois/aristocratic grace and nobility but also decadence, and, most interestingly, delirium and swirl-induced dizziness, when the waltz is in a fast tempo. This last aspect is of course not foreign to the psychedelic experience itself, and it does also relate to the often hypnotic, hallucinatory, dizzying sensations stimulated by the whirling carousel – a psychological connotation that, together with

¹¹ Dahlhaus 1967.
¹² I have to emphasize here that the waltz was indeed not the sole idiom of the circus musical business: “By 1910, the American carousel and band organ industry had streamlined its musical production so that various ‘tunes’ (such as polkas, Cuban dances, Russian folk-songs, hymns, Italian arias, Sousa marches and Waldteufel waltzes) were arranged and cut in three shades of metrical organization: fox trot, march and waltz. While the waltz-tune (and variants) was an important component of fairground music, it certainly was not the primary one” (Magdanz 2006, 4). But as accompanying music to the mechanical rotation of various fairground rides, the waltz has become in time so connected to the carousel as to make a nineteenth century German fairground catalog refer to the “Walzertakte” as the carousel rhythm (Magdanz 2006, 6); and, as such, the waltz-carousel equation had a powerful effect on the visual and aural collective imagination of the nineteenth- and twentieth centuries, an influence most visible perhaps, as Teresa Magdanz shows, in the world of film.
the cultural association between waltz and the fairground ride, would suggest a new category of waltzes: the psychedelic waltz, or the “carousel-waltz.”

Having both strong connotations and strong identity, the waltz has been always dear to art music composers, who referenced it in their music from the eighteenth century on through quotation, reworking, or allusion. Leaving aside the flourish of waltzes in the nineteenth century as both light (Schubert’s salon dances) and serious music (Chopin’s piano pieces), three contrasting examples from the earlier twentieth century should give enough evidence of the iconic nature and potent significations of the waltz. In the orchestral prelude to the third act of Richard Strauss’ Der Rosenkavalier (1911), brief waltz fragments are interspersed into, even interrupting the relentless fugato texture, leading to a ghostly, spectral waltz in the coda, played offstage. Even the fantastic final trio of this opera, with its lush, luscious, and over-emotional effusions, seems to draw its endless melodic flux (a true Unendliche Melodie counterpoint) and slowed-down, subdued triple meter phrasing, from an earlier waltz of the third act: in other words, a radical, Wagnerian-Straussian transfiguration of the waltz.\(^{13}\) The quintessential effect of this waltz-haunted music is that of a nostalgic farewell, a dying song to the world of aristocracy, luxurious ballrooms, and the Romantic Viennese waltz. By contrast, Maurice Ravel and his La Valse, written immediately after the first war (1919), also says a definitive farewell to the past, but in a drastically different manner from Strauss: not by way of abundant, sweet-

\(^{13}\) See also Thomas May’s program notes to the opera (undated). David Murray offers an interesting quotation from Hugo von Hofmannsthal himself, suggesting to Strauss to “try to think of some old fashioned Viennese waltz, half sweet, half cheeky, which should pervade the whole [Third] Act” (Murray undated).
expressionist sonorities and ghostly, nostalgic presences, but by setting up the waltz as a mechanism, a *machine infernale*, a waltz-vertigo ending up in delirium, paroxysm, catastrophe. If Strauss is irruptive and still a moribund Romantic, Ravel is disruptive, spasmodic, and modernist par excellence. A third approach to the waltz, contemporaneous with but distinct from both Strauss and Ravel, is that of Igor Stravinsky. His second episode, “Valse,” from Three Easy Pieces for piano duet (1914-15, reworked in 1921 into a Suite for Small Orchestra), displays that ludic-detached, carnivalesque if not burlesque manner that would come to define so many other works of the neo-classic, quasi *Neue Sachlichkeit* Stravinsky: here and elsewhere, a sense of relaxed simplicity and airy, light-hearted yet objective playfulness removes at a single stroke any trace of Romanticist excess and nostalgic longing, Expressionist *Einfühlung* (empathy), or Modernist angst. With the 1960s “collage generation,” the waltz becomes even more important as quoted or allusive material, and no one would exploit its morbid and ironic implications more fully than Alfred Schnittke in the 1970s. The waltz – like the march, its opposite – is then

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14 Leaving the *homo ludens* behind, a more neo-Romanticist air, with fragrance of Chopin, yet still unmistakably Stravinskian and, thus, non-restorative, is felt two decades later in another of Stravinsky’s waltzes, this time a more disguised and delicate one: the nocturnal First Variation from Concerto for Two Pianos (1935). As for an instance of expressionist-modernist waltz, one could invoke the orchestral introduction and ending to the Tavern Garden scene in Act II of Alban Berg’s *Wozzeck* (1914-22): a large-scale scherzo with dark overtones, somewhere at the intersection of the Strauss and Ravel works cited above, both filtered through Mahler, whose spectral and gloomy waltz-scherzo in the Seventh Symphony (1905) Berg must have been aware of.

15 Sharing the same symphonist flair with Shostakovich but going several steps beyond his master (whose influence was definitely implicit if not explicit) toward a deconstruction of the traditional narrative-organicist assumptions of the symphonic edifice (up to the significant point of being symphonic and non- or anti-symphonic at the same time), Schnittke, like Shostakovich, often combines, juxtaposes, transforms marches, tangos, and waltzes to fit a dramatic, stylistically fractured and almost never shiny vision – a vision that, again as in Shostakovich, is as musical as it is extra-musical. His predilection for distorted funeral marches, decadent waltzes and death tangos, with their frequent combinations (as heard, among other places, in the Ivesian coupling of the march and the waltz in the fourth movement of the First Symphony, 1969-74), tells something about Schnittke’s tense
something of an iconic trope in music, or, to borrow Leonard Ratner’s term, a *topos*: a rhetorical-semiotic “characteristic figure” or gesture that, once employed in a music, can affect the music on both its syntactic-formal and semantic-expressive levels.¹⁶

If the waltz is a topos of art music, the inclusion of many “waltz moments” as topoi or significant gestures in the rock music of the late ’60s is indeed striking and relevant in more than one respect: emblematic of circus and circularity, and thus fitting culturally with the larger psychedelic mindset, the whirling and supple waltz was also a very unusual *musical* presence in the usually straightforward and virile world of rock ’n’ roll: not only the waltz’s lilting character, but its very rhythmic nature based on a circular feel of three was in direct contradiction with the muscular ethos and essentially square or *quadratic* metrical norms of rock music, already well-established by the mid-1960s.¹⁷ If triple divisions of the beat were common in the relationship with the dominant ideology of Social Realism. His waltzes and tangos can be read as metaphors of social decay and death; they also belong to a surreal realm, but often their dreamy character turns out to be haunting and ghostly – a nightmare, rather than an idyllic and pretty reverie.¹⁶ See Ratner 1980, 9. Ratner divides the topoi into two main categories: types and styles. The types designate fully worked-out pieces such as marches and dances (waltz, minuet, sarabande, etc.), while the styles refer to “local” topoi (hunt music, pastorale, Turkish music, Empfindsamkeit, the learned style, etc.) that are integrated into forms and genres other than dances. However, one can easily imagine a waltz or a march not just as independent pieces (“types”), but also as “styles.” The stylistic dimension of the topoi remains somehow underdeveloped in Ratner’s book, but is addressed in the post-Ratner theoretical writings of Allanbrook 1983, Sisman 1993, and Hatten 1994. Allanbrook, for instance, distinguishes between two predominant stylistic topoi of classical music, each corresponding to a particular dance meter affect: the “learned style” (known also under a variety of other names, such as ecclesiastical style, strict style, gebundener Stil or stile legato), whose “exalted passions” are epitomized by the duple meter of the march; and the “gallant” or free style, whose “terrestrial passions” are conveyed by the triple meter of the dances (“Triple meters represent the danceable passions, duple the passions closest to the divine:” Allanbrook 1983, 22; see also 18-22). Compared to the serious and martial character of the march, the waltz would indeed appear more elegant, gallant and free, more “terrestrial,” and perhaps more light and trivial – which sends us back once again to Dahlhaus’s view on “trivial music” as entertainment, dance, and functional music (Dahlhaus 1967).¹⁷ By “quadratic” I mean not only the duple nature of the rhythm itself, but also the square symmetry of the melodic and harmonic phrasing, which, by extension, could be considered a *metrical* aspect as
swing era and in the early stages of rock ’n’ roll (early-to-mid 1950s), divisions that created the so-called swing or “shuffle” rhythmic patterns (i.e., a basic pulsation of 4 that is divided into four groups of 3, resulting in a faster pulsation of 12), in the 1960s the metrical conventions of popular music tended increasingly toward straight or square rhythmic patterns based on a perfectly duple division of the beat. In the words of drummer and musicologist Steven Baur, “during the late 1950s and early 1960s, duple subdivisions of the quarter-note pulse became more common in rock ’n’ roll drumming, replacing the triple subdivision characteristic of swing and shuffle patterns, and by the end of the 1960s the ‘straight’ (as opposed to ‘swung’ or ‘shuffled’) eight-note ride pattern typified most rock drumbeats.”

Furthermore, it could be argued that pop music can embrace waltzes and triple meters more easily, given its more sentimental, tender, nostalgic leanings, but there was little to no place for this type of melodramatic escapism in the nascent experiments of psychedelic rock. In other words, generally speaking, rock music is so far away from the world of triple meters as to make tempus perfectum a sort of diabolus in musica for rock ’n’ roll: 4/4 is truly a “common time” here. And yet, in the psychedelic era, circular waltzes and triple times are everywhere, employed to varying degrees of effectiveness in both pop and rock music.

Three different examples, all from 1967, illustrate this range of using waltzes and triple times across the popular music spectrum. At one pole is Engelbert

well. My use of the term “quadratic” here was partly inspired by Hugo Riemann’s axiomatic theory of symmetrical phrase structures and periods in tonal music, and by his metrical-harmonic correlations.

\[\text{Baur 2002, 173.}\]
Humperdinck’s (the British singer, not the German composer) biggest hit, “The Last Waltz,” a wonderful – if bland – example of a sentimentaloid pop serenade where the triple time “gets away,” almost unnoticed. Nothing unusual, indeed, in having a crooning, noble et sentimentale waltz. Moving a big step beyond Humperdinck is the Young Rascals’ “How Can I Be Sure,” a pop-soul number, yet closer to rock than “The Last Waltz,” displaying a certain Francophone flavor in its use of an accordion, and with lyrics that, despite being romantic, would not be foreign to an acid-rock song either, since they state genuine psychedelic sensations like uncertainty (“How can I be sure? / In a world that’s constantly changing”) and elevated ecstasy (“Flying too high can confuse me / Touch me, but don’t take me down”). While the sense of circular motion in this song and in its cover by French singer Nicoletta (1967) is unmistakable, it becomes even more evident in the version recorded by Dusty Springfield in 1970, in a richer arrangement, and with a grander coda featuring pompous strings, lilting horn punctuations and sparkly glockenspiel for a cumulative effect evoking not just circularity, but a showy parade, or, indeed, a funfair carousel.

Finally, a 1967 song that is definitely “rocking” is Love’s “Stephanie Knows Who,” a number typically psychedelic in its stylistic eclecticism if not in its lyrics: a manic, dizzyingly circular psychedelic waltz on the harpsichord provides the rolling

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19 No wonder then that French singer Nicoletta covered the song in the same year. Paradoxically, the accordion sounds more like a “chanson de la Seine” in the original than in the cover.
20 The segment I am referring to here is a short bridge toward the end of the song. Each of the three renditions mentioned above have a distinctive timbral and rhythmic approach to this bridge: soulfulness in Young Rascals’ original; syncopated jazzy rhythm and busier bass line in Nicoletta’s version; and strong carousel motion and fairground happy-go-lucky atmosphere in Dusty’s cover. Another rendition of the song, David Cassidy’s #1 UK hit at the time, drops the instrumental bridge altogether, minimizes the role of the accordion, fades away (rather than ending the song) with a looping sequence on the words “how can I,” and begins with a curious waveling and delay-reverberated guitar that sounds more ambient and psychedelic in 1972 than any of the previous versions.
foundation for some rough proto-punk vocals interrupted by a messy jazzy-rock interlude with sax and guitar. The use of a psychedelic waltz in a garage, proto-grungy context is indeed attention-grabbing, different, and creative. This is one of the most significant examples of what, from now on, I will refer to as carousel-waltz.

The terms “psychedelic waltz” and “carousel-waltz” are not entirely mine. The first one was inspired by “Delia's Psychadelian [sic] Waltz,” one of Delia Derbyshire’s spooky sound-tracks for the ITV Sci-Fi children series The Tomorrow People, whose original incarnation took off in 1973. The second phrase comes from Teresa Magdanz’s excellent dissertation on the aural and visual connections between the waltz and the fairground carousel. Magdanz offers a panoramic and prismatic (aesthetic, technological, cultural) analysis of this carousel-waltz relationship in the popular imagination of the twentieth century, and thus her study is perhaps the closest to my own interests, with two exceptions: (i) her focus is not primarily on music (popular or not), but rather on film; and (ii) the psychedelic aspect is not accounted for at all. Nevertheless, as a way of directly expressing a connection that is as deep-rooted as it is intuitive and instinctive, as implicit as it is explicit, and as visible as it is invisible, Magdanz’s coining of the “carousel-waltz” term serves to convey not

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21 As spectral and wacky as Delia’s piece is, it pales in comparison with another oddity from the BBC Radiophonic Workshop vaults of the early-to-mid-1970s: Richard Yeoman-Clark’s “Waltz Antipathy,” a mad-futuristic electronic re- and de-construction of a waltz-jingle, complete with an atonal pulse-dial-tones schizophrenic melody over an equally disturbing and pointillist “rhythmic section” of car horns (was Ligeti aware of this when he wrote the prelude to Le Grand Macabre?) – unusual stuff even by the Workshop standards.

22 Magdanz’s descriptions of her own approach as a “history of a non-history” (5) and of the carousel-waltz as a “it’s-so-ubiquitous-it’s-invisible-and-inaudible phenomenon” that “operates below pop culture’s aural and visual radar” (7) could not be more perfect for my own intuitive investigation,
only the possibility of a twin conceptual identity that strangely enough is both
conjectural and axiomatic, but also the perceptual visual/aural duality by which such
an equation is established in our psycho-social collective imagination. In her quest for
a multi-sensorial account of the cultural carousel-waltz, and in accord to her emphasis
on cinema as the modern medium that has received (rather than originated),
disseminated and highlighted the carousel-waltz in the popular conscience, Magdanz
employs a number of other such terminological dualities such as “audio-viewing,”
“see-hearing,” “sound-image” and “music-image,” as well as the “visaurality”
concoction (visual, visceral, aural) – all inspired, it seems, by Michel Chion’s study
on audio-vision. In this light, the visaural carousel-waltz becomes indeed more
visible-audible if approached not just from an *ex tempore* historical or conceptual
advantage point, but from an *in actu* syncretic or synesthetic mode of perception.
More fundamental questions pertaining to a phenomenology of (collective)
perception are triggered at this point. More precisely: the question of the impact a
visual component has over our auditive perception (and vice-versa), and,
consequently, the preeminence of visuality (cinema included) over aurality when it
comes to ingraining elusive and quasi-metaphoric sound-image-concepts (like
“circularity”) into the popular cultural imagination.

As with other illustrations of carousel-waltzes, or just psychedelic waltzes (minus the
audio-visual suggestion of the mechanical rotation of a carousel), one could invoke

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which, like Magdanz’s, can be thought of as an exercise of speculative archeology in the realm of
collective imagination (*vivat* Michel Foucault).

23 Chion 1994; Magdanz 2006, 7-8, 10-11.
countless names both iconic and obscure, from the Beatles’ sound-montage in the middle and ending of “Being for the Benefit of Mr. Kite!” (1967) to The Other Half’s “Wonderful Day” (1968). Lennon has acknowledged of being inspired in writing “Mr. Kite” by a nineteenth century circus poster, and his search for a true “carnival atmosphere” led George Martin to produce that mesmerizing and truly aleatoric cut-up of various recordings of fairground organs and calliope music recordings – a segment whose first occurrence is placed strategically right after the line “Henry the Horse dances the waltz.” On the same Sgt. Pepper album is “Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds” (1967), a number that is more acid- than carousel-oriented, but whose beginning and subsequent verses in triple time can easily be heard as a sort of subdued, subliminal slow waltz in absentia, floating and airy and dreamy as the lyrics themselves.24 The Other Half’s song, while again not directly connected to the circus world, is a slowed-down variation of Love’s circular number discussed above: same waltzing quality (albeit much slower), and same garage-going-hard-rock vocals, by future Blue Cheer guitarist Randy Holden.25 Along with Jimi Hendrix’s Woodstock...

24 The song switches to the common 4/4 time in the chorus. The other piece on Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band that is fully in triple time is “She’s Leaving Home,” a sad and lushly arranged pop ballad with strings, harp, and John Lennon’s Greek chorus with double-tracked and high-pitched backing vocals, creating a cumulative effect that is at times closer to Beach Boys and possibly Queen than to psychedelia or the carousel-waltz. It is also significant perhaps that no other Beatles album contains three numbers employing triple time. In fact, their equally revolutionary Revolver from the previous year has no songs set fully in triple time, and only two cases of brief shifting from duple to triple time, in “Love You Too” and “She Said She Said.” Revolver remains nevertheless a circular or cyclical album in its intention (“Magic Circles” was one of the album’s proposed titles, and even the final title is more than telling in this regard) and thematic of circularity, wholeness, completeness, transformation, reversal and inversion (see Reising 2002, 246; Gould 2007, 348; Tucker 2009).

25 The Other Half was a short-lived psych/hard-garage Californian band (first Los Angeles, then San Francisco) with just one eponymous album to their credit. The affinities between their style and some of Love’s rougher music becomes even more evident if one listens to the Other Half’s “Feathered Fish” (1968), which in its proto-punk leanings seems a direct (although less effective) replica of Love’s hit single “7 and 7 Is” (1966); no wonder, since “Feather Fish” was written by Love’s frontman, Arthur Lee, but never recorded by Love or Lee himself.
rendition of the “Star Spangled Banner,” Country Joe & The Fish’s “I-Feel-Like-I'm-Fixin'-To-Die Rag” (1967, but released first in 1965) is perhaps one of the best-known war protest songs of the 1960s, but radically different in approach from Hendrix: a biting satire of the Vietnam war, set in a circus/funfair atmosphere, complete with “yee-hee’s” interjections, a jug-band and carillon-like instrumentation, even if not in a triple time. Less known is Country Joe’s “Happiness Is a Porpoise Mouth” from their debut album (1967), this time a psychedelic waltz with an obvious flower-power message where the “organs play a circus tune” while “all the earth is love,” and adding a slightly middle-eastern modal guitar flavor recalling Jefferson Airplane’s Jorma Kaukonen. After addressing the street carnival theme in their 1967 psychedelic title “Paxton's Back Street Carnival,” Strawberry Alarm Clock’s “Shallow Impressions,” an instrumental number from 1968, presents another carousel-waltz with harpsichord, piano, and the jazzy touches of a submerged wah-wah guitar. The Baroque psych-prog of Bonniwell Music Machine’s “The Trap” (1967), a superb if ambivalent meditation on the power (or trap?) of reminiscence, is heard in a “rocking,” busy Bachian harpsichord that sets the song in constant revolving motion. Their “Bottom of the Soul” from the same sophomore album (1967), this time a darker psych-soul number reminding of both Iron Butterfly and The Doors, features a typical gyrating waltz-carousel intervention on the Farfisa organ – that iconic 1960s instrument that became the closest in evoking the sound of the old street and funfair barrel-organ.26 (With The Doors in mind, what could

26 “Farfisa organ” is often quasi-mistakenly used as a general description for the timbre of an assortment of other electric keyboards in the popular music of the 1960s. Farfisa was indeed the most common and perhaps affordable electric keyboard instrument at the time, but other organ models can
possibly be more emblematic for the “music-as-circus-show” image than their “cover” in 1967 of Weill’s & Brecht’s “Alabama Song,” in a psychotic Weimar cabaret style rivaled perhaps only by Frank Zappa, and later by Tom Waits and The Tiger Lillies.)

Many songs with lyrics that directly reference the circus world are, of course, set fully in triple time: Crystal Circus’ “Circus and Zoo World” (1968), Status Quo’s “The Clown” (1969), Cathy Young’s “Circus” (1969), Family’s instrumental “Summer '67” (1969), Justine’s “Clown” (1970). Other songs with segmental forms incorporate a metrical level of 3 only partially, showing a contrasting alternation between sections in duple and triple time: The Collage’s “Ragged Clown” (1968), Stone Circus’ “Carnival of Love” (1969), Reign Ghost’s “Curio Shop” (1969), Fantasy’s “Circus of Invisible Men” (1970), Cheryl Dilcher’s “Three Wishes” (1971). Sometimes the triple time and carousel-waltz reference is just that: a simple passing but quite audible reference, just one “moment” or “stop” among others in the map of the song (as in the case of Bead Game’s “Wax Circus” of 1970, where a brief triple carousel moment appears only once to initiate a long instrumental segment). But in most cases, the triple time sections and the contrast they create are structural rather than accidental events in the form and economy of the song. Three perfect examples are Buffy Sainte-Marie’s “The Carousel” (1967), The Hollies’ “Maker” (1967), and Stone

be encountered, such as the Vox Continental and the Gibson G101 (both used, among others, by Ray Manzarek of The Doors), and, later, the Hammond B3 (used with predilection in prog-rock and blues-rock). To talk in a generalized manner about “the Farfisa sound of the 1960s” as we do today may not be the most accurate from a technical point of view, as there are some timbral differences between the various organ manufacturers, but in most cases these differences are almost negligible in the actual listening experience, especially when that electric organ sound is employed to evoke the circus/fairground barrel-organ.
Circus’ “Blue Funk” (1969), all three songs employing a strong and consistent contrast between verses in duple meter, and choruses in “waltzing” triple time. In Buffy’s song, written by her and arranged by Peter Schickele in a Baroque folky-pop idiom reminiscent of Judy Collins, the feel of a round carousel motion is persistent even in the 4/4 time verses, and not just because of its lyrics (impressions of the merry-go-round ride told from the perspective of one of its wooden horses), but especially in light of its timbral and motivic configurations. The song starts with a glockenspiel over a lilting yet delicate melodic figure in the strings played only on the first three of the four beats of the measure: the effect is that of an “elliptic” waltz melodic motive in this context of a 4/4 time bar. The structural metrical contrast between verses and choruses in The Hollies’ deeply psychedelic and sitar-infused song is augmented by a differentiation at the level of lyrics between the cosmic/transcendental realm of the verses (the “maker's eyes” in the “distant haze”), versus the “back to reality” aspect of the chorus: an interesting reversal, to have the “maker’s eyes” in the common 4/4, and the mundane reality in the unusual 3/4. Finally, Stone Circus’ song is indeed a “blue-funk” with hard-rock and psychedelic leanings, alternating funkier and edgier verses in 4/4 and major key with a “blue” and softer chorus in 3/4 and minor key: a radical structural contrast, once again.

Not to be disregarded here are some songs that are so quirky in their formal articulation as to make the inclusion of the unusual triple time almost unnoticeable. One such example is Fantasy’s “Happy” (1970), a large-scale bipartite structure, with a weird second half. The song starts in an almost improvisatory scat-jazz fashion
before entering into a powerful Jefferson Airplane-like groove, only to stop abruptly in the middle, making a full turn to a psych-prog alternation between style materials of the most incongruent type: repeated hard-rocking organ and guitar riffs; some communal “Hey” interjections with a strong Russian or Eastern folk dance flavor (the kazachok) that would be at home in Mussorgsky; and an exceedingly strange pseudo-or mock-operatic male/female duet of sorts, melismatic and in triple time; the clear Baroque ending is the most “natural” aspect of all. Similarly odd songs are Locomotive’s organ-heavy and Doors-influenced “Nobody Asked You To Come” (1970), with its disjointed and quirky flow and brief triple time references; and Cryan’ Shame “In The Café” (1967), with its naïve and, intended or not, faux-French interlude in triple meter.

The Windmills of Your Mind: round cycles and fluidity in duple times

If triple-time passages are by their nature evocative of circular, rotational, spinning motion, a more subtle and difficult to conceptualize song type from the late 1960s is that class of songs where the circular suggestion (be it carousel-waltz-related or not) is implicit and latent rather than explicit and immediate. Of course, we are referring here to some music in duple time. Without being proper round music in triple meter, without being carousel-waltzes (not even waltzes at all), a good many songs in this era still manage to suggest a particular type of circular motion and even a carousel-like motoric or mechanical rotational quality in a more complicated way, mainly by
maintaining a steady and smooth rhythmic flow and uninterrupted fluidity of rhythmic-melodic utterance, with often brief and involuted rhythmic patterns, melodic figures, and harmonic progressions generating micro-formal articulations that are repeated over and over again in a recurrent, looping, sequential, cyclic manner as to create a stronger-than-usual “going-back-to-the-beginning” feel. Of course, repetition is the mother of all refrain-based popular and rock music, but what I have in mind here is rather different from the long-span formal patterns of, say, 12-bar blues, verse/chorus, or strophic forms. The phrase “micro-formal articulation” above is important, describing subdivisions within the larger sections of conventional song forms: brief repeated riffs, harmonic patterns and rhythmic figurations that create short-span cycles, often one bar or less in length. Equally important in such a cyclic structure is the heightened feel of constant, relentless motion, realized by way of continuous, incessant, “ride” rhythmic-melodic patterns playing on each and every beat of the measure: in other words, there are no interruptions, no pauses in the flow of music. In more abstract terms, such a cyclic design in the verse or chorus of a song would describe a mini-trajectory that is not gradual and linear (going step-by-step from point A to point B to point C), but rather circular or “round,” a continuous and constantly reiterated motion with little or no variation, much like in an ostinato or perpetuum mobile. The effect is most noticeable in fast-paced tempos, with a quick

27 However, an ostinato can often imply harmonic, melodic, or rhythmic stasis, with drone patterns being an extreme case of this. Obviously the motivic micro-cycles I refer to here are highly dynamic and in constant motion, not static. They are also different from both the funk grooves (see the next section), and from those characteristic “galloping riffs” heard in speed (as in the first 8 bars of Megadeth’s “Hangar 18”) and thrash metal music (as in the pre-solo bridge of Sepultura’s “Infected Voice”), which, although dynamic and energetic through their manic, ultra-fast reiteration, have a minimalist melodic/harmonic/rhythmic articulation, being thus more rhythmic and “groovy” than strictly motivic.
turn-around of motivic micro-cycles, but it can be encountered in moderate or slow tempos as well.

It is more or less evident from the previous paragraph that, unlike in the examples of triple time discussed so far, the suggestion of circular feel and motion in duple-time songs depends as much on musical as on extra-musical factors (lyrics and interpretative context), and as much on some rhythmic subtleties as on other non-rhythmic aspects such as melody (both the lead melody in the foreground, and secondary accompaniment figurations), harmonic and bass/“base” support (chord changes and bass lines or punctuations), and motivic articulation and subdivisions within the cyclic rhythmic-melodic phrase. After all, the way in which rhythmic-melodic-harmonic cells are grouped together into the larger configurations of bars, phrases, and periods, can be considered as a metrical matter, since it bears an imprint on the particular rhythmic flow of a song. In the absence of a “round” triple time, even the lyrics and the timbral quality can become (more) significant factors of suggestion.

As a first illustration of a “round” song in duple time whose circularity is everything but rhythmic, let us start again with a famous pop number: Michel Legrand’s “The Windmills of Your Mind.” Written for the original The Thomas Crown Affair film of 1968 (dir. Norman Jewison) where it was sung by Noel Harrison, this is perhaps the quintessential circular song, and yet its meter is unmistakably 4/4, despite the varying degrees of “romantic” rubato fluctuations in almost every one of its many renditions.
In pure musical terms, the revolving, circular nature of the song comes primarily from its constantly modulating harmonic structure, with repeated phrases or “cycles” moving on anticlockwise on the harmonic circle of fifths, “falling” no less than 7 fifths per cycle/phrase. This circular modulating scheme based on the circle of fifths is common in both art (especially Baroque) and popular music, but it has an unusually strong impact here due to its simplicity, clarity and length, creating a wonderful and prolonged cascading effect that provides a potent sense of harmonic-melodic progression, a smooth flow that simply carries the listener back and forth between the harmonic waves, and also expressive depth to what must be some of the most circular lyrics in popular music history (by Alan and Marilyn Bergman). The brief cyclic melodic cells of the vocal part and the effective timbral and orchestral arrangement by Legrand (cf. the watery, whirling intro on the flutes), certainly contribute to the “round” nature of the music, and make his version the most compelling one (though probably not the most popular one, a credit which should go to Dusty Springfield’s quite different cover of 1969, slower and odder in several respects when compared to the original).

It probably tells a lot about the era the fact that Legrand’s and the two Bergmans’ “round” song with its overabundance of circular metaphors as they relate to the mind (allegorizing in a brilliant way the circular mental mechanics of reminiscence),

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28 Philip Tagg offers several examples of “anticlockwise circle-of-fifth” harmonic progressions in popular songs, though, when compared to “Windmills of Your Mind,” most of those examples (mostly jazz standards) are not really “circular,” having relatively short progressions, and being less clear through ornamentation of and improvisation on the basic harmonic pattern. See Tagg 2003, pp. 36-40 of the PDF file).
hooked everyone immediately. Indeed, the image of a “windmill of the mind” could not be more fitting with the psychedelic generation. After winning an Oscar for Best Song in 1968, the number quickly became a standard, being covered by many from the late ’60s up to the present, in different countries, languages, and styles. And it was not the only such song to make furors. One year earlier, in 1967, a strikingly similar song was being featured on the soundtrack to another film, Vivre pour Vivre, Claude Lelouch’s masterful meditation on marital infidelity. Even the title of the song, “Des Ronds dans l’Eau,” along with some lines in the lyrics, sends us forward to Legrand’s number and its circular connotations. The score of the movie was signed by Francis Lai, a composer whose overall style has the same mix of lush-sweet nostalgia as that of Legrand – and they both wrote music for Lelouch’s films, even collaborating a few times, as for the score of Lelouch’s masterpiece, the film-waltz Les Uns et les Autres of 1981 (a chronicle of twentieth century turmoil allegorizing the circular dance of life through Ravel’s Bolero). In this light, Legrand was most probably aware of Vivre pour Vivre (both the film and its music) when he begun scoring The Thomas Crown Affair. However, “Des Ronds dans l’Eau” was one number on Vivre pour Vivre that was not penned by Lai, but by Raymond Le Sénéchal, with words by Pierre Barouh. In its original cinematic form, the song is an

29 From the late ’60s renditions, beside Dusty’s cover, worth mentioning is also Vanilla Fudge’s slowed-down and more rock-oriented version (1969). Legrand himself performed the song with many variations, with and without vocals (in French, with the title changed to the more chanson-fitting “Les Moulins de Mon Coeur”), with a more jazzy arrangement or with a more classical-Baroque string orchestration.

30 Taking as evidence the delicate waltzing time (in 3 or 6) in the title song of Vivre pour Vivre, I would go as far as saying that both Legrand’s and Lai’s musics, as well as Lelouch’s films themselves, have an almost waltzing quality, a light, tender, subtly sophisticated (as well as naive), celebratory, life-affirming yet slightly nostalgic air, something that is typically, well, … French.

31 The title of the heavily cut American version is Bolero: Dance of Life.
alternating bilingual duet sung first in French by Annie Girardot and then in English by Nicole Croisille, a pseudo-dialogic format corresponding to the two femmes of the extra-marital love triangle (Annie Girardot herself, and respectively, Candice Bergen). Having the same almost aquatic fluidity of articulation, the song is built on precisely the same descending circle-of-fifths, and precisely the same cascade of 7 fifths as in Legrand’s song, although the second phrase-cycle here falls just 4 fifths. Another slight difference would be one of character, Sénéchal (or maybe Lai?) employing in the middle a series of turbulent piano disruptions that match both a segment in the lyrics and Lai’s other similar moments in the score (particularly Robert’s Theme). But otherwise, musically, thematically and lyrically, the two songs are so close one to another as to make the resemblance if not suspicious, at least intriguing.32 “Des Ronds dans l’Eau” had less public exposure and success than “Windmills of Your Mind” (not surprising, given the partially non-English language of both the song and the film), but one single cover by Françoise Hardy on her Ma jeunesse fout le camp album of 1967 was enough to popularize the song, at least in the Francophone sphere, and make it a sort of staple of the late 1960s post-Yé-Yé chanson repertoire.33

32 One could trace further interesting parallels here to Oscar Peterson’s “You Look Good To Me,” which, once again, is based on exactly the same descending harmonic circle of 7 fifths, being written in 1964 by Seymour Lefco and Clement Wells.
33 Coincidental or not, Hardy’s version appears twice in the music to Gabriele Muccino’s pre-Hollywoodian Ricordati di Me (Remember Me, My Love, 2003), the song’s past-looking melancholy providing, like in Vivre pour Vivre (and possibly in “Windmills of Your Mind” if it would be employed in a similar filmic context), an air of nostalgic familiarity, understanding, and poignant humanity to what is otherwise another sweet-bitter cinematic look at expiring marriage and extra-conjugal affairs that involve this time, a revival of an old-time love relationship.
Included on *Revolver* (1966), the Beatles’ “For No One” is another introspective, aching rather than melancholic, and of course, heavily covered song that, despite being in a solid 4/4 time, still manages to convey a potent sense of cyclic circularity partly through its lyrics (the recurring ruminations of an abandoned or to-be-abandoned lover), partly through cyclic melodic and harmonic patterns, and partly through timbral qualities. Ian MacDonald describes the song’s structure in its relation to lyrics precisely in terms of a cyclic and round articulation: the song “reproduces [its] hero’s obsessive examination of his predicament: exhausting every possibility, yet hesitating (over a suspension at the end of each chorus) before going round again to make sure all the options have been covered.”\(^{34}\) This obsessive cycle filled with sentimental uncertainty and unuttered questioning is reflected musically via a descending *basso ostinato* supporting line played first on the clavichord, and doubled later by the bass. As Jacqueline Warwick (2002, 63) observes, the stepwise and recurrent descending line of the accompaniment (C-B-A-G-F-B flat-C) going against an ascending chord structure\(^{35}\) does recall the Baroque lamento bass (cf. Monteverdi, Purcell, Bach, etc.), although it should be noted that, like the previously discussed circle of fifths, this is hardly a unique feature in the popular music of the late 1960s. Bob Dylan used such a semi- or fully-chromatic descending pattern (albeit shorter, comprising only 4 notes) in two songs from *Nashville Skyline* (1969): “Girl from the North Country” (this duet with Johnny Cash differs in several respects from the original 1963 version, which does not feature the descending line) and “Lay Lady

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\(^{34}\) MacDonald quoted in Warwick 2002, 63.

\(^{35}\) For this last aspect (the relationship between the falling bass line and the ascending chord structure), see Schleifer 2002.
Lay.” The same lamento pattern can also be heard in Carolyn Hester’s “The Bad Girl” (1965), Fever Tree’s “Day Tripper” (1967), Trader Home’s “The Mutant” (1969), Chicago’s “25 or 6 to 4” (1969), Gentle Giant’s “Nothing At All” (1970), Led Zeppelin’s “Babe I’m Gonna Leave You” (1969) and “Stairway to Heaven” (1970), Styx’s “Suite Madame Blue” (1975), and so on. With a few exceptions (Hester’s and Trader Home’s numbers are both in “round” triple time), none of these songs have particularly strong circular connotation, nothing more than the inherent circularity given by the continuous repeat of the descending (semi-)chromatic line, and the chord progression that comes with it.

Tempo again, timbre, and harmonic flavor, may be important in the evocative power of such a configuration: compared to the slow, truly ballad-like beginning of Led Zeppelin’s “Babe I’m Gonna Leave You” whose cyclic pattern on the relatively “dry” acoustic guitar and bass ends on the dominant chord, the organ and pedal steel guitar (with its fuller, “round” and sultry timbre) in Dylan’s atypically seductive, sensual, almost crooning and hooky “Lay Lady Lay” sounds certainly more circular, in a moderate tempo, a looping “unresolved” chord progression (I - iii - flat VII - ii\(^7\)) and the delicate and unusual sound of a syncopated cowbell/bongo pattern, for a cumulative effect that is suggestive of leisurely love-making.\(^{36}\) Timbre is even more significant in “For No One,” with the dry, monotone, tinkling, metallic and indeed mechanical-sounding clavichord (to which a livelier piano figuration is added in the

\(^{36}\) For this particular verbal image I am indebted to my advisor Arved Ashby, whose care for well-chosen words and metaphors is always inspiring.
so-called “bridge”\textsuperscript{37}) that resonates perfectly with the equally monotone and emotionally detached voice of McCartney. In the tradition of the Baroque basso continuo, the clavichord’s function here is everything but melodic. It simply provides a continuous, relentless and indifferent chordal support to the vocal melody, playing in a very square manner on each and every beat of the 4/4 measure: one “anchor” note (part of and simulating the “bass” cyclic pattern) followed by three repeated chords (if the song would be in triple time, this would be a waltz motive). The effect, at least to this author’s ear, is highly mechanical, and suggestive of a rotating mechanical music box (and, only by extension, of the mechanical whirl of the carousel, whose motion is smoother, less square). Warwick is right when in her comparison of McCartney’s piece to Emmylou Harris’ version (1975) she notes that the later is utterly different in every respect except melody and lyrics. In particular Harris’ passionate, emotional delivery, the slowed down tempo (almost twice as slow as the original), and the replacement of the mechanical clavichord with a more rich and enveloping/warm arrangement (acoustic and electric guitar and piano at the beginning, discrete string section and mandolin later), make her version a radical reworking rather than a cover.\textsuperscript{38} Even the descending bass pattern is minimized here, lost in the lush artifice of the surrounding instrumental presences that are no longer harmonic, but contrapuntally melodic. Indeed, while McCartney’s song is cold (even icy), dispassionate and rotative-mechanical, Harris’ reworking is so warm, smoothly

\textsuperscript{37} This is more like a B section than a “bridge,” or, alternatively, a faux-bridge that leads nowhere but back at the beginning of a new cycle. See also Schleifer 2002, 163-67.

\textsuperscript{38} Truth be told, the very opening of Harris’ song resembles to some extent the beginning of George Harrison’s own “Something” (1969), build on a similar (albeit more conventional and short) descending infrastructure line.
and achingly expressive, and country-crooner inflected, that for a non-English
speaker the song could appear as the most genuine, intimate, heartfelt, and sweet
love-declaring ballad in the world. And, needless to say, there is no round quality in
Harris’ piece whatsoever.

If Emmylou Harris’ slightly countrified and heartfelt, emotion-filled “For No One”
was done a couple of years after her decisive encounter and collaboration with Gram
Parsons, her earlier, less-known debut solo album, Gliding Bird (1969), contains two
songs quite different in approach: “Waltz of the Magic Man,” and “Fugue for the
Ox.” They are both anchored in a pre-Parsons, pre-country idiom, a folky style
recalling, among others, the early Joni Mitchell. While “Waltz of the Magic Man” is
indeed a waltz in triple time with a psychedelic tinge, allegorizing the encounter
between two lovers as a magic waltz that take cosmic dimensions (with the
protagonists “climbing through the midnight sun” while the stars dance along),
“Fugue for the Ox” is one of the few songs in the era recounting the idyllic
excitement of a carousel ride (and, more generally, of the fairground atmosphere) in a
duple rather than triple time. Comparisons of this last piece with other late folk-
revival numbers such as Buffy Sainte-Marie’s previously-mentioned “The Carousel”
(1967) and especially Joni Mitchell’s “The Circle Game” (ca. 1966, but released only
in 1970) may be appropriate here only to highlight the somewhat contrasting visions
among the three. Indeed, both “The Carousel” and “The Circle Game” are more
wistful and pensive, with the former stating in the chorus that “Merry-go-round, they
are merry for those / Who are free to come and go” (despite the “merry,” lilting 3/4
waltz of this segment), and the later conflating into the carousel image several central themes such as the passing of time, reminiscence, memory, and the circle of life.

Mitchell’s “circle game” is ultimately about the dual nature of time as simultaneously cyclic and inescapable flow (“the seasons they go round and round,” but “we’re captive on the carousel of time”), while Harris’ song expresses at one point just the second aspect of this duality (“Round and round they go always reaching for the ring of gold / Never knowing when the music’s over they will be old”). And yet, musically speaking, the cyclic “round and round” feel is noticeable in Harris’ “Fugue for the Ox,” while almost absent in Mitchell’s song (both numbers are in a solid duple time).

Tempo may be again a factor here, along with the type of motivic profile and accompaniment. Mitchell’s song is slow and tranquil, with a quasi-arpeggiated figuration on the acoustic guitar that is always in the background, keeping the vocal center-stage.39 By contrast, the tempo is faster in Harris, the motivic design of the vocal melody is certainly more round, the acoustic guitars (at least two) have a stronger presence, sounding more repetitive and riff-based, and a sort of guiro or maraca provides a moderately-paced “ride pattern.”

All the examples mentioned so far in this section, from Legrand’s windmills of the mind to Mitchell’s circle game, may in the end tell a more deep, profound story about the dual nature of time (cyclic and unidirectional), about the mechanisms of human

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39 Buffy Sainte-Marie recorded “The Circle Game” in 1967, three years before Mitchell released it officially (on *Ladies of the Canyon*, 1970), a version that, like Harris’ revision of McCartney’s “For No One,” radically transforms Mitchell’s meditation, this time into an upbeat, lighter, and ultimately pop-sounding song. Closer to the original song is Tom Rush’s rendition (1968), released again prior to Joni’s own.
memory (and further, the “irrational,” non-chronological logic of dreams⁴⁰), and about how these issues of time and reminiscence are translated into musical time, into musical flow. Also significant in this context is that more facile and ubiquitous image of the carousel as magic “time-machine,” whose ride becomes analogous to time- or interdimensional-traveling. Why is this circular archetype so strongly connected to temporal issues? Why are the time-travel-machines depicted in literature and cinema always implying circular mechanisms and rotational forces?⁴¹ After all, the carousel served as inspiration for countless (science-)fiction writers and filmmakers, but equally as a quasi-scientific topological model of the relativistic axial universe, a visual aid for explaining in a simplified, “science-for-the-dummies” way, the

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⁴⁰ Guy Maddin, a film director renowned for his dreamy and surreal cinematic visions and narrative and editing techniques, intended his auto-biographical movie Cowards Bend the Knee (2003) to be edited (and ultimately watched) in the same way in which one remembers (rather than tells) something: that is, in a discontinuous, non-chronological (and, thus, not necessarily narrative) way, following a “logic” of remembrance that is also the logic of dreams (or, at least, the way in which the dreams are consciously remembered and told). See his interesting insight on this dreams-recollection analogy in Maddin 2003, 148-49.

⁴¹ One eloquent example here is the Sci-Fi film (and later TV series) Logan’s Run (1976, dir.: Michael Anderson, with a plot apparently spoofed later in Michael Bay’s The Island, 2005), where the inhabitants of the Domed City, once they reached the critical age of 30, must participate in a strange ritual known as “Carousel,” a giant spinning mechanism that rotates people in the air and promises a “reboot” of their life-cycle. The concept of the Carousel as a rejuvenation/reincarnation ceremony was created specifically for the film/TV adaptations, being non-existent in William F. Nolan and George Clayton Johnson’s dystopian novel of 1967, but it does add to an aura of belated psychedelia in the mid-70s milieu, justifying thus the film’s inclusion in Irv Slifkin’s guide of psych films as “a misguided link between the psychedelic ’60s and the emerging ’70s disco era.” (Slifkin 2004, 182). Another case of a film where the carousel trope is added for enhancing the already psych-horror atmosphere is the remake of The Haunting (1999, dir.: Jan de Bont), which contains two scenes of a revolving carousel-room (doubled as a room of mirrors) in the haunted mansion, accompanied by Jerry Goldsmith’s creepy carousel-waltz in triple time (the waltz is also heard at the beginning of the end-credits, adding to its significance). Again, the carousel-room does not appear in Robert Wise’s original 1963 movie, nor in Shirley Jackson’s 1959 novel (on which both films are loosely based), but it does fit perfectly, along with other architectural oddities of the Hill House, into that psych-terror imaginariun mentioned at the beginning of our chapter.
complexities of physical relativity theories (Einstein’s cylindrical universe, and Gödel’s “rotating universes”).42

From psych to prog: music-machines, quotations, and circularity again

Our choice of Ravel’s La Valse as an illustration earlier was not by chance. By setting up a waltz-machine, Ravel’s music is not only closer to the idea of the carousel-waltz, but also closer to other, even more clear instances of what may be called, for the lack of a better term, “mechanical music:” Ravel’s own Bolero (1928), Arthur Honegger’s Pacific 231 (1923), the “invasion theme” in Dmitri Shostakovich’s Seventh Symphony (1941), or the canon in Henryk Górecki’s Third Symphony (1976). What is common in all these (proto-)minimalist examples is the process-based musical construction and development: “music as a gradual process,” as Steve Reich would say. With the exception of La Valse, the rest of the examples above are based on rhythmic and/or melodic ostinati that are either gradually shifting and unfolding in time, or serve as a kinetic foundation to the musical activity of the foreground.

42 For a couple of such popular science explanations involving the analogy with the carousel, see Hawking 2001, 150; and Halpern 2007, 136-37. The analogy has been made even in the 1960s – it is indeed striking to read in a scientific book about physics the following statement: “The carousel is therefore not only an attraction in an amusement park, it is actually also a time-machine. When we mount its colorful wooden horses, it is not only to amuse ourselves (or perhaps rather our children), but also to make a trip into the future” (Gerholm 1967, 143).
43 I know this is not the happiest term, given the connotations of “mechanic” and “mechanical” in the English language, but I was unable to find a better alternative.
44 The popular power of metaphor: Google-searching for “Shostakovich,” “machine” and “ostinato,” will return a long list of results referring to this particular episode (as well as other rhythm-driven movements from Symphonies No. 8 and 15) as an “unstoppable machine.”
45 One of Reich’s prime examples of “process music” is, of course, “a round or infinite canon” – circular music par excellence. See Reich 1968, 34.
Whatever the case, the process involved here is always auto-generating and self-sustaining, and thus, similar to an automaton: music can often be like a machine that, once put into motion, becomes hard to be stopped.\textsuperscript{46} It is easy to see how the essentially additive development/process and motoric and driving quality of the \textit{Bolero} or \textit{Pacific 231} may have found some adherents among rock musicians, for whom regular rhythmic patterning, rhythmic and melodic repetition, and riff- and groove-based articulations are of the most crucial importance. Perhaps the strongest reflection of the music-machine in the popular music of the late 1960s is represented by James Brown’s funk incursions, culminating with his “Sex Machine” around 1970.\textsuperscript{47} It could be seriously argued that the multilayered and polyrhythmic groove of funk music is not just about dance, or is only ostensibly about dance and physical movement; musically speaking, and in a more significant way that many other disco, techno, or dance-club-related styles, a proto-disco song like “Sex Machine” is all about its own multilayered articulation, translated into the elusive concept of the \textit{groove} – an organic and mechanic entity at the same time: a music-machine that is set

\textsuperscript{46} An updated or derived version of Herder’s, Goethe’s, and other nineteenth century organicist philosophies advancing or suggesting the “music-as-organism” metaphor, the “music-as-machine” metaphor could of course take an even more figurative turn, as for instance in the case of the huge coda in the finale of Beethoven’s Fifth: if one considers this last movement – and, by extension, the entire symphony – like a huge, complex machine, then an equally grand coda is indeed needed to get full closure, to stop the machine. Jonathan Bernard has discussed the role of the machine in the rock music of the late 1960s, but his view of the machine is much more literal than ours. See Bernard 2004, 287-90.

\textsuperscript{47} The song was released in 1970 in two versions: as a two-part single, and as a different, single-part, faux-live album version (on Brown’s double album \textit{Sex Machine}). Another studio version of the song can be found on Brown’s 1975 album \textit{Sex Machine Today}. Being one of the first songs recorded with Brown’s new band The JB’s, “Sex Machine” represents a radical simplification and textural slimming down compared to Brown’s previous hits of the late 1960s such as “Give It Up or Turn It a Loose” (1969, also containing a “sex machine” exhortation) or “Mother Popcorn” (1969, perhaps the most fantastic display of bass virtuosity in funk music) – songs that benefited enormously from the contributions of Maceo Parker (sax), Fred Wesley (trombone), and Charles Sherrell (bass). All three rejoined the newly formed JB’s later in 1970, but they were not part of the initial lineup that recorded “Sex Machine.” This may account for the relatively shy presence of horns and bass lines in this song: a new height of funk pointillism and concision is reached here.
in motion, auto-generating and self-propelling its vital impetus (and what an impetus it is!) solely through the constant vamping of its various components – pointillist melody, minimalist or static harmonic structure, ultra-syncopated polyrhythms on different levels, overactive or pulsating bass lines, and short and freeform vocal interjections conveying vibrant movement and, yes, dance-floor energy. It is perhaps significant that the last album James Brown produced for the already tired and disco-infected JB’s in 1979 was titled … *Groove Machine.*

But even some years before, and apart from the groove-oriented pointillism of funk, some of the psychedelic music resonated with the idea of a *perpetuum mobile* that would generate enough propulsion for an entire song, or a significant part of a song. A few prominent examples come to mind, all alluding to or even literally quoting the music of Ravel and Honegger. Jefferson Airplane’s Bolero-derived rhythm and additive process in their “White Rabbit” (1967) is well-known. Perhaps less known is the earlier version of this song, from the previous year, written and performed by Grace Slick while she was part of the pre-Airplane outfit, The Great Society. While the later version emphasizes rhythm as the main driving element, in the Great Society’s 1966 rendition the focus shifts from the obsessive rhythm to a no-less-obsessive, essentially circular and still Spanish melodic riff on the guitar, providing support for the arabesque motive of the clarinet. But in both versions, the constructive principle or process is the same: the rhythm, respectively the circular riff, creates the song’s momentum, forming the rolling foundation for a repetitive, relentless, additive and addictive musical progression. As in Ravel’s iconic work, a single element
enables “White Rabbit” to grow and build up continuously, both dynamically and texturally.

Although not as substantial of a constructive process, the role of the “galloping” rhythm and witty, arty counterpoint of “The Chase,” a 1968 song by the British psych-prog band Family, becomes evident and revelatory only at the end, once one realizes two things: that the whole song allegorizes in a bleak way a love relationship as a fox hunt, with the male being the fox; and that the song’s ending is nothing else than an allusion to Honegger’s speed modulation in Pacific 231, with the steam locomotive now the vehicle of a chase, and the steam whistles now hunting horn calls. Rhythmic drive and a sense of circularity (provided by the strings’ motive in the background) are again strong and effective elements here. This ending provides indeed a very clever and purely musical “key” for understanding the song a posteriori, after the fact. The Honegger reference (which I do believe is intentional) is also a quite unusual one for a rock song – definitely more surprising and harder to catch than Ravel’s omnipresent and famed Bolero. But then, like many other quirky English bands of the late 1960s, Family’s music was always one of the unexpected. There are other partial references to Ravel’s Bolero and to various other iconic musics in the rock ’n’ roll of the time, in different contexts, and with different results. In the prog opening of their “Shadow of Man” (1968), Scottish hard-rock band

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48 If Honegger’s evocation of a “speed modulation” is long-span, and as much rhythmic as textural, Family achieve the same effect in the condensed span of a few seconds, through the more literal technique of gradually increasing the tape speed (which inevitably rises the pitch, too). The motivic and effect resemblance between these two examples are too strong to be a mere coincidence, a simple case of what I like to call “traveling motives.”
Writing on the Wall conflate Ravel’s *Bolero*, Gustav Holst’s *The Planets* (1916) and Strauss’ *Also sprach Zarathustra* (1896) in a mysteriously grand, open-space incipit that could not be more appropriate for the song’s cosmo-philosophical theme (the song’s title obviously sends us to both Nietzsche/Strauss and Kubrick’s film). James Gang’s tripartite medley “The Bomber” (1969) is another example that incorporates Ravel’s *Bolero* as an instrumental interlude between hard-rocking episodes, while ELP, with their well-known penchant for classical music reworkings, did their own “Abaddon’s Bolero” in 1972. And speaking of Holst’s “Mars” (the opening movement of *The Planets*), no one paraphrased that music better than King Crimson, in their “The Devil’s Triangle” (1970). In a purely experimentalist vein typical of

49 Along with various works of György Ligeti, Strauss’ *Also sprach Zarathustra* achieved cult status in 1968, after the inclusion of its incipit in Stanley Kubrick’s *2001: A Space Odyssey* film. [As a more-or-less side-note on how closely interrelated the visual and aural components are in the formation of our (collective) intuitions and perceptions, it is worth mentioning here the critical reception of one particular scene in Kubrick’s film: the image of the spacecraft revolving in the black intersideral ether on Johann Strauss’ *Blue Danube* waltz. Both Michel Chion and Teresa Magdanz have associated this image to a carousel, an amusement machine, “a sort of visual amusement park in slow motion,” and the correlation is so strong that “it has become difficult for many people /…/ to hear the ‘Blue Danube’ Waltz without thinking of spaceships” (Chion cited in Magdanz 2006, 15-16.)] The structural similarity between Strauss’ dawn motive and Holst’s opening of “Mars” (the first movement of *The Planets*) is remarkable: the beginnings of both pieces involve open-intervals (fifths dividing the octave), with a descending semitonal brass call (major to minor third in Strauss, perfect fifth to augmented fourth in Holst) over a sustained sound-bed (low drone in Strauss, pulsating and ominous percussion stratum in Holst). Although Writing on the Wall’s song clearly uses Holst’s melodic motive, the rhythm is closer to Ravel’s *Bolero* than to Holst (both having similar structures), with one license: everything in “Shadow of Man” is molded into a more conventional duple meter – in other words, both Holst’s unusual 5/4 and Ravel’s 3/4 are domesticated to conform to the rhythmic phrase standards of hard-rock. It is easy to see how strong yet simple incipits such as those of Strauss and Holst, have become iconic to rock music, too. Like Copland’s incipit in *Fanfare for the Common Man*, Strauss’ and Holst’s works provide the rock musician with anthemic opening gestures that are hard to ignore, especially as rock leaves psychedelia behind and enters into the 1970s “arena music” phase. I have briefly addressed in another place the role that Copland’s heroic Fanfare had played for rock “versioning” (Dick Hebdige’s term), including the reworking of ELP and the decontextualizations operated by Rolling Stones, Bob Dylan, Pink Floyd, and Queen. See Firca 2006, 60-61, and Hebdige 1987, 12-16. For another song of the time paraphrasing Strauss’ incipit, see Ars Nova’s “Zarathustra” (1968). Four other examples, out of many, alluding to or literally quoting Ravel’s or Holst’s iconic rhythms, are the climactic mid-section of Deep Purple’s epic “Child in Time” (1970), the second half of Midnight Circus’ “November Church” (1972) and of Styx’s power ballad “Lady” (1972), and the ending of Uriah Heep’s “Pilgrim” (1973).
Robert Fripp, King Crimson’s triptych song is indeed a futuristic music-machine: driven by Holst’s martial 5/4 rhythmic pattern, the first segment of this piece (“Merday Morn”) presents at first a sparse, diluted, triton-heavy melodic cell on the mellotron, that rises *ab nihilo* in a gradual ascensio, growing, expanding, branching off contrapuntally and symphonically into related motivic gestures, culminating, not unlike Ravel’s *La Valse*, in a visceral, quasi-chaotic, collagistic climax\(^{50}\) (the effect becomes even more evident on their 1969 live in Hyde Park version that ends with some wild Varesian sirens). Taken as a whole, the strong constructive impetus behind “The Devil’s Triangle” is not exactly a psychedelic affair, but rather part of a nascent “progressive” attitude in rock music. But then we have to remember that much of the rock music between 1969 and 1971, including some early songs of King Crimson, was still located in a quicksand middle-ground, somewhere between psychedelia and prog. And this is perhaps the most fascinating aspect about this music, a music that bridges two different types of sonic experimentation. 1969-71 were transitional years between two eras, mindsets and musical styles that are quite distinct, if not opposite, in their aesthetic and musical-psychological profiles. While psychedelia emphasized sensoriality, intuitiveness and spontaneity, progressive rock will gradually learn to

\(^{50}\) The bold tritonic design in both melody and harmony could be related to Holst’s intervallic structure of the opening motive (see previous footnote), although King Crimson’s melodic focus in this album version is on the stepwise chromatic theme of Holst’s middle episode. The studio version of the song (included on King Crimson’s second album, *In the Wake of Poseidon*) is over 11 minutes long, in a tripartite structure (“Merday Morn” - “Hand of Sceiron” - “Garden of Worm”), with each of the three episodes moving further away from Holst’s model. The first segment, “Merday Morn” (divided at its turn into two distinct steps or waves of intensity), also served as the finale to the band’s live shows between 1969 and 1971, introduced simply as “Mars.” Many of these “Mars” live versions, some of them documented on the 1997 anthology *Epitaph*, are shorter and differ in many respects from the album version. “Merday Morn” was also included as the theme music to the *The Devil’s Triangle* (dir. Richard Winer), a 1974 documentary on the Bermuda Triangle. For a detailed analysis of the song see Keeling 2000.
value the more cerebral, intellectual, constructive, arty qualities of the musical realm. Like many of Fripp’s and King Crimson’s creations, “The Devil’s Triangle” emphasizes this art dimension in its fullness – no doubt about this. But at the same time, I would argue that the two collage moments in the piece – the one in the middle of the song (the end-climax of “Merday Morn”), and the other one at the end of the song (the third segment of the song, “Garden of Worm”) – are closer to the messy, delirious, extemporized psychedelia than to the more polished, sophisticated yet equally excessive structures of prog. In pure sonic terms, these two moments remind of the similar collages of the Beatles, early Pink Floyd, and countless other psychedelics, with one exception: while Beatles’ “Revolution 9” (1968) is an independent and ab initio statement of discord and disaccord, the collages of “The Devil’s Triangle” were coded as integral part of the song’s machine, much like Luciano Berio’s arborescent ramifications of quotation in the third movement of Sinfonia (1968) are integral part of a larger intertextual tree that was more or less consciously intended as such. In other words, if the psychedelic bricolages are often conveying a sense of contingency and the unexpected, King Crimson’s collages are indeed more than mere “episodes:” they are predictable and necessary articulations in and of the overall economy of the song.

To return to the pure psychedelic music, I will refer in the end to Fever Tree, a Houston, Texas band whose first two albums of 1967 and ’68 display an almost obsessive interest in Ravel’s music (as well as other art music), and an eclecticism of style that, by comparison with the British counterpart, was relatively rare in the
American music of the time. Ravel’s music is referred to in at least three songs on these albums, all showing an unusual diversity, even clash of stylistic idioms. The garage/hard-rock number “Where Do You Go” (1967) presents a strange quasi-acoustic interlude featuring an incredibly funky and electrified bass punctuation over which a folky or classical flute improvises a free melody, quoting for a few seconds a crumb from the Bolero’s melos. In the classically-arranged “Filigree & Shadow” (1967) it is time for the Bolero’s rhythm to take center stage in the second half of the song. What is interesting here is that, exactly like King Crimson’s “The Devil’s Triangle,” and like Ravel’s La Valse, the rhythm-machine leads the whole song into a convulsive apotheosis, a collagistic end-climax of avant-gardist proportions. But the most spectacular number is “Death is the Dancer” from their second album (1968), referring this time to Ravel’s La Valse itself (this is the only such reference I was able to find in the rock music of the 1960s). Following Ravel’s recipe, the song again degenerates: alternating sections of duple (both 2/4 and 4/4) and triple waltz time (precisely on the words “death is the dancer”), the music soon comes to a fake stop, but continues after that with the waltz theme, becoming increasingly echoey and ending with a descending, moribund vocal glissando juxtaposed over a literal quotation from the piano transcription of La Valse, namely the ascending vertigo of the finale. The meaning is clear: death is, indeed, not just the dancer, but the winner of the game. Of the same “circle game.”
Carnival and the Carnivalesque

The carousel-waltz and various other circular suggestions discussed in our Preludium are, as it has been mentioned earlier, reflections of a much broader cultural vocabulary of the late 1960s, a vocabulary where the carousel, the circus, the fair, the clown, the freak-show, play an important role. If the first part of this project took the image of the carousel as a pretext for musical discussion, it is time now to expand our scope and move in the other direction: to take the musical reality of the carousel-waltz as a pretext for considering more broadly the semiotic context that made such a reality possible, find non-musical examples that would substantiate this semiotic context, and go beyond the carousel to consider some other terms of the fairground lexicon.

The main issue at this point is to find one broad-enough class of signs that would coherently encompass all the verbal images listed above – the carousel, the circus, the
fair, the clown, the freak-show – and a theoretical frame that would consistently explain the way in which these word-images articulate their literal and allegorical meanings in the cultural climate of the late 1960s. One such category is that of the carnivalesque. Indeed, not only does the carnivalesque define the circus, the fair, the freak-show as spectacles, as shows, but the word appears to sum up much of the cultural and psychological spirit of the late 1960s, a time of tremendous, feverish turmoil, excitement, and confusion.

The carnival as social institution and the carnivalesque as mode of literary expression were extensively discussed by Mikhail Bakhtin in his early book dedicated to Rabelais. In the introduction to his *Rabelais and His World* (1965), Bakhtin takes the carnival of the Renaissance popular/folk culture (the “culture of the marketplace”) as an explanatory model for Rabelais’ startling verbal images, images dominated by the coexistence (and often simultaneity) of both laughter and the grotesque. In doing so, Bakhtin outlines, here and in his later study on Dostoevsky, a few essential properties, conditions, functions and principles of the carnival, and implicit of the carnivalesque, that can be summarized as follows:51

1) the non-official, alternative nature of the folk festival, going against or in parallel with the official feasts of the Church;

51 This summary is based especially on Bakhtin 1984a: 7-12, 18-27, and Bakhtin 1984b: 122-29.
2) the **non-hierarchic structure**, and liberating, participatory, communal communication: everyone participates in the carnival, and the hierarchies of the official order are abolished or inverted;

3) the **profound ambivalence and dualism** of the carnival/carnivalesque. The carnival is a feast of joy and laughter, but also of the “grotesque body,” of bodily deformations, degradations, exaggerations that, like the carnival itself, function symbolically and allegorically in an ambivalent way: to degrade and regenerate, to assert and deny, to mock and renew the established social order;

4) the **carnivalesque inversion**: the inside-out and the upside-down, the parodic turnabout, where the king becomes beggar, the fool becomes wise, and all opposites mingle in a playful confusion;

5) the **misalliance of opposites, of extremes**, creating **eccentric and extravagant** configurations;

6) the **potential subversiveness** of the carnivalesque model (an idea elaborated by Bakhtin later in the book, as well as in his work on narrative dialogism in Dostoevsky), where irony and self-irony, parody and self-parody, and the “grotesque realism” alongside, test and contest the established order, the carnivalesque and dialogic novel becoming thus a place where resistance to authority becomes possible.

Even a quick look at these six interrelated points would reveal strong resemblances and resonances with some of the realities and ideals of the late 1960s. In a time of tremendous countercultural turmoil and excitement, of communal idealism, and of
great sensitivity to various alternative, non-hierarchical, liberating forms, structures, manifestations, the carnivalesque model with its decentralized and communal configuration, playful ambivalence, eccentric misalliances, and ironic inversions and subversions appears as a natural ingredient of cultural play and countercultural resistance. Such resonances of topics between the carnivalesque and the socially-aware and community-oriented climate of the psychedelic generation are so strong that the following Bakhtin quote could be taken in equal measure as a description of the communal and essentially experienced reality of the carnival, and as a perfect definition of the interpersonal interaction experienced inside the hippie, “flower-power” culture:

[The] free, familiar contacts [experienced during the carnival] were deeply felt and formed an essential element of the carnival spirit. People were, so to speak, reborn for new, purely human relations. These truly human relations were not only a fruit of imagination of abstract thought; they were experienced. The utopian ideal and the realistic merged in this carnival experience, unique of its kind. This temporary suspension, both ideal and real, of hierarchical rank created during carnival time a special type of communication impossible in everyday life. This led to the creation of special forms of marketplace speech and gesture, frank and free, permitting no distance between those who came in contact with each other and liberating from norms of etiquette and decency imposed at other times. A special carnivalesque, marketplace style of expression was formed.\[52\]

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\[52\] Bakhtin 1984a: 10.
As a mode of representation, what Bakhtin calls the “carnival sense of the world” (1984b) is fully present in the late 1960s cultural imagination, where it articulates a rich network of literal and allegorical images, including but not limited to those of the circus show, the clown, the fairground, the street parade. To give a preamble to our further discussion, let us not forget that the street during the late 1960s is a privileged, ultra-active site of both liberation and contestation, of both joyful play (public happenings, parades) and social-political fight (protest demonstrations). It could be said, by comparison with today’s situation, that the street is indeed the most definitive and symbolic space of the decade. But the street of the late 1960s is a carnivalized street, which differs fundamentally from today’s commercialized, functional and relatively passive street (especially the modern North-American urban street, which is more inert than its European counterpart). In the carnivalesque representation (whether this representation is concrete or mental), the street becomes more than a simple public place; invested with symbolic values, and mirroring the old public square or marketplace where the traditional carnival took place, the street becomes a scene, a show, a theatrical arena, a carnival. The street becomes carnivalized as a sort of spectacle or indeed a carnival or circus, complete with its clowns and freaks, with its humor and grotesque components, with its excitement and confusion, and with its noise. Because, after all, the carnival, like the public street or the banquet, is loud, noisy, and potentially confusing and messy (the hierarchical inversions operated in and by the carnival have much to do with this); it is not only a “sensual ritual-pageant,” as Bakhtin has put it, but also a super-saturating sensorial experience that keeps an open door to the unexpected, to the chaotic, to the anarchic.
Chaos revisited, or about heteromorphies

This sense of sensorial super-saturation, of extreme heterogeneity that invades the senses and can degenerate at any moment into chaos or madness, is crucial for the countercultural ethics and aesthetics of the late 1960s. It is enough to think about the improvisatory happening, or about the practice of collage, both extremely widespread and defining phenomena at the time, and one would immediately discern this symptomatic “will to disorder.” This is not to say that a spontaneous improvisation or a free-associative collage would be by necessity chaotic. But a happening or a collage can maintain a stronger relationship with the primordial world of chaos than other, more hierarchical, ordered, well-formed structures; in other words, an improvisatory or collagistic configuration has the potential of becoming chaotic at any moment. There is an entire series of dynamic structures and spaces that maintain this sort of amicable relationship with chaos, and they always involve a plurality of heterogeneous constituents arranged in a dense, crowded fashion. I would provisionally call these structures and spaces heteromorphies, by analogy with both Michel Foucault’s heterotopia, and Bakhtin’s own heteroglossia.

While Bakhtin’s concept, which refers to the conflicting coexistence of different “speeches” or voices in the dialogic novel, is of little use for our discussion at this precise moment (it will appear later, in conjunction with our discussion of collage), Foucault’s evocative – if also ambiguous, overused and probably misunderstood –

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53 I am grateful to Prof. Graeme Boone for this inspired and Nietzschean expression.
term proves more useful, if only because it is a more topological concept than Bakhtin’s. When coupled with Bakhtin’s carnivalesque, heterotopia can also prove a useful conceptual framework, and we will briefly touch upon its significance here.

In his lecture from 1967 titled “Of Other Spaces,” Foucault defines heterotopia in opposition to the imaginary space of utopia, as a real space that simultaneously represents, contests and inverts other real sites, and thus, a space that is simultaneously here and there, simultaneously now and then, and simultaneously concrete and imaginary. Among the many exemplifications provided in his text, perhaps the most clear ones are those of the garden and the museum. The botanical (or zoological) garden is a heterotopia of juxtaposition: a heterogeneous microcosm of other spaces (plants from all over the world) that are being represented and contested at the same time, the garden is both here with us and there with the others. A museum, or a library, is a heterotopia of time that creates a “slice in time” (a “heterochrony”), enclosing in one place objects from all time. Time is simultaneously represented and suppressed or congealed in a museum, whose dual role is to expose and preserve its objects for eternity.

According to Foucault, the fairground (and, more generally, the festival) is also a heterotopia of time, but in another sense than the museum is. Unlike the museum, a fairground does not engage with the notion of eternity, but, on the contrary, with that of the transitory, momentary time. The fairground creates its own temporary “other” space and time that contradicts and disrupts the real spatial and temporal geography,
in a manner similar to the circus. In his study on the semiotics of the circus, Paul Bouissac explains the heterotopic circus through its two contradictions that it creates:

the circus always temporarily disrupts the spatial economy and semiotics of the urban fabric into which it inserts itself, causing displacements and detours, upsetting the meaningful civil landscape by re-centering public attention to itself, its own pace, space, and architecture.

And Bouissac continues:

The second spatial contradiction is inherent to the mode of operation of the circus: it must both show and hide the wonders it contains. It is indeed essential to protect from public sight the performance which must be seen only in exchange of a payment commensurate with the visibility afforded by the location of the seat in the tent. But it must also reveal enough of the performance to convince a potential audience that paying for an admission ticket is a fair deal.55

Like Foucault’s fairground and Bouissac’s circus, the freak show seems to be another “heterotopia which inverts and restructures conventional values,” as Nancy Bombaci shows in a book about “freakish aesthetics” in late modernist America.56 And Bakhtin’s non-hierarchic carnival, with its ambivalences, misalliances, inversions, potential subversiveness, is, in fact, a heterotopia, too. It is a heterotopia even if we consider just the most basic of its various spatial and temporal contestations, as Bakhtin does in the following, very Foucaultian description: “While carnival lasts,

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there is no other life outside it. During carnival time life is subject only to its laws, that is, the laws of its own freedom.”

Carnival puts space and “time in parentheses.” Thinking about carnival as heterotopia, and about the process of carnivalization in the late 1960s as attempts at creating heterotopic sites of resistance, contestation, and alterity, sites that disrupt the “order of things,” would be both tempting and fruitful, but it is beyond the scope of the present study. It is, however, something for the reader of these pages to keep in mind.

Foucault’s heterotopia is defined in opposition to the non-existent space of utopia, and in relationship to other real spaces that heterotopia simultaneously represents and contests. By contrast, our simpler and more intuitive heteromorphy is defined solely by its relationship with the primordial sphere of the chaos, of the in-formal, of the unstructured. The heteromorphy is a dynamic heterogeneous, crowded, and dense structure, space or configuration that is either unstable, or in any case has the potential at any point to become unstable, spontaneously degenerating into chaos, disorder, anarchy. Some concrete examples of heteromorphies would include:

- the crowded street, with its apparently random, Brownian movement of people
- the traffic circle
- the highway traffic
- a boisterous party

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57 Bakhtin 1984a: 7.
58 Stam 1989: 94.
59 Here is where the genealogy of Foucault’s heterotopia becomes evident, a concept that can be traced back to Foucault’s structuralist interests of the 1960s in the archeological taxonomy of power structures and the institutionalized tactics of social exclusion. Foucault introduced the concept of heterotopia in 1967; The Order of Things was published in 1966; and his “archaeologies” of madness (Madness and Civilization) and the clinic (The Birth of the Clinic) date from 1961, and respectively 1963.
- the shopping mall, especially at the holidays
- the social rally and political demonstration
- the fruit & vegetable marketplace; or the flea market
- a group of tourists, especially when it is without guide
- the rock ’n’ roll live performance, as well as its audience
- the happening
- collage, assemblage, montage artistic practices, where, to use an old rhetorical
  language, inventio is either replaced by dispositio, or dispositio becomes and is
  inventio

The term “heteromorphy” is not perfect, since it does not evoke the sense of
processual dynamism often implied by such structures and spaces, the fact that a
heteromorphy has often different, distinct stages of evolution or revolution, some
closer to order, others closer to disorder. Calling these configurations “entropic
heteromorphies” would be even more unfortunate, since in most cases there is
nothing inherently chaotic in a heteromorphy. There is nothing inherently chaotic in
highway traffic, or in the shopping mall. But highway traffic, despite various
prediction models, can randomly generate traffic jams; and one can easily lose their
children in the mall during peak time. The probability of such an entropic intrusion is
of course directly proportional to the number of variables in the heteromorphy: the
greater the number of cars on the highway, the higher the chance of having traffic
congestion; the greater the number of children one has, the higher the probability of
losing them in the mall.
A better understanding of this dynamic quality would perhaps come from thermodynamics and its adaptations in various theories of chaos, catastrophe, complexity, especially those of Ilya Prigogine and Isabelle Stengers. Particularly interesting is the thermodynamic notion of dynamic structures that operate “far from (thermodynamic) equilibrium,” systems which physical chemist and philosopher of science Ilya Prigogine calls “dissipative structures.” In Prigogine’s influential theory, a dissipative structure is a self-organizing system that can generate some complex patterns, and sometimes even evolve toward order and symmetry, in conditions that are entirely unstable, marked by dynamic non-equilibrium (hence the title of one of Prigogine’s books: “order out of chaos”). Some classic and simple examples of such dissipative structures are cyclones, hurricanes, and whirlpools – forces whose shapes are sustained by a constant flux of energy and matter. Interestingly, Prigogine also considers the traffic jam as a dissipative structure where the entropic congestion of individual cars creates a new pattern, a new configuration. In the words of David Porush, the traffic jam acts as an “attractor” for other cars:

The traffic jam actually attracts other cars by involving them in a larger system than that created by their individual intentions or patterns (trips). Cars that would have been occupying other, more randomly distributed spaces in the road system at any given moment now find themselves occupying a place in the larger organization ordained by the traffic jam (in this case, someone else’s organization!).

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60 Prigogine 1984 and Prigogine 1997 are the two most-often quoted and influential books in this regard.
Other examples in our list of heteromorphies (the party, the street demonstration) can also be seen in this light, as attractors that generate both entropic “heat” and new macro-patterns or con-figurations (a term that seems more appropriate than Porush’s “organization”).

However, neither Foucault’s heterotopia of the fairground (useful for an archeology of power structures), nor Prigogine’s dissipative structure of the traffic jam (useful for a theory of the “order out of chaos”) would seem to fully explain the polyphonic “will to disorder” so present in the carnivalized 1960s, and the acute sense of carnivalesque confusion exhibited by the party scene in Jacques Tati’s *Play Time* (1967). As a matter of fact, Tati’s entire film is a lush display of various heteromorphies of the public space, from the crowded street and the traffic circle to the boisterous party, shops, and tourists. Before taking a closer look at that film, let us redefine one more time our intuitive term: a heteromorphy is a dense structure, space or configuration that exists “far from equilibrium,” and has a tendency toward disorder, but without being necessarily and eternally entropic.
Carnivalized heteromorphies: jamming and partying in *Play Time*

*Confusion is reality*
(The Tangerine Zoo, “Confusion,” 1968)

In 1967 Jacques Tati released, with big self-financing efforts that turned into big financial losses, the film that many regard as his *pièce de résistance*: the third installment of Monsieur Hulot’s adventures, a film cleverly titled *Play Time*. The piece is innovative and ideatic in several respects, and it would be unfortunate to see it just as and just for its comedic farce. For one, it is a narrative film, but without any conventional plot (a notion that would involve well-defined characters and dramatic situations). The loose narrative line concerns the absent-minded, curious and well-intentioned Mister Hulot, performed as always by Tati himself, roaming around Paris alongside a group of American tourists, witnessing, contributing to, or playing along in the process with a series of urban confusing happenings of comical (and sometimes absurd) nature. Put even more succinctly, Tati’s *Play Time* plays with the confusion and disorientation that can arise in urban, modern public spaces, an idea that is summarized by the final scene of the film: a traffic jam in a roundabout, that clearly suggests … a carousel. Not only are the vehicles moving round and round in a seemingly endless motion, but other circular motions and various motifs discreetly enhance this fairground impression: a small crane with a mechanic for the electric light pole is rising and moving around the pole; a cement truck that rotates its red-and-white oval tank; a revolving globe street decoration with an airplane figuration; a spiral-shaped modernist sculpture that resembles a lollipop rising from the cake-like
floral base in the middle of the traffic circle; curvilinear light poles; festive flags and balloons at the windows; children with balloons, carnival trumpets and cones of ice-cream; the hydropneumatic suspension of an old Citroën balancing the car up and down when it stops suddenly, and mirroring the joyful bouncing of a girl in the back of a motorcycle; a similar pneumatic up/down counterpoint of two cars raised on platforms in the repair shop; and finally, the most clever scene: a window cleaner who slides the window up and down, the sliding creating sighs of excitement from the bus tourists in front of the window, as if the up/down movement of the window would also move the entire bus, with the passengers experiencing the thrills of a fairground ride. Needless to say, all this is set to a carnival music that does include at some point a mechanical carousel-waltz in triple time. Every tiny detail in this finale contributes to the overall picture. And it is important to notice, as Teresa Magdanz does, that “Tati’s scene does not try to hide its connection to the carousel; indeed, apprehension of the allusion between fairground and traffic circle is necessary to glean the scene’s larger sense.”

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62 Magdanz 2006, 163.
What is the “larger sense” then? The carnivalesque, joyful nature of this carousel finale is in accord with the light tone of the entire film (it is, after all, a comedy), as manifestation of joyous, excited, carnivalesque confusion. Playful jamming, mass confusion received with excitement and curiosity rather than panic, is indeed the essential ingredient of a film that, if we want to get serious, can be read as a comedic allegory of urban disorientation/alienation in an ultra-modernist, technologically-charged environment, a theme Tati had visited earlier in *Mon Oncle* (1958).

The “action” of the film, if there is one, takes place in some of the most public locations of the urban-scape: airport; tourist bus; elevator; business office cubicles; expo space; parking lot; restaurant; grocery store; streets and roundabout. We follow Hulot and the group of tourists in all these spaces of the public sphere, which are inhabited by anonymous crowds, rather than by individuals. With this film, Tati-
Hulot explores the physiognomy of the crowded public space as a locus of bewilderment and excited havoc, and looks with amusement and detachment at the contrast between the abstract-functional modernist technological city and its real-life population. The Paris imagined by Tati is an ultra-modernist and functional one, but its functional technological novelties remain mostly abstract and perplexing for both its inhabitants and its visitors, as is the case with the sophisticated gadgets in the exposition, or the multi-colored and multi-button electric panel in the office building. The city is a cold, impersonal matrix that is populated and animated by the warm swarm of urbanites and tourists. The film itself is a masterful display of various confusing heteromorphies: the crowded street environment with its rows of cars, noises, passersby; the tourist group; the party in the restaurant; the polyglossic communication (the dialogue is minimal, but spoken in 4 or 5 languages, plus, of course, the all-important gestural expression); and many others.

The emphasis on collective and anonymous manifestation would explain the most radical formal innovation of the piece: not only is the film plotless (in the conventional sense of the word plot), but it dispenses with the conventional distinctions between foreground and background action, and between leading actors and supporting roles. The “action” is always in the background; or, said differently, there is no foreground. Similarly, a cast of hundreds is employed, and everyone has lead roles, or everyone is supporting the nonexistent lead. Monsieur Hulot is not a lead. He is a pretext for the show, he appears and disappears unexpectedly from nowhere and everywhere in the frame (as in the roundabout scene at the end, where
he appears for just an instant rushing on the street with the others), he melts into the
crowds, being one among a thousand others, and, most amazingly, he is being
replicated during the film (in a perfect industrial assembly-line mode) in various
contexts, with Hulot lookalikes being seen at several points. One such explicit faux-
Hulot appears toward the end of the film: the real Hulot enters the shop to buy a
going-away gift for one of the American tourist girls, but he has trouble leaving the
shop; the bus of tourists is about to depart, and so he asks another customer who
resembles him perfectly to hand the gift to the girl. This assembly-line, or pop-art
replication of Hulot the star, as well as of other subjects, objects, and situations in the
film, reflects a de-emphasis of the individual in favor of the crowd, and “is basic to
the film’s ethics and aesthetics, which deplore the kinds of space created by stars,
whether human or architectural.” 63 On the other hand, the proliferation of copies has a
pronounced parodic effect. In spite of some obvious similarities such as gestural and
caricatured expression, Hulot is not a perfect modern replica of Chaplin; he is at best
a mild version of Chaplin, being less excessive, less exaggerated, more “realistic.” If
Chaplin was a clown, Hulot is just “clownesque.” But he is nevertheless clownesque
and caricaturish, presumably a parodic imitation of the real Tati, and having copies of
himself, imitations of imitations haunting the film, doubles the burlesque,
carnivalesque effect of the movie. 64

64 Recalling his brief encounters with Tati in Paris, Jonathan Rosenbaum talks about how “becoming
part of a Tati gag was inevitable if you hung around him, but it always became part of a dialectic when
the copied version was transmitted back to you. It was the same way, I’m told, that he directed
performances in his films: imitate the funny way that someone walked, then ask him or her to imitate
If, in light of technical cinematic evolution, the gestural histrionic excessiveness of
the silent-era Chaplin or Keaton is minimized with Hulot (Tati was not a revivalist,
nor a deconstructivist, as Martin Arnold, Guy Maddin or Peter Delpeut are), this is
remedied in *Play Time* by an excess of playfulness. Burlesque attention to the
bureaucratic indifference, misunderstanding and confusion in public spaces such as
the airport help-desk, the business office, the expo space, seems to dominate the first
half of the film, while the second half is dedicated almost entirely to one single scene
of a rare extravaganza: Hulot and the cohort of tourists spend the evening partying in
a restaurant that is still under construction, the scene slowly but surely degenerating
into a mayhem of glorious accidents, merry drunkards, noisy revelers, and
multilingual expression. A burlesque, boisterous party of confusion and congestion
that one year later will serve as major influence for Blake Edwards’ *The Party* (1968),
the scene was aptly described by Kent Jones as a “bacchanale,” an “eruption of joyful
anarchy” that is completely in the spirit of May ’68. And in case someone may think
such a scene could not have posed logistical or technical difficulties, according to
Jones it took no less than seven weeks to shoot it.

The cinematic representation of the less elegant, wild Dionysian party as orgiastic
and/or carnivalesque, as a reflection of permissiveness and transgression (“everything
goes”), of anonymous confusion (“who is that?!?”) and liberating indifference (“I
don’t care what you do”), as an amalgamation of people and languages, as a cultural
and linguistic melting-pot, and as something always prone to merry accidents, was

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65 Jones 2001. According to Jones, Tati himself said, after the May ’68 events in Paris, that “with *Play
Time* he was on the barricades with the students in revolt.”
not new. Fellini was fond of this type of boisterous hedonistic party that appears as a trope even in his first films of the 1950s, and reaches heightened levels of moral bourgeois depravation in *La Dolce Vita* (1960) and *Juliet of the Spirits* (1965). In Buñuel’s *The Exterminating Angel* (1962) the dinner party degenerates in a surreal-morbid nightmare. And in the sexually- liberated and transgressive happening counterculture of the late 1960s, with its hippy communes and communalities, orgiastic-collagistic sequences of the carnal becoming carnivalesque and vice-versa are to be seen everywhere in American avant-garde filmmaking, perhaps the best illustration being the gender-bending films of Steven Arnold. Not as surreal-absurd as Buñuel, not as magic-visionary as Fellini, not as orgiastic-transgressive as Arnold, Tati’s 50-minute long and increasingly intense carnival- or anarchy-party, maintains in its polyphonic complexity a light, joyful, clownesque tone. It thereby integrates seamlessly with some of the central ideas of the film, those of crowd anonymity and carnivalesque confusion. Taking almost the entire second half of the film, the restaurant party scene is integral to the narrative flow, rather than its climax-conclusion; it is a logical extension of the first half, not its conclusion. Jonathan Rosenbaum is spot-on when he describes the scene (and by extension the whole film) as “a network of polyphonic complexities” that places Tati in the company of a modernist aesthetic:

The world [Tati] depicts is a peculiar one consisting of public events viewed from private perspectives, […] a central theme of modernism that actually places Tati in the unexpected company of Joyce and Eisenstein (as well as Duras, Godard, Rivette, and Straub-Huillet, among closer contemporaries who revere his
work), so that in the second half of *Play Time*, Tati could achieve through intuitive genius a network of polyphonic complexities such as Eisenstein and the others arrived at mainly by conscious design.\(^\text{66}\)

Needless to say, the mainstream, Hollywoodian replication of Tati’s polyphonic party in Edwards’ *The Party* is faithful in its humorous intention, but lacks all the meaningful subtleties, layers and intuitive ambition of the original.

The noisy, lively, busy street, with cars impatiently honking their horns and the always-present swarm of people, features repeatedly and naturally in a film that looks at some of the most public *and* anonymous of all public spaces. But there is also another sense of the street here. Less of an echo of Fellini’s characterological parade and poetical vision in *La Strada* (1954), and more of a carnivalesque display (and, in a way, denunciation) of the urban circus, *everything* is or becomes public show in Tati’s film. The show is not only that of the street, but *from* the external angle of the street we can have a glimpse at some *inside* shows. The office building, as well as the building holding the exposition of modern gadgetry, have big glass facades showcasing their interior, and Tati plays several times with this confusion-generating illusion between inside and outside. One of the most memorable sequences in *Play Time* is when Hulot is being invited by an old acquaintance into an apartment whose entire exterior wall facing the street is made not of concrete, but of transparent glass.

Part of the ultra-modernist architectural design Tati had ingeniously planned for his city in the so-called “Tativille” set at the periphery of Paris (and along with that

\(^{66}\) Rosenbaum 1995, 167-68.
perfectly geometric grid of office cubicles at which Hulot at one point startlingly looks at from above), the image of a glass-apartment whose interior is completely visible from the outside is nothing but striking. In one of the frames we see (from the street) the whole complex of four such glass-apartments, with inside action going on simultaneously in each of them (ironically, and in keeping with the film’s theme of assembly-line copies, the “action” is not only bland – people watching TV – but again replicated in a perfectly symmetric/industrial way; and the décor of the rooms is in the same way: symmetrically replicated.) This is Tati’s prefiguration of the split-screen video technique of more recent times. It also reminds, as Rosenbaum writes, of Eisenstein’s *The Glass House*, an unrealized project where he dreamt of having

multiple actions in different parts of a glass house where opaque objects, such as rugs, would interrupt the line of sight and serve as compositional devices. Of utmost interest was the possibility that the same shot, or scene, could contain not only an action but also people, on the other side of the glass walls, seeing and reacting to the action.⁶⁷

Eisenstein’s vision of what he termed “stereoscopic” film, realized by Tati, even if only for an instant, in quadroscopic version, had also adherents beyond cinema, among the many artistic avant-garde circles earlier in the century, which, it can be argued, were linked by the same passion for the idea of simultaneity, of polyphonic synchronism. But whereas for the cubist or futurist, simultaneity meant a collagistic de- and re-composition of reality, angles, and geometries, and respectively a bombardment of the viewer with the artist’s visceral impressions (ideas that resonate

in the late 1960s as well, as I will show later), for Tati the role of the glass-apartments complex was essentially parodic, a thematic reiteration of the comment regarding the process of artificial, mechanist replication, and at the same time a reflection of something more significant: the fact that, through inside-out inversion (a profound carnivalesque strategy, after Bakhtin), the private apartment becomes the stage of a public spectacle that can be seen from the now-comfortable auditorium-street (the scene happens at night, so that, exactly like in the movie theater, the street is in the dark while the apartments-stage are illuminated as if they were movie screens). At this point, there is indeed no difference between the glass-apartment, the gadget exhibit earlier in the film, and the shop-window later in the film. And yet, there is no trace of voyeurism or exhibitionism in Tati’s movie. The apartment with the shop-window is a fixture of Tati’s modern city, and it is as if no one would care about what happens inside; no one stops to take a peek at the show. The spectacle is not directed at the passersby in the film, but at us, the spectators of the film, who may or may not decode the potentiality and meaning of the moment.
The entire film can be put in these terms of a dual play with the notion of spectatorship: the spectacle in the film, and the spectacle of the film. During daytime, people constantly look, with curiosity, admiration or exhilaration, at the various exciting attractions, in the city, in the expo space, in the gift shop. But it is with the glass-apartments and the restaurant party where Tati’s film really becomes a spectacle. On its surface, the film is about a group of tourists visiting the city, but then we realize that the film itself is presented to us as something to be visited, and that we are its tourists, its spectators. Without transforming cinema into theater or fantasmatic vision, like Fellini and many others have done, Play Time remains in its essence a film-spectacle. Carnival and circus, yes, but with ideas.
Noise: Noise of the Street; Noise of the Time (a bridge)

There is plenty of noise in Play Time, including street noise. And by noise here we should of course understand not just the literal sense of the word, but also its allegorical connotations: confusion, mayhem, turmoil, and, by extension, the idea of social-political unrest, protest, resistance, subversive provocation. It is precisely this ambiguous and complicated relationship between the literal and the figurative that I wish to explore here. It should come as no surprise that Tati’s next film of 1971 was titled Traffic; that the film after Traffic (and Tati’s last) was called Parade (1974); and that Tati’s unfinished project (for which only the script remains) was labeled … Confusion. The pattern is quite clear, even if we look only at these headings. Linking the joyful anarchy of Play Time with the tense situation happening on the streets in 1968 is not so far-fetched, and in fact Tati himself supposedly said after the Parisian May ’68 events that “with Play Time he was on the barricades with the students in revolt.”68 The publication in 2007 of a collection of essays under the name Humour and Social Protest would again seem to confirm a certain affinity between these two apparently irreconcilable poles, and, despite all its comedic silliness, a film like Louis Malle’s Viva Maria! (1965) where a circus troupe ends up participating in the anarchist Mexican Revolution of the 1910s would provide a fantasist response to the same problem.

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**Play Time, Traffic, Parade, Confusion.** Through this series of titles, Tati seems to perfectly express the carnivalesque ambivalence of the late ’60s (playfulness and “will to disorder”), and particularly of that carnivalized, heteromorphic street which, as mentioned at the beginning of our Fugue, becomes one of the most symbolic public spaces of the time, a site of both joyful celebration of life (street parades, fairs, and the Mardi Gras) and profound socio-political unrest, provocation and resistance. In an era defined by a constant, febrile search for freedoms of all kinds (artistic, sexual, social and political), the street provided a public arena to express these desires in the open, to test their validity, and to challenge the status quo through various forms of liberating and communal manifestations, of which the most emblematic ones were perhaps the improvisatory happening, and the protest demonstration. In this light, the acoustically noisy environment of the street, the literal noise of the carnival, the noises of the traffic, of the parade and of the party, all these become clear allegories for the noise of the time. And in a liberal adoption of Jacques Attali’s concept of the noise-as-violence-and-murder one could certainly say that the acute noise of the late 1960s, the noise of the era’s Play Time, Traffics, Parades, and Confusions, was both violent, and carnivalesque – two realms that are not mutually exclusive.

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69 Attali 1985.
The carnivalization of the street and the allegorization of its tumult as noise of the
time can take quite different forms from Tati’s light-hearted, humorous, and
politically-veiled approach, either through a more direct political engagement,
through adoption of a grotesque mode of representation, or through escape into the
surreal and the fantasmatic. Jean-Luc Godard’s *Week End* (1967) exemplifies the first
of these directions (although Bakhtin’s “grotesque body” is also present here, if one
takes the unapologetic display of blood and dead bodies in many of the film’s frames
as being grotesque; and the parodic absurdity of some scenes does relate to a
surrealist aesthetic). *Week End* was released in the same year as *Play Time*, and was
titled (and spelled) in the same bisyllabic and bilingual *franglais*. Godard’s film is
also outwardly a comedy, or at least this is the category it is sometimes listed under in
film databases. Anarchic road-movie would be a better label. Five minutes into the
film, one realizes that the movie’s perverse-subversive intentions are far from the
comedic realm of Tati, and far from the idyllic road rebellion of Dennis Hopper’s
*Easy Rider* (1969). By 1967, Godard, like many others in the circles of intelligentsia,
was starting to be affected by the spell of Marxist/Maoist idealism, a move that would
have a profound impact on his filmmaking for many years. *Week End* is the last film
of Godard that retains something of the conventional filmic narrativity before
pulverizing it completely in the late ’60s (“fin de conte / fin de cinéma,” proclaims an
intertitle at the of the film), and it fully displays this ideologization, where cinema
becomes a weapon in the revolution against capitalist, imperialist, and bourgeois
values, especially those of conformity, consumerism and commodification; cinema
becomes leftist agit-prop (Godard’s denial that his late ’60 productions had political
intentions is of course to be taken with a grain of salt; yet there is always a wonderful
sense of cleverness and iconoclast imagination in these late ’60s films of his that
keeps them well apart from pure, mindless agit-prop). Starting inoffensively and
comfortably as the story of a bourgeois couple that leaves Paris for the countryside in
the weekend, the film quickly shows its subversive and ugly side, with the couple
experiencing a series of bizarre and violent episodes that gradually degenerate into a
chaos of apocalyptic dimensions, rape and cannibalism included. Imbued with brutal
and shocking images, and representing a huge parable of the violent, anarchic
Revolution, this is a film that is in total opposition to Tati’s world.

Yet, the fact that the film is labeled as a “comedy” is significant. Its absurd extremism
could be one reason for such a classification. Its sarcastic, cynical tone, its potent,
bitter and biting irony could be another one, a parody realized very much through
carnivalization. There are quite a few effective carnivalesque moments in Week End.
The first one takes place at the beginning of the film, when the car of Corinne
(Mireille Darc) and Roland (Jean Yanne), the two protagonists, is caught up in an
interminable traffic jam on a country road, a scene shot in a single, long take (a
“tracking shot”) that lasts almost 13 minutes in real-time, and hours in narrative-time. If one were to ignore the context of the entire film, the disproportionately-long traffic jam episode would be Godard’s perfect response to Tati’s equally disproportionate restaurant party. However, not only is the traffic jam epitomizing visual confusion and chaos in a more immediate and, it can be retrospectively said, more politically-conscious way than Tati’s film, but those 13 minutes are incredibly noisy, ten times more aggressively noisy than Tati’s party, with a continuous, deafening cacophony of horns honks “so loud and persistent that they lose any potential meaning as greetings or warnings.”

This wall of unnerving horns, drivers yelling and other sounds is constant during the scene, but at some points a brief musical leit-motive is heard over the noise, having great impact over the structure and sense of the scene. Godard is one of those few directors with a fantastic sense of musical understanding; he knows perfectly well how to dramatize the filmic material through music and sound, and nowhere is this more evident than in the musical montages to his epic cycle _Histoire(s) du cinéma_ (1997-98). The score of _Week End_ was signed by Antoine Duhamel, his second collaboration with Godard after the exceptional music he wrote for _Pierrot le Fou_ (1965). As he did with the segmentation of the flowing and melancholic musical theme of Ferdinand in _Pierrot_, Godard tends to use an almost collagistic approach to music in _Week End_, fragmenting the music into brief and recurring episodes, episodes or flashes that are abruptly interrupted, started and restarted. In this way, the musical “cut” is made evident, rather than hidden at the time of montage. For the traffic jam scene, Godard chose a fragment from Duhamel’s

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70 Sterritt 1999: 97.
score that contrasts with the filmic context: it is a brief neoclassic minuet motive in 3/4 (with an eight note pulsation subdivided as 4+2), syncopated, anacrusic and gracious, but slow-tempo and minor-modal (thus, it is not exactly a happy carousel-waltz). This motivic flash occurs three times during the scene, and each time strategically, in conjunction with three cinematic frame disruptions: a typically Godardian intertitle indicating in big colored letters the passing of narrative time (“13H40” in red; “Weekend” in blue; “14H10” in red); a large, bicolor Shell Oil tank truck (red and yellow); and the place of the deadly accident that caused the whole jam, a frame dominated by red (the blood and the red clothing of the corpses lying on the side of the road). In each of these three cases, the introduction of vibrant color in an otherwise gray landscape, along with the 3/4 minuet motive, sarcastically dislocates for just a moment the thematic chaos, reframing the anarchy as a sort of colorful parade.

This sarcastic effect, and the resemblance of the traffic jam to a parade, is confirmed by a few other significant details in the scene: a group of schoolchildren on the side of the roadway singing joyfully; a couple of vehicles carrying circus/zoo animals (lions, 71 In the published soundtrack, the fragment can be found in the second half of “Elle et lui,” as well as in the ending of “Lamento.”
72 This Shell Oil vehicle that “breaks” the frame through both its dimensions and its colors can be of course read in political key as a sort of anti-consumerist/industrialist comment. Sterritt describes the scene as follows: “[The truck] greedily sucks up screen space with its intimidating bulk and aggressive red-and-yellow colors; yet it’s even more stymied than the other vehicles, stuck in a nose-to-nose stalemate with a white Fiat headed in the opposite direction on the same stretch of roadway. This is a prototypical Godardian symbol, transforming the personal car crash that climaxed Contempt into a socioeconomic car clash (Shell vs. citizen) with darkly comic undertones” (Sterritt 1999: 98). Such an interpretation would probably be impossible to make with Tati’s red-and-white concrete tank truck in the finale of Play Time, which rather than disrupting the frame, was integral part of it. The role of Tati’s rotating and colored tank truck was purely compositional rather than ideological; it was meant to provide another spot of color and carnivalesque in the kaleidoscopic carousel of the traffic circle.
monkeys, and an exotic llama); people having a chess match right on the pavement in the middle of the road, or playing catch with a red ball from one car to another; a family relaxing on the grass as if they were at a picnic; and other such activities. Of course, nobody in this delirious anarchy seems to care about the many abandoned, wrecked cars seen along the road; and nobody cares about the human casualties of the traffic accident, the dead bodies of adults and children seen lying on the sideway at the end of the scene. Corinne and Roland speed up through the accident site, glad that they finally got out of the jam.

Another episode in Week End with significant carnivalesque resonances takes place shortly after the traffic jam, when Corinne’s and Roland’s car is being hijacked by a couple of bizarre, half-hippie half-clownish hitchhikers. Here Godard moves from parade to another carnivalesque trope, namely the circus (already prefigured by the
traveling menagerie in the traffic jam scene). The woman who initially stops the car asking for a ride particularly looks like a clown, with her white boots, red raincoat, and a pallid face that seems (or perhaps is) painted in white. Her travel companion, hidden at first among the wrecks of a smashed-up car (violent accidents and wreckages abound in a film that, as Godard informs us in an intertitle at the beginning, is “found on a dump”), makes his sudden appearance with a similar clownish red coat, red boots, and a leafed tree branch in his hand, and demands a ride in the opposite direction. When Roland refuses to turn the car around, “he fires a gun, brandishes his leafy stick, and prods Roland through a U-turn, just as a lion tamer would put a circus animal through its paces.”

As the four are cramming into the car, an intertitle interrupts the frame, reading in a quasi-anagrammatic, playful way, “L’ange / Ex / Terminateur,” a clever reference to Buñuel’s 1962 film where things spiral out of control in a similar manner as in Week End (another point where Tati’s Play Time differs). In the words of David Sterritt,

> By invoking [Buñuel’s] title in his own movie, which takes a similar dark pleasure in confrontations between the ordinary and the inexplicable, Godard cleverly cannibalizes its blend of existentialist angst and surrealist drollery. He also inject another Brechtian break into the story’s continuity (already shaky), and foreshadows a supernatural/religious element in the episode about to unfold.

Even Duhamel’s music in this scene is evocative of Buñuel’s anxious atmosphere. No longer resembling a minuet, but still in triple time, the music sounds more ominous,

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74 Sterritt 1999: 102.
with long-held notes over a vaguely Holstian martial rhythmic ostinatto in triple time with low string pizzicati (and possibly timpani); and then a repeated chordal signal in orchestral tutti, loud and dissonant, at the end of the hitchhiker episode: a moment of profound yet parodic and cartoonish pandemonium when Roland and Corinne take temporary hold of the hitchhikers’ revolver and chase the two out of their car, before the hitchhikers manage to get the gun back and reverse the chase; the four are chasing each other and firing their gun now in a field of car wrecks and … sheep. This anarchic chase sequence with gunshots, and the sheep flock which appears from nowhere, are other, more disguised intertextual references to the symbolic, ambiguous finale of Buñuel’s film, which ends with the disturbing image of a public demonstration being dispersed through gunshots by police, while a flock of sheep traverses the public square into the cathedral. Similarly, Duhamel’s repeated chordal tutti (a signal of six repeated dissonant chords) recalls the almost apocalyptic bell warnings with which Buñuel ends his film.75

A clear waltz musical moment in Week End appears in conjunction with another carnivalesque episode. Lost in the woods, Corinne and Roland enter a fantastic realm, a “wonderland” where they meet an unlikely pair of literary figures: Emily Brontë (Blandine Jeanson) and Tom Thumb (Yves Alfonso). In his typical fashion, Godard weaves in this scene a web of intertextual references, literary conflation (Brecht, Blake, Brontë, Lewis Carroll, Ionesco’s theatre of the absurd) and symbolic meaning

75 The musical material of the entire hitchhikers sequence is taken from Duhamel’s “Lamento” (the pizzicati rhythmical motive, albeit slowed-down in the film, and with possible addition of timpani), and from the beginning of “Le miracle des mouton” (the repeated chordal signal of the field chase).
that is too dense to analyze or describe here. Suffice to say that Godard’s Tom Thumb is clearly a clown, and that the literary figure of Emily Brontë conflates several other characters: Dorothy from the *Wizard of Oz*, Little Red Riding Hood, and Lewis Carroll’s Alice. Corrine and Roland keep asking for directions to Oinville, but any reasonable communication is impossible with Emily and Tom, who are lost in an abstract world of their own, with Tom quoting esoteric statements of political philosophy and Emily reading from a book some equally enigmatic syllogisms apparently drawn from Lewis Carroll’s *Symbolic Logic* (1896).

Duhamel’s music again provides a good counterpart to the scene, with a delicate, fairy, enchanting slow waltz evoking the dreamy, unreal narrative situation, although Godard’s use of music here is discreet. He takes a brief fragment from the waltz that Duhamel intended for the scene and uses it only once, at the moment when Emily recites syllogisms from her book.\textsuperscript{76} For the feral end of the scene, where Roland becomes so unnerved by Emily’s indifference that he sets her on fire with a lighter, Godard brings back the leit-motive of the more ambiguous minuet heard in the traffic jam.

Probably the most sarcastic, cynical incongruence between text and context in *Week End* is a later scene in the film where Corinne is raped by a vagrant in a ditch while Roland indifferently smokes his cigarette at the margin of the road. The moment of the rape is invisible and without music: only Corinne’s cries of help are heard. But, in

\textsuperscript{76} The material chosen by Godard here is the very beginning of Duhamel’s “Alice au pays des syllogismes.”
keeping with his brand of carnivalesque absurdism, Godard closely frames this highly traumatic moment with a series of more relaxed, even burlesque shots: Corinne and Roland taking turns in childish piggybacking rides, or the vagrant asking Roland for a light, and Roland with a match in his hand saying he doesn’t have one; and, after the rape, Corinne getting out of the ditch and joining Roland quite naturally, as if nothing ever happened, and then the two resuming their piggybacking, with an intertitle that reads: “Footit et Chocolat” – referring to two antagonist clowns (in an act where Footit was abusing Chocolat) that were popular at the turn of the century, and filmed by Lumiére in 1900. Duhamel’s music accompanying these scenes is also burlesque, a cabaret number straight out of Kurt Weill, reminding one at the same time of the circus clarinet music Nino Rota has penned for some of Fellini’s sequences.

By comparison with Tati’s innocent Play Time, Godard’s volcanic Week End is a difficult film, a film hard to digest, due to both its dense intellectualizing referentiality, and its carnivalization of violence. Through a series of visual and musical carnivalesque inversions, contestations, ambivalences and incongruencies, all integrated into an ultra-cynical perspective, Week End proves that the carnivalesque can go well beyond the playful, humorous dimension, to address more sarcastically and in a politically-engaged way, the serious, sensitive matters of social turbulence and violent, anarchic revolutionary activism; in other words: the violent, confusing noise of the time. Particularly noticeable is Godard’s non-hippie vision. Revolution

78 Duhamel’s segment for this scene in the soundtrack is called “Footit et chocolat.”
has to be violent, one strand of the film seems to say, even if, in perfectly
carnivalesque manner, this statement seems to be itself contested, since the object of
Godard’s generalized mockery is “every sort of power, from middle-class privilege to
working-class indignation and revolutionary outrage.”

Let us remember that, for
Bakhtin, the carnivalesque implies both contestation and self-contestation, mockery
and self-mockery. At the same time, it would be hard to ignore the carnivalesque
nature of the social noise portrayed in Week End, realized through carnivalesque
inversions. As Sterritt writes, Godard presents us here with

a “civilization” turned upside-down and inside-out, wherein life
and death, beauty and horror, reality and illusion become
heedlessly confounded with their opposites. The purpose of these
inversions and contaminations is to shake us into a brutal new
awareness of how tragically our real-word civilization has gone
astray.

Sterritt concludes that Bakhtin’s notion of carnivalesque, although clearly at play in
Week End, may appear too “neat and manageable” to account for the film’s
extremism. For Sterritt, Godard makes the step from apocalyptic carnivalesque into
the realm of what Julia Kristeva calls “abjection:”

“Abjection” picks up where “apocalypse and carnival” leave off.
By dictionary definition, the “abject” means that which is low,
wretched, base; by abject expression, Kristeva means utterances
fostering a heightened awareness that “the narrative web is a thin
film constantly threatened with bursting.” When divisions between

80 Sterritt 1999: 128.
subject-object and inside-outside are called into question, the narrative may lose its linearity and enter a new stage in which “it proceeds by flashes, enigmas, short cuts, incompletion, tangles, and cuts.” Eventually the fiction’s highly stressed infrastructure “can no longer be narrated but cries out or is described with maximal stylistic intensity (language of violence, of obscenity, or of a rhetoric that relates the text to poetry).

This describes *Week End*, and other works of Godard’s revolutionary phase, with great accuracy. “If one wishes to proceed farther still along the approaches to abjection,” Kristeva adds, “one would find neither narrative nor theme but a recasting of syntax and vocabulary – the violence of poetry, and silence.”

Abject, carnivalesque, or abjectly carnivalesque, the fact remains that *Week End* is not the creation of a pacifist flower-power child, but of an auteur-provocateur interested in radical politics and in the shaking of the status quo. The eschatological *Week End* represents the end of narrativity in Godard’s career (hence the final intertitle of the film, proclaiming the “end of story” and the “end of cinema”), and the beginning of a long non- or post-narrative phase, with strongly ideologized pseudo-documentary films where Godard pushes the limits of cinematic vocabulary while at the same time provoking the audience to reflect upon and take a stand for or against the ideology embedded in the film. Ultimately, with *Week End* Godard shows a big middle finger to everyone, but it is a gesture done with illuminating artistry and carnivalesque flair.

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81 Sterritt 1999: 128.
Provocations and ambivalences, 
the situationist spectacle, 
and the rock ’n’ roll circus

– Why do you want to see the Stones particularly?
...What turned you on to the Stones at this rife old age?
– I always liked rock music ... It’s like a carnival, you know...

(ABC Archives pre-concert interview with a band fan in his late 30s, 1973)

One of those post-narrative films that Godard made in the aftermath of the apocalyptic Week End was Sympathy for the Devil (1968, also known as One Plus One), a pseudo-documentary on the studio work of the Rolling Stones that serves as pretext for a meditation on the role of political ideology and revolutionary counterculture in Western society. Footage of the Rolling Stones in the studio, rehearsing and recording countless takes of one and the same song (“Sympathy for the Devil,” from Beggars Banquet, 1968), is interspersed with a few other scenes where revolutionary action or reflection takes place. Alongside the Stones’ music are various quotes about fascism, communism, democracy, feminism, as well as a prominent and repeated scene of the virulent Black Panthers rehearsing their rhetoric and militant attitude in a junkyard and shooting a couple of white young women in the process.

It should come as no surprise that Godard chose the Stones and their “Sympathy for the Devil” as background for a film-meditation that deals with controversial themes,

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82 Interviews and crowd footage from the Rolling Stones’ concert at the Kooyong Stadium, Melbourne, 2/18/1973, aired on the Australian ABC in March 1973, and available at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JMIwjWu-f0A.
political and social ideologies, and, like in Week End, revolutionary violence. There must have been a certain affinity between Godard the political provocateur and the Rolling Stones, a band that is often credited as epitomizing the rebelliousness of rock ’n’ roll. The Stones’ “Sympathy for the Devil” focuses on Lucifer’s handiwork in various atrocities over the centuries, and appears as the opening track in an album whose initially rejected cover-art depicted a derelict, ultra-dirty, graffiti-laden toilet room (paralleling Godard’s own preference for derelict spaces and images: ruins, car cemeteries, various wreckages). So this song had its fair share of controversy at the time before becoming another of those quintessential anthems of the late 1960s, and it confirmed in a definitive manner the band’s credentials as a group of rebellious “bad boys.” The Stones cultivated a non-mutual ironic reaction and distanciation to the Beatles, and it should be noted that these bad boys expressed much more of a sense of dissatisfaction and social protest than their archrivals ever did. The Stones were always ready to reply to and spoof the latest productions of the four lads from Liverpool, translating the Merseybeat pop into a more gritty, granular alternative. In spite of, or perhaps due to their firm rooting in the blues, and despite the occasional trippy and spacy incursions in such an album as Their Satanic Majesties Request (1967), the Rolling Stones had a significantly larger number of socially-conscious (and thus, controversial) rock “anthems” in the ’60s than the poppy-turned-experimental Beatles, from “(I Can’t Get No) Satisfaction” (1965) and “Under My Thumb” (1966) to “Street Fighting Man” (1968, from the same Beggars Banquet) and “Gimme Shelter” (1969). This more realist, partly Dylanesque anchor went along with the Stones’ and particularly Mick Jagger’s pronounced sarcasm, salty or sour

This type of sarcastic tone would explain a certain disjunction between music and lyrics in some of the Stones’ songs, a disjunction imbuing these songs with a sense of ambiguity and ambivalence. It would be a stretch to say that songs like “Under My Thumb” or “Sympathy for the Devil” are carnivalesque. Missing are the carnivalesque clash or misalliance of extremes, and a certain caricatural exaggeration – even if the very idea of expressing “sympathy” for the devil is as much Mephistophelian as it is carnivalesque (though maybe more carnivalesque than Faustian\textsuperscript{84}). Yet, just as one cannot ignore the particular dissonance that Godard creates by using a minuet for illustrating the anarchy of a traffic jam in \textit{Week End}, the almost beachy, tropical marimba, the clapping, and the relaxed syncopation (especially at the beginning) in “Under My Thumb” infuses a soft blend of soul (Northern or otherwise) and the Caribbean that contrasts with the more machismic image of being under one’s thumb.\textsuperscript{85}

\begin{footnotesize}
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  \item \textsuperscript{83} Wenner 1995.
  \item \textsuperscript{84} For a reading of “Sympathy for the Devil” in light of Goethe’s \textit{Faust} see Berman 1974. However, see the discussion below for our relative reservation toward this Faustian interpretation.
  \item \textsuperscript{85} This contrast is of course in light of the affect codes established in Anglo-American rock music, which differ from those of soul and reggae music; Bob Marley would probably not have perceived any sort of tension here. But then, we should remember that the Rolling Stones’ music has not only blues roots, but also strong soul influences (unlike the Beatles, who were, at least at the beginning, more on the rockabilly and Beach Boys side, with a few blues/bluesy exceptions). As it has been noted in cyberspace, the marimba riff (and even the overall drum-and-bass infrastructure, I would add) in “Under My Thumb” is quite close to a similar pattern in The Four Tops’ “It’s the Same Old Song”
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As for “Sympathy for the Devil,” its non-aggressive, almost laid-back and seductive mode of presentation, in mid-tempo, with soft Latin percussion (maracas and congas) and doo-wop “woo-woo” backup vocals, should not be so surprising; after all, the “nature of the Bad Guy’s game” is puzzling precisely because of the devilish trickery, temptation, seduction that such a game implies. The song though does become more emphatic and groovy, more vocally intense and texturally thick as it progresses, building in its final minutes to a remarkable rock groove that begs some comparison with what James Brown was doing at the time.

The fascination with evil is a prominent theme in the blues history that the Rolling Stones were so fond of. However, the Stones’ “Sympathy” is less about fascination or submission as it is about ambivalence toward the devil, and the song displays a sarcastic tone that seems less Faustian (no one is eternally damned in the Stones’ number for their, perverse or not, complicity) than carnivalesque. The song also has (what an ironic title, given the circumstances), a prominent Motown Top 10 single of 1965. Some covers and remakes of the Stones’ song would substantiate these soul-Caribbean connections. Northern Soul singer Wayne Gibson covered Jagger’s and Richards’ number immediately in 1966, although his version was apparently not liked by the Stones. In 1980 the Irish band The Boomtown Rats recorded their punkish ska remake (a radical one), in conformity with the strong Jamaican influence on the British punk / new wave / post-punk scene, ca. 1980. 2002 saw the release of a compilation titled Paint It Black: A Reggae Tribute to the Rolling Stones, containing a cover of the song by Andrew Francis. And, most recently, 2010 American Idol semifinalist Tim Urban performed the song in a reggae arrangement. At the same time, fans of the band have found some vague structural similarities between “Under My Thumb” and “Gimme Shelter” (see http://www.iorr.org/talk/read.php?1,347620,page=1 for the forum discussion thread), resemblances which I would tend to see from a broad stylistic and atmospheric rather than narrow structural (chords and riffs) perspective. Both songs have a soul influence, made primarily audible in “Gimme Shelter” by the admirable sense of mid-tempo groove (with the guiro and maracas imparting a Latin rather than Caribbean touch this time), and by the soul-gospel tone of Merry Clayton’s voice. Add the dead-serious message of the lyrics, and one has a song that is not far removed in its intentions from Marvin Gaye’s gutsy and pleading “What’s Going On” from a year later (1970).

According to Gary Lachman, one of the song’s influences was Mikhail Bulgakov’s The Master and Margarita (1928-40), which is itself a mix of Faustian themes, slapstick carnivalesque humor, and socio-political satire and allegory. The complete version of the novel was not published until 1967 in

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86 According to Gary Lachman, one of the song’s influences was Mikhail Bulgakov’s The Master and Margarita (1928-40), which is itself a mix of Faustian themes, slapstick carnivalesque humor, and socio-political satire and allegory. The complete version of the novel was not published until 1967 in
a Nietzschean tone, and counts as “a gleeful Nietzschean identification with power,” as Fred Pfeil has put it. 

“Sympathy for the Devil” is ambiguous in its musical presentation, as well as in its message, and this ambiguity persists of course in Godard’s *One Plus One*. Are Godard and the Rolling Stones saying that violent revolution is the only viable solution? Or, on the contrary, that anarchy is bad? It would appear as if the Stones’ and Godard’s Satan would be closer to the ambivalent figure of the Trickster rather than to the Christian image of an unequivocally evil force.

Taking as argument Marshall Berman’s Faustian interpretation of the song, both Ryan Moore and Jon Wiener agree that the devil portrayed by and speaking in the song is to be feared and respected but is not a figure of unambiguous evil, for he also personifies the specter of change than entranced millions of youths all over the world in 1968. In Marshall Berman’s reading, the devil in this song is akin to the one Goethe created in *Faust*, in which experimentation and annihilation are irrevocably bound together in modernity’s spirit of creative destruction. “Sympathy for the Devil” urges the Sixties generation to know who they’re dealing with – to guess his name and the nature of his game – but it doesn’t caution them to stay away.

Germany, and it was probably a copy of the English translation (also 1967) that Marianne Faithfull, Jagger’s girlfriend at the time, gave Mick to read. Another thread in the genesis of the song (although prone to mystifications, cf. the widespread misconception regarding the connection between “Sympathy” and the Altamont incident) would concern the mystique of the Stones as “Satanic Majesties,” and the mystical-occult climate in which the band (particularly via Brian Jones and Anita Pallenberg) was dabbling in the late ’60; for an interesting account of the many connections involved in this environment see Lachman 2003: 288-91.

Pfeil 1995: 77.

For the differences and similarities between the Christian Devil and the American Indian Trickster see Keyes 2005.

In Berman’s descriptions as paraphrased by Wiener, the song would reveal that “it’s not easy to separate ‘good’ violence from ‘bad’ violence,” and would suggest that “every one of us who wants to overcome the power of the Pentagon must come to terms with the Pentagon within himself.”

And that seductive grooviness of the music, pointed to earlier, is confirmed by Wiener’s assumption that with this song “Jagger was suggesting simply that all violence was bad – the flower-power cliché – at the same time that he found it groovy. His song was a seductive invitation to join in a diabolical game.”

Here is again where Godard meets the Stones on the common ground of sarcastic ambivalence: while Godard carnivalized violence, the Rolling Stones found it, musically and otherwise, “groovy.”

If the Stones, through their salty irony and relatively uncomfortable edginess, had a more acute sense of social consciousness and rebelliousness in their songs than the Fab Four (there is nothing like “Sympathy for the Devil” or “Street Fighting Man” to be found in the Beatles’ catalogue), it is nevertheless true that both groups were inevitably part of the same pop culture machine where the carnivalesque was less a mode of resistance and contestation (as in Godard’s truly non-mainstream *Week End*), and more a strategy of theatrical representation and affirmation of the “pop star(s)” (exactly the reverse of Tati’s celebration of anonymity in *Play Time*), a strategy that involved, of course, not just the stars themselves, but the spectators as well. The rock ‘n’ roll live show as a multi-colored, flamboyant, dizzying circus, the various antics, body language, impersonations and alter-egos of such a show, the flashy and richly

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90 Wiener 1991: 68.
91 Wiener 1991: 68.
adorned stage costumes, the facial makeup (evidently of clownsque/carnivalesque origins – the mask), the general euphoric, “carnivalesque” craziness of the fans; from Elvis and Jerry Lee Lewis on, all these are natural components of the rock musician’s universe and of rock music as performance art, and the emergence of the “stadium rock” at the end of the ’60s, followed by glam rock in the next decade, will exaggerate these already acute tendencies toward the spectacular. However much we would like to think sometimes of such a performance art as escaping from or subverting the regulations of the show business, and avoiding the spectacle of celebrity, the fact remains that the spectacular (and more hippie) carnivalesque of the Beatles was and remains more popular than the subversive (and less if not straightly non-hippie) carnivalesque of a Zappa or Beefheart.

In this light, despite various more or less impressionist attempts to read the Beatles’ *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* (1967) (as well as their subsequent *Magical Mystery Tour* from the same year) in a Bakhtinian key as a “revival of the carnivalesque,” and despite the uncontested genius of that recording, one would still

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92 In his Bakhtinian analysis of popular culture, Marcel Danesi goes a step forward and explicitly links the spectacular visual appearance of various modern subcultural clothing fashions with the medieval carnival: “Gangsta artists, punks, goths, and others wear costumes and put on masks (makeup, jewelry, and so on) that are not unlike those worn by the medieval carnival mockers” (Danesi 2008: 61).

93 One may invoke here a counterexample with modern day Lady GaGa, whose almost Pop Art spectacle (mainly in her video-clips) is both popular, and, some say, subversive. But, unlike in Zappa or the Beatles where music can stand alone independently of visuals, the potentially subversive carnivalesque of Lady GaGa resides only in the space between visuals and music, more exactly, in the gap opened by her radical disjunction of the two: outrageous, eccentric, extravagant visual appearance, and ultra-bland, ultra-pop, ultra-commercial dance music; a multimedia misalliance of extremes, in Bakhtin’s terms, that, indeed, can be more ironic (and popular, because of the accessible, catchy musical language) than the closer alliance of sound and image (and the valorization of music as something more than a sequence of hooks) in Arthur Brown, Kate Bush, Grace Jones, Annie Lennox, Madonna, Björk, Peaches, etc..

be inclined to see in the “conceptual” show implied by the album’s music, lyrics, and cover-art, the signs of a clever extension, of a studio prolongation on LP of the real, live show that the Beatles have just left behind (they stopped touring in August 1966, and the recording of *Sgt. Pepper* started in December that year). As clever, artistically and technically ambitious, innovative, and yes, carnivalesque the whole album is, imprinting this carnivalesque with larger countercultural meanings without taking into account the ubiquitous reality of the “rock ’n’ roll circus,” and reading the album’s somewhat loose concept of the carnivalesque virtual show as having potent rather than potential subversive connotations (“even the most seemingly innocent of its songs conceals a sly, subversive intent”95), would disregard the simple facts that (i) the carnivalesque trope, with its long series of images (circus, fairground, carousel, clowns, freaks, parades, zoo menagerie, etc.) was already well ingrained into the cultural imagination and reflected by the cultural artifacts of the era (music, film, literature, visual arts) by the time the Beatles came up with their “concept;” in other words, the carnivalesque was neither introduced, nor “revived” by *Sgt. Pepper*; (ii) the carnivalesque spectacle was not always and necessarily “subversive,” unless we consider the whole rock ’n’ roll spectacle as such; (iii) when compared to other rock ’n’ roll acts of the time (the Rolling Stones and Frank Zappa included), the Beatles had never manifested in their music an explicit socio-political conscience, an acute sense of mockery and sarcasm, or a tendency toward caricatural and grotesque representation.

95 Gregory 2008: 162.
This being said, we should avoid going as far as Zappa’s scathing mockery of Sgt. Pepper in his famous Mothers of Invention response of 1968, which was part of his larger attack against hippie culture. The Beatles of 1967 were not just hippie clowns, and the Sgt. Pepper carnival was obviously not just an entertainment vehicle intended “only for the money.” A band as iconic as the Beatles and an album as influential, rich and heterogeneous (despite its apparent thematic unity) as Sgt. Pepper cannot be reduced to one single trend or idea, but encourages instead nuanced and sophisticated readings and rereadings, as that of William Northcutt, who sees the album’s spectacle of alter-egos as one of “alienation,” estrangement and distancing from the crowd, rather than, or as much as, one of all-inclusive, hippie communal participation. “The Beatles were always suspicious of mass adulation, although they also realized such adulation had to be sustained,” writes Northcutt, and Sgt. Pepper sustains this “ambivalence toward the crowd,” by simultaneously inviting it to the show (sometimes selectively, as in the display of celebrities in Peter Blake’s cover-art, icons and stars which are not, properly speaking, a “crowd”) and excluding it from the show through the double move of “performing the distance” and “distancing the performance.” As Northcutt shows, it is a distancing that operates on many levels, of which the most obvious one concerns the Beatles’ retreat from the live tour world (following a series of public controversies in the summer of 1966) into the more austere yet creatively liberating space of the recording studio, which also implies the distancing of the band from their earlier Mop-Top image. By 1966-67, with Revolver and Sgt. Pepper out in the public, the Beatles were starting to be applauded by the

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low-middlebrow press (*Time, Newsweek*) as “an experimental laboratory group,” “serious musicians” making “an enormous contribution to electronic music,” and with “recording practices” marking “early steps in a brand new field.” But it is significant that *Sgt. Pepper* marks this transition into a new phase not by renouncing the notion of the rock ’n’ roll circus, but, once again, by extending it into a virtual, or conceptual, spectacle.

Northcutt’s points and conclusions are different, and do not involve the “rock ’n’ roll circus,” but one of his paragraphs explains the Beatles’ “distancing” nicely, by invoking Guy Debord’s theory of the social spectacle – although, by so doing, Northcutt infuses *Sgt. Pepper* with a socio-political and even subversive meaning which the Beatles themselves probably did not intend. In short, taking as argument Debord’s thesis that the only way to resist and subvert the social spectacle is from within, from inside the spectacle itself, Northcutt concludes that with *Sgt. Pepper* the Beatles did just that: “The Beatles found themselves fighting the spectacle from within,” and thus they found “a way to separate themselves from spectacle and its spectacle crowds.”

It is highly improbable that a situationist would agree with Northcutt’s conclusion, though it is perhaps valid in a very broad sense where creative freedom and artistic imagination would act as subversive “fight.” A more detailed look at Debord and the

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situationist theory is necessary at this point. In *The Society of the Spectacle* (1967) Debord develops a critique of the modern capitalist, consumerist, and mass-mediated society, which he sees as a huge spectacle where representation takes the place of authentic social life, and genuine social interaction becomes mediated by the images and the appearances of the spectacle.\(^{100}\) According to Debord and the situationist position, to get out of this social spectacle, to break free from the amorphous state of what Marxists (and Adorno along with them) would call “false consciousness,”\(^ {101}\) one must construct “situations” and perform *déroulements*. The “situation,” an ultra-vague situationist key concept always defined generally, abstractly or intuitively rather than specifically, concretely or rationally, involves “a moment of life” deliberately constructed as a sort of performance act (*not* art) – a series of actions, gestures, events that would place (situate) the participants right in the space and time of the lived, *hic et nunc* experience. Furthermore, this constructed moment of life would seek a perfect accord and unity between the participants’ behavior and the surrounding ambiance\(^ {102}\) (hence the arcane psycho-imaginary urban projects of the early situationists, a mix of surrealist play and utopian political cartography, with

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\(^{100}\) Cf. Debord’s 1st and 4th theses: “The whole life of those societies in which modern conditions of production prevail presents itself as an immense accumulation of *spectacles*. All that once was directly lived has become mere representation.” And: “The spectacle is not a collection of images; rather, it is a social relationship between people that is mediated by images.” (Debord 1967).

\(^{101}\) As we have shown, the Marxist idea of the “false consciousness” is implicit in Adorno’s critique of the “regressive listening” and of the fetishist character of music. See Adorno 1938, and Firca 2006: 59.

\(^{102}\) A couple of definitions of the Situationist “situation;” a (constructed) situation is “a moment of life concretely and deliberately constructed by the collective organization of a unitary ambiance and a game of events” (Debord 1958). “The situation is … an integrated ensemble of behavior in time. It is composed of actions contained in a transitory decor. These actions are the product of the decor and of themselves, and they in their turn produce other decors and other actions” (Knabb 1958). “The *situation construite*, the ‘constructed situation,’ is best thought of as a sort of *Gesamtkunstwerk* (total work of art). Each constructed situation would provide a decor and ambiance of such power that it would stimulate new sorts of behavior, a glimpse into an improved future social life based upon human encounter and play” (Sadler 1998: 105).
Debord’s “psychogeography” and theory of the urban “dérive” where one constructs and drifts along a symbolic map of affects and moods rather than physical buildings, roads, landscapes\(^{103}\). In this light, despite an essential diffusion of the distinction between concrete practice and metaphorical theory which was typical of situationists, the “situation” would appear to share much of the same participatory and experiential nature with Allan Kaprow’s “happening” (also called by Kaprow “activity”) and with other such “events” and “actions” proliferating in the 1960s. Influenced by Sartre’s ideas about a “theatre of situations” (1947), Debord’s “situation” would also appear to convey the same sense of immediacy, the same “modality of presence” as Henri Lefebvre’s non-Bergsonian (since it involves discontinuous, discrete temporality) concept of the \textit{moment} (what Lyotard would later call \textit{instant} and \textit{event}\(^{104}\)), defined by Andy Merrifield as “something intense and absolute, yet fleeting and relative, like sex, like the delirious climax of pure feeling, of pure immediacy, of being there and only there, like the \textit{moment of festival}, or of revolution”\(^{105}\) (our italics). Carnival and the revolution, joyful play and contestation, would be linked by the same affective and temporal modality of the ecstatic, euphoric, and spontaneous “moment.”

The political moment, as Lefebvre wills it, is a pure and absolute act of contestation: a street demo or flying picket, a rent strike or a general strike. Streets would be the staging, and the drama might be epic or absurd or both, scripted by Brecht [or Godard?] or

\(^{103}\) This situationist cartography, the imaginary urban map, fits perfectly in the late 1960s utopian project, and resonates strongly with both Sartre’s earlier existential phenomenology, and with Marcuse’s emphasis of the word “imagination.” See in this respect Tally 2010.

\(^{104}\) See especially Lyotard’s discussion of the “instant” in Barnett Newman’s painting (Lyotard 1984), as well as his earlier ruminations on the “event” in John Cage’s music (Lyotard 1972).

\(^{105}\) Merrifield 2006: 28.
Chaplin [or Tati?] or Rabelais [vivat Bakhtin!] – who could tell?
It’s meant to be spontaneous, after all.  

As a “moment of life” that becomes a Lefebvrian “political moment,” the situationist “situations would be practical and active, designed to transform context by adding to the context, assaulting or parodying context, especially one where the status quo prevailed.” This “assault” on the context, on the decor of the surrounding spectacle from which the momentary, transitory “situation” tries to escape, has a more precise name in the situationist vocabulary, being called a *détournement*. A little less slippery than the “situation,” *détournement* is derailment, diversion, hijacking, reversal. It is often defined as a parodic and sarcastic (mis)appropriation of the established icons and artifacts of the spectacle, in order to divert, pervert, subvert their original, spectacular aura. The similarity between such a tactic and the carnivalesque misalliance and inversion is, once again, evident.

[Détournement] would scupper accepted bourgeois behavior and received ideas about places and people. Squatting, and building and street occupations are classic examples of *détournement*, as are graffiti and “free associative” expressionist art. All these actions would exaggerate, provoke, and contest. They’d turn things around, lampoon, plagiarize and parody, deconstruct and reconstruct ambience, unleash revolts inside one’s head as well as out on the street with others. They’d force people to think and rethink what they once thought; often, you’d not know whether to laugh or to cry. Either way, *détournement* couldn’t be ignored: it was an instrument of propaganda, agitprop, an arousal of indignation, action that stimulated more action. They were a

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107 Merrifield 2006: 34.
“negation and prelude,” inspired by Lautrémont’s *Poésis*, one of Debord’s favorite works.108

However, despite the obvious resemblances between “situation” and happening, and despite the temptation to find instances of *détournement* in avant-garde artistic creations (as Merrifield does for a moment in the quotation above with his example of abstract expressionism), the situationists repeatedly denied such a comparison. They did this because they saw their project not as a reiteration of the artistic avant-garde movements earlier in the century (especially those of futurism and Dadaism), even if such movements had always maintained a political-revolutionary stance, but essentially as an engaged socio-political venture, an avant-garde Revolution but without the help of art. Ironically, International Situationism (IS) was in fact the child of a fusion among three radical avant-garde groups: COBRA, a Belgian post-surrealist, anti-Breton faction; the Imaginist Bauhaus, seeking a more experimental and actionist restructuring of the pre-war Bauhaus; and the better known Lettrist International. But, as it turned out, Debord and his situationists were not artists; they weren’t even philosophers. They were “strategists,”109 theorizing about “constructed situations” and planning non-artistic *détournements* of the social and urban spectacle, even if, unlike happenings, few if any of these situationist provocations ever materialized – one notable exception here being the May ’68 Parisian uprisings, where the IS did play a central role, logistically, ideologically, propagandistically.

108 Merrifield 2006: 34.
109 “I’m not a philosopher, I’m a strategist,” admits Debord in a conversation with Giorgio Agamben, who concludes: “Debord saw his time as an incessant war that engaged his entire life in a strategy” (Agamben 1995: 313).
Simon Sadler summarizes this anti-art ethics well:

The situationists would measure their success by the degree to which their avant-garde role was minimized. “The situation is made to be lived by its constructors,” Debord explained. Conveniently, however, the exact point at which the situationist avant-garde would rescind their role as “auteurs” of the situation, or at which the situation would stop being an autonomous artistic event and become a revolution, escaped scrutiny. The situationists instead diverted criticism onto the multimedia performance art that was emerging elsewhere, refusing it any situationist significance – in 1963 *Internationale situationniste* acknowledged “the ‘happenings’ produced by the New York artistic avant-garde” only as “a hash produced by throwing together all the old artistic leftovers.” The happening, it was argued, was not part of a revolutionary process. A revolutionary transformation of consciousness among its participants was neither its prerequisite nor its result. Not only did it leave the spectacle unchallenged, it was itself a “spectacular” avant-garde activity.\(^\text{110}\)

Happenings were not the only topic making the object of criticism in *Internationale situationniste*. Even an auteur-provocateur with double Marxist and Lettrist ties like Godard, who was always willing to subvert linguistic conventions through his anagrammatic, acrostic, and playful intertitles (like the whimsical ANAL YSIS in *Week End* prefacing the Bataillean perverse eroticism, the explicit “verbal orgy” of Corinne’s monologue about her threesome experience – itself a moment of carnivalesque signification\(^\text{111}\)), was often being attacked there for his allegedly

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\(^{110}\) Sadler 1998: 106.

\(^{111}\) For a discussion of Corinne’s monologue in connection to Bataille see Westbrook 2005; for the same scene (and the whole film) reframed in the terms of Freud and Georg Simmel see the chapter on
“pretentious pseudoinnovations.”

Godard’s films were indeed beyond pure “strategic” provocation, channeling provocation through art.

The Beatles’ carnivalesque *Sgt. Pepper* would not stand a chance of being endorsed as “fighting the spectacle from within,” as Northcutt has put it, in these ultra-restrictive conditions of utopian projection where both the communal happening and Godard, and both avant-garde and art more generally, were seen as perpetuating rather than disrupting the spectacle. At least not from the situationist perspective of the “spectacle,” “situation” and *détournement*. Zappa’s avant-garde incursions in *We’re Only in It for the Money* would probably have even less of a chance, despite the Mothers’ “freak show” being far more subversive than the Beatles’ carnival. Yes, the Beatles were at the very center of the spectacle, and this is perhaps the only attribute that would make them interesting and potentially “subversive” in the situationist eye. But the virtual show put forward by *Sgt. Pepper* was not exactly a *détournement* (there are no explicit misappropriations, hijackings, offensive perversions here); it did not construct a collective “situation” or a “(political) moment” that would connect the participants’ behavior with the surrounding social environment (it is perhaps impossible to construct situations through sound)

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Zappa’s subversiveness is multi-dimensional, but one of its levels is precisely the subversion of the hippie culture and psychedelia “from within” – that is, through psychedelic, but fundamentally sarcastic, eccentricities and experimentations. As George Petros observes, Zappa “created a parallel universe of pseudo-Psychedelia, appropriating Dadaist and absurdist mechanisms to assault his audience” (Petros 2001).
recordings); it did not generate street unrest, uprisings, social revolution. The sense of irony and sarcasm in *Sgt. Pepper* is relatively weak. Social commentary, although there, is disguised and light. A certain caricatured element is perhaps present, but the grotesque is missing altogether: there are no freaks in Sgt. Pepper’s show, and Henry the Horse is just a horse trained to dance the waltz. And the “carnivalesque,” psychedelic “liberation of the mind” was not exactly a novelty in 1967, although the album, released in the U.K. in June, did come at the right time for the hippie “Summer of Love,” and the masked references to LSD and possibly heroin must have had an impact coming right from “within the spectacle” rather than from its periphery. If there is any potent subversive element in *Sgt. Pepper*, it must be the subversion of artistic rather than socio-political norms. In any case, in the end, Godard chose the Rolling Stones over the Beatles.

But, as always, things are not as black and white as they may seem. In 1968, more exactly in *May ’68*, the Beatles would come as close as ever in their career to an impressionist portrayal of the violent, chaotic, turbulent noise of the street, with Lennon’s (and partly McCartney’s) uncompromising, wild, collagistic “Revolution 9,” perhaps a follow-up to McCartney’s earlier, unreleased “Carnival of Light,” a 14-minute collage piece he did for a sound-&-light happening in 1967. At the same time, as mentioned earlier, as sarcastically ambivalent and socially-conscious as they may have been, the Rolling Stones themselves were no strangers to the idea of the spectacular rock ’n’ roll circus. In fact, the very phrase “rock ’n’ roll circus” is theirs. In a gesture that is characteristically theirs, in December ’68 the Stones would reply
for the second time to the Beatles’ *Sgt. Pepper*, by putting together their own *The Rolling Stones Rock and Roll Circus* — not an album, not a live show, but something in-between, a stage event simulating a concert, and intended as a BBC TV special that never aired (the film was withheld from public release for decades by the Stones who were unhappy with their performance, being finally released only in 1996).

Based on Jagger’s idea and filmed by Michael Lindsay-Hogg over one afternoon and one full night on a sound stage in London made to resemble a flashy big top, the event comprised a series of top acts (Jethro Tull, The Who, Taj Mahal, Marianne Faithfull, John Lennon’s “The Dirty Mac,” Yoko Ono & violinist Ivry Gitlis, with the Stones closing the show with an extended set) performing in front of a lively invited audience dressed up as clownish wizards, with brightly colored ponchos and bizarre hats. Complete with an entry fanfare parade and interludes featuring clowns, acrobats, and a fire-eater accompanied by the striking Donyale Luna (of Warhol and Fellini fame), the show is indeed a circus – visually, as it is musically, from Ian Anderson’s typical one-leg-in-the-air flute-playing position to The Who’s famed display of demented energy in their “A Quick One, While He’s Away” medley, and from Marianne Faithfull’s quirky folky-pop rendition of Mann’s and Goffin’s

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114 Chronological note: coming a few days after the release of *Beggars Banquet* (December 6), *The Rock and Roll Circus* (December 11) would be the Rolling Stones’ second response to the Beatles’ *Sgt. Pepper*; the first one was one year earlier, with the release of the psychedelic *Their Satanic Majesties Request* in December 1967, six months after the Beatles’ album.

115 The Dirty Mac, playfully named after Fleetwood Mac, was a one-time band created by John Lennon specifically for the event, consisting of Lennon (vc., gt.), Eric Clapton (gt.), the Rolling Stones’ Keith Richards (bass), and The Jimi Hendrix Experience’s Mitch Mitchell (drums).
“Something Better”\textsuperscript{116} to Yoko Ono’s avant-tribal vocalizations over Ivry Gitlis’ violin and Dirty Mac’s rhythm section. Leaving the musical and documentarist/historic value aside, the show aims low, at least by comparison with \textit{Sgt. Pepper}’s more unified and conceptual standards. There is a heightened sense of artificiality in the whole conception, which becomes especially evident in the pseudo-spontaneous but “pythonesque” introductions of the bands by Jagger, Keith Richards, and Lennon, who take on the role of compères. Everything feels staged, proving that, when taken out of their rock performance element, musicians are bad actors (despite Jagger’s fine acting in Cammell’s and Roeg’s \textit{Performance} of 1968). In the show’s communal finale, Jagger and his bandmates sit amongst the audience and sing the closing track from \textit{Beggars Banquet}, the proletarian, pseudo-anthemic and admittedly ambivalent “Salt of the Earth” (1968) championing and toasting the “common man,” the working class of the world,\textsuperscript{117} while the surrounding crowd of clownish wizards – presumably the “faceless crowd” Jagger refers to in the bridge – joyfully swings and sings along in a manifestation of blissful flower-power brotherhood that culminates in a frenzied, carnivalesque everyone-must-dance moment on the song’s final soul-gospel vamp. Another instance of the Rolling Stones’ cynical ambiguity? Most probably so. Yet, in light of the whole rock ’n’ roll circus, the cynical intention of this finale is somehow diluted, if not lost, and that “ambivalence toward the crowd” that

\textsuperscript{116} Faithfull’s smooth ballad performance is somewhat discordant with that whole circus context. A better alternative would be Jack Cardiff’s \textit{The Girl on a Motorcycle}, a corny road movie released earlier in 1968, and featuring a sexy and independent Marianne Faithfull in leather bodysuit dreaming of being “tamed” in a circus ring by the whip of Alain Delon...

\textsuperscript{117} Cf. the song’s entry in Wikipedia, Jagger himself said in an interview from 1970 that the lyrics of the song were written as “total cynicism. I’m saying those people haven’t any power and they never will have” – a quote whose exact source I was unable to track down, except that it appears as such in a \textit{Newsweek} article from January 1971 (Oberbeck 1971: 47).
Northcutt notices in *Sgt. Pepper* becomes really ambiguous, really ambivalent here. In this finale to their Circus, are the Rolling Stones unconditionally fraternizing with, or rather ironically distancing themselves from the faceless crowd? And, in light of this communal ending of the show, is “Salt of the Earth” truly a moment of “total cynicism” as Jagger has supposedly said, or rather one of the greatest drinking songs ever?\(^{118}\)

In 1969, Italian collagist painter, film director and avant-rock musician Mario Schifano produced his first experimental film, *Umano non umano* (Human Non-Human),\(^{119}\) a Godardian exercise (and tribute) in non-narrative socio-political deconstruction, and a film co-produced by and featuring the Stones’ habitué Anita Pallenberg, as well as Mick Jagger and Keith Richards. Schifano’s film includes Jagger lip-synching “Street Fighting Man,” in a performance that demonstrates – despite the song’s directness – a tension between music and its visual accompaniment that proves just as multi-textual (or “heteroglossic,” to use Bakhtin’s term) as the “Salt of the Earth” finale in *Rock ’n’ Roll Circus*. Godard was not the only filmmaker who saw the sarcasm and rebelliousness of the Stones as perfectly suitable counterpoint to socio-political filmic commentary. Essentially an existentialist and politicized film-essay, *Umano non umano* opens with several scenes from Godard’s films projected on a screen (including an outdoor sequence of Godard himself while shooting one of the beginning scenes of *Week End*), and proceeds with a series of

\(^{118}\) See the footnote above. The song made it to #2 in a recent Top 25 Best Drinking Songs compiled by the Whiskey Goldmine website, right after the Dubliners and the Pogues’ folk-punk rendition of the Irish “Whiskey in the Jar” (1990). See Chapman 2010.

\(^{119}\) The film premiered in Venice in 1969, but was officially released only in 1971.
apparently unrelated sequences: a muted bourgeois party, Vietnam War footage, a Chinese popular celebration of Mao, a couple of scenes with writer Alberto Moravia and filmmaker Carmelo Bene, and recurring images of Italian labor street demonstrations. Somewhere in the middle of the film, Mick Jagger is shown in a dark room lip-synching on “Street Fighting Man,” a striking visual performance that is devoid of the mannerisms associated with the typical Jagger live show. Instead of the rebellious ultra-tight pants and tops, Jagger is dressed in a pink suit and adorned white shirt, with a big corsage on the chest. His body language and posture is reserved and gentle rather than ostentatious and aggressive: he smiles at the camera (a gesture not as rare as in Dylan’s case – Jagger also smiles on Circus’ “Salt of the Earth” – but still unusual given the song’s message), marches back and forth and left-right in simple, geometric movement, spins himself a few times, and makes large theatrical but elegant bows and hand gestures. This is a Chaplinesque Jagger, or a Jagger of the music hall rather than of the rock ’n’ roll concert stage. The contrast between the visuals and the music and lyrics could not be more powerful, given the explicitly rebellious tone of “Street Fighting Man” – a song that incites social action, and a song that links in a definitive manner the Revolution and rock ’n’ roll via the same idea of rebellion (“…the time is right for fighting in the street, boy / But what can a poor boy do / Except to sing for a rock ’n’ roll band”). The previous Rolling Stones circus becomes here rock ’n’ roll cabaret, with Jagger’s act closer to David Bowie’s more ambiguous impersonations and pantomimes (already in full swing by 1969120) than to the androgynous machismo of the stereotypical Stones live stage.

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120 See the pre-Ziggy mime segments in the following two promotional short films of Bowie: Love You
performance. At the same time, as in a Bowie performance, there is a sense of quirkiness here, making this cabaret a different sort from the more Freudian and noir appropriations of the genre by Jim Morrison and the Doors.

Fig. 4. Rock 'n' roll cabaret: Chaplinesque Mick Jagger as a (non-Satanic) master of ceremonies, lip-synching, smiling and bowing on “Street Fighting Man” in the political film-essay *Umano non umano* (1969)

From a strict situationist-Marxist perspective, the Beatles’ *Sgt. Pepper* carnival and the Stones’ rock ‘n’ roll circus and cabaret would appear as entertainment vehicles susceptible of perpetuating rather than disrupting the social spectacle. It is perhaps safe to say that, except for the ultimate goal of the Revolution (itself the result of a mechanism of utopia), the situationist conceptual projects were seductive but so

*Till Tuesday* (dir. Malcolm J. Thomson, 1969), and *The Looking Glass Murders* (dir. Brian Mahoney, 1970), this last one a TV production of Lindsay Kemp’s and Bowie’s *Pierrot in Turquoise*, a mime show staged in 1967.
restrictive and in a way dogmatic (despite the self-proclaimed anti-dogmatic nature of the SI) that they were in fact utopian – that is, impossible to realize. This would explain why the movement reached its peak around 1968, and quickly dissolved in the early 1970s, paralleling the rise and death of the idealist and revolutionary 1960s; the situationist ideas will be revived though at the end of the ’70s by Malcolm McLaren and the British punk generation in their attempt to establish punk as a countercultural “artpolitics,” as Crispin Sartwell has put it.\textsuperscript{121}

However, if we were to ignore the non-artistic and non-avant-garde requirements of the SI program, there are some concrete activities that would come a few steps closer to those happening-like momentary situations and détournements envisaged by situationists, and these activities are always connected with the public space of the street and with its crowds – since the situationist Revolution must happen in the streets, not in an album, a film, or a concert stage. As mentioned by Merrifield above, squatting and graffiti art would be good examples of détournement, to which we can add picketing, strikes, and all sorts of public pranks (so dear, again, to the anarchist punkers). Shortly after the creation of the SI in the late ’50s, we witness in 1960 the emergence of the Nouveau Réalisme (New Realism), the Parisian answer to the Anglo-American Pop Art, a movement that promoted the practice of “décollage” in street wall posters. This technique, connected with the lacerated posters of François Dufrène, Raymond Hains, Jacques Villeglé, and Italian Mimmo Rotella, involved overlaying two or more posters, then tearing away or removing parts of the top poster

\textsuperscript{121} See Sartwell 2010, the chapter on Dead Kennedys and Black Flag, and especially pp. 102-04.
in order to reveal the poster(s) underneath. The New Realists were close to Pop Art in their recycling of commercial, mass-produced “found” objects such as cinema posters, although the result of the poster laceration was often quite abstract, as in the illegible, spectral, sometimes Lettrist-oriented works of Dufrêne and Hains. Pierre Restany, the conceptualist of the group, defined the New Realist enterprise as a “poetic recycling of urban industrial and advertising reality” – something that is not far away from the situationist understanding of détournement (except, of course, for the word “poetic”). In any case, the décollage of public wall posters would be another good instance of détournement, of cultural hijacking of spectacular symbols, and of diversion that takes place within rather than outside the public space of the street.

In the realm of rock ‘n’ roll, a better instance of détournement than Sgt. Pepper would probably come from Jefferson Airplane and their December 1968 rooftop performance in New York City, an event – or situation – connected, one more time, with the name of Jean-Luc Godard. After One Plus One, Godard, by now part of the Marxist Dziga Vertov group, started to work in the fall of 1968 on another pseudo-

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122 Restany 1990: 76.
123 The word “décollage” will be soon adopted in the Fluxus vocabulary by Wolf Vostell (where it is spelled dé-coll/age), a German that became connected with Nam June Paik and George Maciunas in 1962. As the flipside of collage, Vostel’s dé-coll/age involved taking the whole apart, dismembering, stripping down, cutting without pasting – emblematic processes for the anti- and de-constructivist attitude of Fluxus, reflected in seminal “actions” such as Yoko Ono’s Cut Piece (1964) where the audience is invited to come up on stage and cut away Ono’s clothing until she is left naked, or Annea Lockwood’s series of four Piano Transplants (1968-72) which involved various methods (fire and drowning) of destroying a piano, that ultimate symbol of Western art music. As for Vostell, he preferred wrecking TV sets and exposing altered, stinking food in front of white canvas, nourishing a sensibility toward decomposition that would have been at home in a film like Peter Greenaway’s A Zed & Two Noughts (1985).
124 Formed in 1968 by Godard and Jean-Pierre Gorin, the politically-conscious Dziga Vertov Group was a radical variation of Chris Marker’s leftist filmmakers collective SLON (Societe pour le Lancement des Oeuvres Nouvelles) founded one year earlier, and represented a crucial step in Godard’s...
doc titled One A.M. (One American Movie), intended as a meditation on American politics, based on his 1968 North American travels. Godard soon abandoned the project, but the footage was later edited by D. A. Pennebaker and Richard Leacock (whose production company already helped to distribute Godard’s 1967 Maoist reflection La Chinoise in the U.S.), who released the film in 1971, retitled as One P.M. (One Parallel Movie, or One Pennebaker Movie). Shot mainly on the streets of Chicago and New York, the film features one memorable performance of the Jefferson Airplane, on the rooftop of Schuyler Hotel in midtown Manhattan, an unauthorized and apparently ad-hoc event, but clearly under Godard’s guidance, who filmed everything from one of the windows in Pennebaker’s company building across the West 45th Street. Taking place at midday, the event—“situation” must have been a spontaneous and dramatic Lefebvrian moment, as well as a Debordian social détournement of great shock value, some ten years before any similar punk gestures would disturb the social scene. The regular passersby on the street were suddenly hit by a shout coming from above their heads, “Hello New York; New York, wake

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125 The Jefferson Airplane performance is included in Bob Sarles’ documentary Fly Jefferson Airplane (2004). The entire Godard/Pennebaker film is available on a Spanish DVD edition released by Intermedio as part of a Dziga Vertov Group 5-disc box set.

126 The Jefferson Airplane’s rooftop show was not singular in the 1960s. In August 1967 the Grateful Dead performed on the roof of the Chelsea Hotel in New York City, in a sort of benefit gig for the Diggers group (see Lesh 2005: 111-12). And at the end of January 1969 — that is, about two months after the Airplane’s gig — the Beatles would make their last live public appearance before a small audience on the roof of their Apple building in London, an event that was similarly (yet more elegantly) cut short by the police (the roof concert is documented as closing segment in Michael Lindsay-Hogg’s Let It Be documentary of 1970). But none of these two shows compare in their intensity with Godard’s and Airplane’s provocative “situation.”
up, you f**kers!” This utterance was followed by a barrage of deafening rock music as the Airplane started performing their “House at Pooneil Corners” (1968), a number in an aggressive 7/4 time which itself had risqué lines of social provocation: “You and me we keep walkin’ around and we see / All the bullshit around us / You try and keep your mind on what’s going down / Can’t help but see the rhinoceros around us.” Needless to say, this was the only song that the band managed to perform, before the arrival of the police who put a stop to the show, explaining that “it sounds nice, but the city can’t stand it.”

Integrating seamlessly with Godard’s carnivalesque tactics in *Week End*, the Airplane’s *détournement* was not just an act of noisy provocation done, like a carnival, where it matters the most – in the street – but also a circus, in the two senses of the word: implicitly as a rock ’n’ roll show, and more explicitly, if we consider the vivid presence of bassist Jack Casady with his colorful knit winter cap that bears some resemblance to a jester hat. It was also a symbolic gesture of unmistakable meaning, where the rebellious noise of rock music invades the equally noisy, socially turbulent space of the late 1960s street, as if saying: the noise of rock *is* the noise of...

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127 Short chronological note about the use of the F word and its variations: Jefferson Airplane’s inflammatory line comes one month after the audience of Detroit’s Grande Ballroom heard the famous opening shout of MC5’s “Kick Out the Jams” in October 1968, although the proto-punkers’ debut live album of the same title (where a “kick out the jams, motherfucker!” was also printed on the inner cover of the initial release, before this cover was censored and pulled from stores) was released only in February 1969. Later in autumn 1969, Jefferson Airplane would release the B-side single “We Can Be Together,” where an “Up against the wall, motherfucker” appears in the song’s chorus (admittedly a line which seems less absurd and opaque in 1969 than the bubblegum fury displayed by a couple of related lines in Ramones’ “Blitzkrieg Bop” of 1976), a phrase taken directly from an Amiri Baraka poem that also inspired the name of an anarchist underground group in New York City in the late 1960s, the Motherfuckers.

128 This metaphor of the rock ’n’ roll circus is captured by the title of Craig Fenton’s biography of the band: *Take Me to a Circus Tent: The Jefferson Airplane Flight Manual* (Fenton 2006), inspired by a line in Airplane’s “3/5 of a Mile in 10 Seconds” from *Surrealistic Pillow* (1967).
the revolutionary street (Godard already equated rock musicians with social revolutionaries in *Week End*, and then, more subtly, in *One Plus One*). Godard’s and Airplane’s carnivalesque disruption of the public urban space would be called nowadays a “guerilla gig” — part of a larger discursive context labeled by Umberto Eco in a 1966 McLuhanesque study on the semiotics of the TV message, “semiotic guerilla warfare.”

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129 “Guerilla gigging” is a relatively new critical phrase associated primarily with the DIY (“do it yourself”) culture of the 2000s, particularly recent forms of punk rock, indie, and post-industrial and noise music. See the final chapter from Spencer 2005.

130 Eco 1972 quoted in Hebdige 1979: 105. Eco’s phrase would be also perfect for describing an album such as Jon Rose’s and Eugene Chadbourne’s *Kultural Terrorism* (1987), whose cover-art hijacks a Deutsche Grammophon edition of Beethoven’s *Eroica* in order to portray a Karajan gesture as a Nazi salute.
The idea of a “rock ’n’ roll circus,” as we tried to suggest through the various examples and connections above, is a nuanced and ambivalent one. On the one hand, and from a Marxist-situationist perspective (including Adorno’s and the Frankfurt School’s brand of Marxism), the rock ’n’ roll circus is an entertainment vehicle for the popular star, and in this capacity, it reinforces the spectacular status quo, the pseudo-individualization, or the false consciousness. On the other hand, the same rock ’n’ roll spectacle can be rebellious and subversive, since it is one of the foundational myths of rock music that “rock is rebellion.” It is precisely in this dual nature of the rock ’n’ roll spectacle as both a form of playful entertainment and a form of theatricalized rebellion where the connection with the carnival resides.

Carnival is a feast of laughter, and a showy parade; but this carnivalesque parade, writes Bakhtin, is filled with a “pathos of change and renewal,” and with a “sense of the gay relativity of prevailing truths and authorities.” Furthermore, the rock ’n’ roll live show would find itself under the same affective and temporal modality of the instantaneous, circular, non-linear present with the carnival or with the social revolution: a Lefebvrian modality of the ecstatic, euphoric, liberating, communal, spontaneous, sensorial moment.

If the rock ’n’ roll show (and perhaps, rock ’n’ roll music more generally) is indeed “like a carnival,” as the Stones fan observed in our motto above, it is nevertheless true that in the mid-to-late 1960s this carnival acquires more than an immediate multi-sensorial meaning. The 1960s rock show is not only a spectacle for the eye and ear,

131 Bakhtin 1984a: 11.
but also one for the mind (as in the psychedelic, “mind-blowing” gigs of the early Pink Floyd, something that Tingling Mother’s Circus captured with their 1968 album title, *A Circus of the Mind*), and, more significantly, it is a spectacle that opens up an alternative, liberating social space – both heterotopic and heteromorphic – where social tensions and established norms can be played out, theatricalized, challenged, contested, neutralized, often in a carnivalesque way – that is, through laughter, playful irony, parody, sarcasm, mockery, caricatural inversions and grotesque exaggerations and eccentricities. This alternative social space opened up by the rock ’n’ roll spectacle is similar to that opened up by carnival, where “a second life, a second world of folk culture is … constructed: it is to a certain extent a parody of the extracarnival life, a ‘world inside out.’”

In two recent books, cultural semiotician Marcel Danesi goes beyond the rock ’n’ roll spectacle to address the entire sphere of popular culture in Bakhtinian terms, as a “theater of the profane,”

… a derivative of carnival culture, arising as a ritualizing vehicle for the expression of the profane instinct in modern secular societies. Like traditional carnivals, circuses, and fairs, the pop culture spectacles, products, texts, and fads provide release valves for the profane side of our nature, thus rendering it socially harmless. Pop culture is cathartic, as philosopher Walter Benjamin argued. It has Spectacle-Power – the power of spectacle to provide a channel for people to vent pent-up emotions.

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132 Bakhtin 1984a: 11.
133 Danesi 2009: 142.
134 Danesi 2009: 151.
While Danesi’s Freudian and Lévi-Straussian rather than Marxist analysis of the
carnivalesque “Spectacle-Power” of popular culture is convincing,\textsuperscript{135} when it comes
to popular music it would be helpful to maintain a certain distinction, as relative as
this may be, between the more conformist pop music and the more “rebellious” rock
music. The myth of rock ‘n’ roll as a rebellious performance art that can fight, resist,
or at least comment on the spectacle “from within” the spectacle itself is formed
precisely in the mid-to-late 1960s, at a moment when rock music enters a stage of
relative maturity, leaving behind the rebels \textit{without} a cause of the 1950s, and the cute
teenagers (girl groups, beach boys, mop-top lads) of the early 1960s. But it turns out
that, in order to be rebellious and countercultural, rock music did not have to take
itself too seriously, or to become “Dylanesque,” poetic and socially-engaged folk or
folk-rock music (although Dylan’s impact on the surrounding popular milieu was, of
course, substantial). There is nothing spectacular, carnivalesque, or circus-like in
Dylan’s performances. The carnivalesque is a theatrical mode of representation,
which was foreign to the “authentic,” and activist rather than subversive Dylan and
his purist folkies, even after they turned “electric.” Theatricalization was instead
embraced by the more “impure” rock ‘n’ rollers, for whom show-business and
defiance, and playfulness and rebelliousness were intertwined rather than antithetic
realities. Rock musicians of the late ’60s had to find a way to maintain their popular
appeal, while at the same time “blowing minds” and keeping a rebellious edge in their
performance art. In other words: their act had to be \textit{both theatrical and authentic}.

\textsuperscript{135} See both Danesi 2008 and Danesi 2009.
Both folk and rock music were integral parts of the mid-to-late 1960s counterculture (with the Dylanesque folk gradually becoming impure, metamorphosing into psych-folk, prog-folk, or psych-prog-folk towards the end of the decade). But the non-spectacular and socially-aware folk music was not, properly speaking, subversive, since it did not act “from within” the spectacle. Latent and potential provocations and subversions are more likely to be found in the less socially-conscious but more spectacular rock music, whose rebelliousness is not only that of the counterculture, but also that of the subculture. Danesi updates Dick Hebdige’s theory of the subcultural bricolage (itself a revisitation of Claude Lévi-Strauss’ 1962 classic study on the “savage/wild mind”) by considering the subcultural discourse of rebellion as carnivalesque:

… like the early carnival participants, members of modern subcultures aim to *confuse, intimidate, or parody* society. Engagement in the carnivalesque is, ultimately, a condemnation of the emptiness of consumerist society, subcultures’ alter ego. Enactment of the carnivalesque intimates that there is nothing left to do but celebrate consumerism’s emptiness through *ironic postures*.136 [our italics]

It is through these *ironic postures* that the Rolling Stones managed to catch the attention of Godard. It is through psychedelic *confusion* and perhaps a vague sense of *parody* that Sgt. Pepper’s virtual show becomes truly carnivalesque. And it is through defiant *intimidation* that Godard’s and Jefferson Airplane’s “guerilla gig” creates a spectacle of the unexpected. But in all these ironies, confusions, parodies and

136 Danesi 2008: 61-62. See also Hebdige 1979 for his classic study on the punk subculture.
intimidations, in all these ambiguities and ambivalences, a sense of theatrical playfulness prevails. It is that primary “sense of the gay relativity of prevailing truths and authorities” that Bakhtin identifies in carnival which probably unites these potentially provocative and subversive rock spectacles. We see here how the two fundamental faces of the carnivalesque explored earlier, namely the Tatiesque innocent playfulness and the Godardian provocative rebelliousness, can often coexist in the same “theater of the profane.”

Streetnoise, crowds, and isomorphic heteromorphies

“And now for something completely different” (Monty Python, 1969). To return for a moment to the all-important late 1960s street as a stage of heteromorphic play and contestation, it is quite apparent at this point that Tati’s traffic circle and noisy party scene, Godard’s noisy traffic jam, and Jefferson Airplane’s rock noise invading the urban space, entertain a visible but allegorical or symbolic connection to the surrounding socio-cultural environment; more exactly, as we emphasized earlier, these examples reflect allegorically the noise of the street, or the turbulent, confusing “noise of the time.”

However, there are many instances in the music of the late 1960s where the soundscape of the street is reflected more directly, even literally. The process of documenting the street sounds has been started in the 1950s by a series of field recordings on the streets of New York City made by Tony Schwartz for Folkways and
But whereas Schwartz’s records exude in a purely ethnographic fashion the joyous, animated face of quotidian city life (populated by street musicians, parades, taxi drivers), the incorporation of the urban soundscape into autonomous musical works in the 1960s highlights the street as the locus of social and political protest. The turbulent street unrest of the ’60s found direct reflection in various tape montages, from Beatles’ “Revolution 9” (1968) which ends with a snippet of street demonstration slogans, to Luis De Pablo’s collage piece *We (Nosotros)* (1969) and Pierre Henry’s hörspiel *Les petits métiers* (a 1995 “remix” of his earlier film scores, some of them from the ’60s), both quoting excerpts from Martin Luther King’s *I Have a Dream* speech (1963). One of the most significant and Godardian documents in this regard is the epic montage done by Luigi Nono in *Musica Manifesto No. 1* (1969), whose second half (“Non Consumiamo Marx”) juxtaposes recited wall slogans from May ’68 Paris with a “field-recording” of street demonstrations in Venice, June 1968. There is no need for allegorical interpretations here; the quick and complex counterpoint between the two “street texts” in Nono’s “work” is enough to create one of the most mesmerizing and utterly dramatic sonic images of the late 1960s social Revolution.

Let us closely look at one interesting example where the representation of the street-noise is both direct and ambiguous. In August 1968 the Soviets drove their tanks into Czechoslovakia in an attempt to stop the reforms of the Prague Spring and repress any potential counterrevolutionary action. The event is reflected in “Czechoslovakia,”

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137 See especially *Sounds of My City* (Smithsonian Folkways, 1956); *Music in the Streets* (Smithsonian Folkways, 1957); *The New York Taxi Driver* (Columbia, 1959).
a song written and performed by Julie Driscoll, and included in Streetnoise, a double-
album that she released in 1969 in her final collaboration with Brian Auger’s Trinity.
This is one song that stands out in an album dominated otherwise by a somewhat
conventional blend of jazz, folk, psych and prog rock, and a song that prefigures
Driscoll’s more adventurous compositions of the early ’70s when she became more
involved with the Canterbury fusion scene. Avoiding, in the manner of prog rock, the
trappings of any pop number, this 6:20-minute long song is comprised of four
contrasting sections, and makes extensive use of avant-garde dissonance and noise.
The first section, the only one with drums, is in a rolling and asymmetrical meter of
16 divided as 6+6+2+2, and ends abruptly with a couple of ultra-dissonant chords on
the acoustic guitar. There are no direct references to the invasion in the lyrics at this
point, although the social-political charge is obvious, with Driscoll delivering in her
typically strong folk-rock tone a message of social awareness (“recognize the hidden
lies”) and hope (“see how good it would be to be free”). The second segment is non-
metrical and spectral, a nocturnal scene describing quite literally the night of the
invasion (“August, ’68, it was dark and it was late / A.M. 24 was the first, but there
were more / Fighters, in close formation / Ready for the invasion”), with an echoey
and menacing drone evocative of the movement of the tanks on the pavement. A third
calming section follows reintroducing a metrical sense through guitar strumming,
with Driscoll delivering a line about the hopeful days of the Prague Spring (“I
remember going to a country where people were warm / and people were ready for
changes”). The final segment is the definitive crush of the dream: a chaotic barrage of
sonic dissonance reminding of the late Scott Walker\textsuperscript{138} and made of various glissandi, slides, and clusters on all instruments, over which Driscoll angrily impersonates a frightening god or Pink Floydian dog of war (“I am tanks from everywhere / smash down everything that’s there”). A small codetta ends the song-requiem in a soft, commemorative note, with a rising intonation of the word “Czechoslovakia” and a fading Beethovenian fate motif.

Strongly illustrative and impressionistic, the song’s impression of street noise is literal in the second section (tanks on the pavement), and more figurative at the end (avant-garde noise as martial oppression), although some of the sounds in that dissonant magma could very well stand as literal depictions of gunshots and, again, of the noisy movement of the tanks smashing down everything in their way. Listening to this song and looking for its meanings one cannot ignore the fact that its musical noise is not just any noise, but the noise of tanks in the street, and by extension the noise of social violence, violation, oppression. At the same time, besides its most immediate, literal, concrete meaning, the sonic uproar at the end also reaches a more abstract-general level of signification where meaning is associative rather than direct, its anarchic noise becoming part of a class of such noises, a class that includes the noise of the tanks and of the invasion, but also, more generally, the noise of the public social-political protest, and even more, the noise of the Revolution. Unlike the humming spectral drone in the middle of the song which is threatening but not particularly anarchic, the noise at the end represents anarchy and chaos, and in this

\footnote{138 See for example Walker’s “Jolson and Jones” from The Drift (2006).}
quality it can depict everything from the image of the invasion to that of the social uproar, the violent street demonstration, the bloody revolution. Let us ignore the context, title and lyrics of the song, and we should immediately realize how interchangeable any potential meanings of the final anarchic noise are.

There is nothing carnivalesque in “Czechoslovakia.” The song is closer in overall approach (if not in effect) to Hendrix’s noise artillery in his rendition of the “Star Spangled Banner” (1969)\textsuperscript{139} than it is to Country Joe & The Fish’s satiric “I-Feel-Like-I'm-Fixin'-To-Die Rag” (1967). And yet, the cover-art to this Auger & Driscoll album is of a pronounced grotesque nature – and thus, of a carnivalesque character as well, if we consider, following Bakhtin, the former being a sub-class of the later. Interestingly, the image on the cover is more ambiguous than the music in “Czechoslovakia,” even if it is also very appropriate for an album titled \textit{Streetnoise} (at the same time, “Czechoslovakia” is the only song on the album that would justify the disc’s title). The illustration of the LP’s gatefold double-sleeve is an early work of caricaturist Ralph Steadman, predating his long-time collaboration with Gonzo journalist Hunter S. Thompson, but it already shows Steadman’s characteristic style, in which the bizarre and the grotesque plays a crucial role. The cover depicts a caricature of a street scene with an indistinguishable crowd in the background and a band of rock ‘n’ roll musicians in the foreground, which is Auger’s band: we see the drummer and guitarist on the right side, Driscoll in the middle, and Auger himself in

\begin{footnote}{This is somewhat debatable. Hendrix’s display of technical gimmicks in his Woodstock rendition is remarkably spectacular, giving to this performance an implicit sense of extroversion and maybe carnivalesque, which is completely absent from “Czechoslovakia.”}\end{footnote}
the left corner. The faces and hands of the four are grotesquely deformed by elongation, their facial expression exaggerated and contorted in ghastly grimaces. This is clearly a band of clowns (see especially Auger’s buffoonish sleeves), and not of the regular type, but morbid and grotesque, performing their act in the carnival/circus of the street. The presence here of Goya’s *Caprichos*, one of Steadman’s acknowledged influences, is unmistakable.

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140 The image pictured here is taken from the remasterized CD reissue of the album (2009). The original LP (as well as the Japanese CD edition) has the image cut in two, with the ground-level band on the front cover, and the aerial buildings on the back cover.
There is no doubt that Steadman’s street, with its crowd and clownish rock ’n’ rollers, is, acoustically speaking, as noisy and loud as the finale of Driscoll’s song. But there is an essential ambivalence and ambiguity in the cover-art that is missing from the music. Who exactly is in the blurry background, and what are the grotesque clown-monsters standing for? Sure, one could simply and rightly assume that those indistinguishable human figures, the Rolling Stones’ (and Driscoll’s) “faceless crowd,” are fans of the band that gathered around to see the street concert. But in the highly unstable and socially-charged climate of ‘68-’69, such a literal interpretation would have diminishing results: it would tell little about the title of the album, about a song like “Czechoslovakia,” about the grotesque depiction of the band, and about the carnivalized, heterotopic and heteromorphic street of the late 1960s. Steadman’s street scene begs to be “read” as capturing a broader range of connotations. Simply put, his caricature is the graphic-art illustration of Jefferson Airplane’s rooftop détournement. As in Godard’s and Airplane’s guerilla gig, the “noise” of rock (and avant-garde) music here invades the urban, crowded street, transforming the street into a lively and noisy space of play, excitement, tumult, eruption, rebellion, contestation that is remarkably similar to that angrily modernist, impatiently intense, violently chaotic urban vortex in constant flux imagined by Marinetti and his Italian futurists at the beginning of the century. Steadman’s image would find its close correspondents in some of Umberto Boccioni’s paintings of 1910 dealing with the theme of the agitated crowd, like the less-known Riot in the Galleria and Police Raid, as well as his famous “synchronist” Simultaneous Visions and Street Noises Invade the House, both of 1911.
The trope of noisy invasion seems to unite Driscoll’s music and Steadman’s graphics: noisy tanks invade a country; rock and avant-garde noise invades the street; and this street noise, like in Boccioni, and like in a momentous carnival, invades, incites and excites the city and the urbanite’s consciousness. But there is also that faceless crowd, or public, in the background, which is a mysterious entity. The notion and reality of the crowd was fundamental for Marinetti and the futurists, who studied Gustave Le Bon’s 1895 book on the psychology of the crowd (La Psychologie des foules). In a series of writings from the 1890s and 1900s, Italian criminologist Scipio Sighele developed a similar crowd theory, in which he distinguished between crowd as “an eminently barbarous and atavistic collectivity,” and public as “an eminently civil and modern collectivity.” Generally speaking, it would appear that, at the moment of the rock ’n’ roll show, those who attend such a show do not themselves exactly constitute a high-class, civil aristocratic “public;” or, put differently, it would appear that the rock ’n’ roll show is not exactly conductive to the formation or preservation of an “eminently civil” collectivity, as that observed in the highly ritualized classical music concert hall where quiescence and deference prevails. The rock ’n’ roll show, like a carnival, is similarly ritualized, but it is a participatory, communal ritual of liberating, cathartic noise. By all accounts, Steadman’s faceless collectivity is then an active crowd rather than a passive public: a rowdy crowd, who not only assists the rebellious avant-rock streetnoise of the clownish band, but also contributes to it.

Furthermore, a fundamental isomorphism, already implicit in Godard’s films and in

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141 Sighele quoted in Poggi 2009: 42. See also Poggi’s entire chapter on “Folla/Follia: Futurism and the Crowd,” for an illuminating discussion of the futurist crowd and its ambivalences, as it transpires in Le Bon, Sighele, Marinetti, and Boccioni.
Jefferson Airplane’s rooftop gig, is established in a more explicit form at this point, between the rock ’n’ roll crowd and the crowd of social revolutionaries participating in a street demonstration. Both these types of public gatherings are prime examples of what we labeled as heteromorphies: potentially unstable, “far from equilibrium” agglomerations that carry the seeds of anarchy, the possibility of degenerating at any time into chaos. And the fact that Driscoll’s and Auger’s band, like Jefferson Airplane, is in the street, does nothing but emphasize this isomorphism between the two crowd heteromorphies. It is quite possible in this light, and quite in accord with the late 1960s cultural imaginarium, to see Steadman’s “faceless crowd” as embodying a social riot rather than, or in addition to, a crowd gathered for a rock ’n’ roll concert.

“Socialism with a human face” was the slogan coined by Alexander Dubcek for his reformist Prague Spring. When related to Driscoll’s “Czechoslovakia,” Steadman’s grotesque clowns are clearly far away from the “human faces” in Dubcek’s brand of socialism. Perhaps they are closer instead to that odd and dangerous animal publicly known as “political clown,” and to that popular representation of the political machine of corruption and unfair game of power and interests as a multi-tentacular monstrosity – so aptly caught by the title of an acclaimed 1980s Italian TV series about the Mafia: La Piovra (The Octopus). Steadman’s double grotesquerie and clownerie reminds in this sense of one of the Italian posters to Francesco Rosi’s Cadaveri eccellenti (1976), a film for which Mario Schifano did the set design, and a film whose title playfully conflates the surrealist collagistic technique of the exquisite
corpse with the more realist, morbid and grotesque meaning of the same phrase (murders and cadavers, as well as social street unrest, abound in this political – and largely elliptical – mystery, governed by an inescapable sense of decay and morbidity). The poster in discussion was designed by another Italian collagist and admirer of Picabia, Enrico Baj, and resembles Steadman’s image quite a bit, featuring the same grotesque clowns, portrayed this time as a sort of marionettes. Baj, a former member of COBRA (itself one of the parent-groups of situationism), had strong if not extremist political leanings (proponent not only of artistic avant-garde, but also of political anarchism), and cultivated a collagist style mixing surrealism, Dada, futurism, and overtly political satire. His caricatured poster to Cadaveri eccelenti reflects Rosi’s own description of his political thriller as “a long journey around the monsters and monstrosities of power,” “a visual summary of all the aberrations, of all the degenerations of power I have come across in my life.”

142 My translation from Italian of the following passage: “…un lungo viaggio attraverso i mostri e le mostruosità del potere: è una ricapitolazione visiva di tutte le aberrazioni, di tutte le degenerazioni del potere in cui mi sono imbattuto nella vita.” Rosi quoted in Micciché 1980: 253.
Who exactly are the grotesque clowns depicted in Baj’s poster? As it is expected from a socially-engaged director like Rosi, and from a film that takes as its argument the always turbulent Italian political climate, there is plenty of street noise in *Cadaveri eccellenti*, with the many street demonstrations and rallies of the Left – and at a first look Baj’s ambiguous illustration may be taken as representing one such street scene. However, Rosi’s film, of a rare pessimism that is presented as realism, concerns the deep and generalized corruption of the political octopus, the rotten roots and tentacles not only of the judicial system – in conformity with one of the film’s surface threads, Baj’s poster actually focuses on magistrates, but in an ambiguous way – but of the
whole government. Rosi and Baj depict the “degenerations,” “monsters” and “monstrosities” of power as a political circus, or masquerade. At one point, it is quoted in the film a Leftist denunciatory newspaper article, attacking judges as “monsters” and “clowns.” The end of the film sees the (predictable) shooting of the “too uncomfortable” police inspector Rogas (Lino Ventura) – a political assassination covered up as suicide – and his subsequent denunciation as a madman by the government. It then becomes evident that the monster-clown (or the exquisite corpse, in a sense) is not just the judicial structure, but something even larger and deeper, the entire omnivorous power class with its cobweb of dirty conspiracies, the political masquerade of menacing agendas and endless machinations against which any fight becomes illusory. “We are playing a game,” cynically admits one official in the midst of a political reunion.

If Baj’s clownsque monstrosities are “playing a game” in the political masquerade of power, Steadman’s grotesquerie may include, among some of its distant connotative layers, allusions to the similar game of power in the Sovietized Czechoslovakia. It could also refer to the “monstrous” USSR, or to the conflict of interests between Dubcek’s “human face” and the conservative puppet regime and “political clowns,” pre- and post-Prague Spring. More directly, Steadman’s image may say something about the confusion and possibly the terror felt at the moment of the Soviet invasion. Whatever Steadman’s intentio auctoris may have been, and however subjective and

143 A similar paranoid scenario, albeit a little less explicit politically and even more enigmatic in nature, is put forward by Jacques Deray two years later in his Un papillon sur l’épaule (1978), where the same Lino Ventura ends up in an identical fashion.
associative our impressions above may be, it is undeniable that his *Streetnoise*

illustration introduces a sense of tension, intensity and uncomfortable ambiguity. That

ambiguity, when coupled with Driscoll’s impressionist “Czechoslovakia” and with

the album’s title, invites considerations that must go beyond literal meanings, to

address larger cultural, social and political discursive practices. Particularly

significant here is (i) the nexus between ambiguous and potent heteromorphic

symbols like the crowd, the urban street, and the invasive, violent noise; and (ii) the
grotesque-clownesque representation of the band, as reflection of a not-so-pretty,
dramatic, “noisy” and potentially violent reality.
CODA

The Heteromorphic Collage

On a structural-perceptive level, Ralph Steadman’s illustration of *Streetnoise*, like Jacques Tati’s *Play Time*, is ultimately about the idea of heteromorphy, of potentially turbulent and confused, as well as playful and excited agglomeration. Steadman’s image evokes and conflates several such explicit or implicit, direct or indirect heteromorphies: the urban noisy street; the rock ’n’ roll crowd; the social-political rally; the rock ’n’ roll circus; and the political masquerade. Despite their obvious functional differences, these heteromorphies correspond one to another at a basic structural and/or perceptive level which is audible and visible. These heteromorphies are structurally analogous, and/or perceptively isomorphic, since they all have in common the same random and dense composition of their multiple and heterogeneous constituents, or at least this is how it may appear in the act of perception. The structure – or to use a more suitable Gestalt terminology, the configuration of a crowd of people (an essential heteromorphy) is inherently random, and it is perceived as such. The same is true with the Brownian movement of people in a crowded street. The heteromorphy of a musical of filmic collage on the other hand, may have solid, logic, rational infra-structural foundations, but its fractured or multi-layered surface is
still prone to be perceived as a more-or-less random, chaotic agglomeration, or conglomeration. A collagistic conglomeration, in other words, displays, in a significantly larger measure than other, non-collagistic structures, two fundamental possibilities: an analytical possibility of being infra-structurally organized; and a perceptive possibility of being supra-structurally disorganized. In this light, collage is clearly a heteromorphy, as defined earlier in our study: a heterogeneous, dense, clustered, and “far from equilibrium” configuration that entertains an amicable relationship with the informal chaos, without being necessarily and constantly anarchic.

It is certainly no coincidence that the heteromorphic musical collage became so popular during the 1960s, a fact that led critics to speak about a “collage generation” practicing a “New Quotation.”\footnote{Hicks 1984.} This collage practice was primarily connected with the post-serialist, post-Webernian and post-Boulezian avant-garde. But its experimental nature, as well as its all-inclusive aesthetics, quickly made from collage a sort of musical lingua franca, so that by the end of the 1960s, the collage practice was equally shared by academically-trained composers and by daring popular musicians, especially those dabbling in radical forms of psychedelia and incipient progressive rock. Furthermore, collage allowed this bridge between elite and pop territories in another fundamental way: as an opera aperta (“open work,” a term coined by Umberto Eco in 1962\footnote{Eco 1989.}), a collage piece integrates radically heterogeneous historical and stylistic sources, from every time, every place, and every type of music.
making thus possible for an avant-psych band like The United States of America to appropriate in their songs the collagistic gestures of Ives, and for a (post-)modernist composer like Bernd Alois Zimmermann to quote jazz and the songs of the Beatles in his music. It is precisely this eclectic “everything goes” approach that made many critics to consider the collagistic 1960s as the more-or-less “official” beginning of musical postmodernism.\textsuperscript{146}

**Collage as (post-)modernist experimentalism**

Despite the commonly shared opinion of the layman (for whom a Boulez and a Cage, a Nono and a Robert Ashley are on the same part of the barricade) that the serious, elite, modernist, avant-garde music is apolitical and socially-unaware “art about art,” it is no mystery for musical scholars that the experimentation with collage and aleatoric techniques in the avant-garde music of the 1960s represented a major departure from the immanentist multi-serialist dogma promoted by Boulez & Co. (a.k.a. the Darmstadt School) after the war.\textsuperscript{147} This type of experimentalism was often discussed as an attempt to reflect the freedom ideals experienced in the social realm.\textsuperscript{148} At the same time, the emphasis on non-traditional performance practices, including collective improvisation and audience interaction, reflected similar anti-

\textsuperscript{146} See for instance the discussion of the 1960s in Watkins 1994 and Metzer 2003, currently the two most comprehensive cultural studies on collage and quotation practices in the music of the twentieth century.


\textsuperscript{148} See the many socio-political discussions in a recent collection of studies dedicated to avant-garde music in the 1960s: Adlington 2009.
normative impulses toward freedom, change, renewal. Seminal avant-garde performance groups of the 1960s such as MEV, Nuova Consonanza, ONCE, AMM, Scratch Orchestra, and De Volharding promoted liberal, decentralized, often improvisatory performance and creative models that questioned the concert ritual and conservative structures of musical institutions, a move in perfect accord with the communal, participatory and anti-establishment spirit of the era. The common point between the social and musical realms was thus the aversion toward restrictive, “closed systems.” The fight against racial, ethnic or gender oppression and the dream of a liberated social climate in opposition to the “System” would be mirrored in the aesthetic domain by the rejection of the closed work concept in favor of opera aperta.

Collage and quotation would appear as natural ingredients in this search for open systems, and as a possible modality in which art can allegorize life. By its modus operandi, a quotation breaks down the framing of a work, opening the work up to external intrusions that may threaten its internal structural and semantic cohesion. Particularly the mass-quotiation in a collage more often than not guarantees such a destabilization. The proliferation of quoted materials in a collage is sometimes so radical as to give the outcome a chaotic, random, anarchic façade, a process which would resonate with the anarchist forms of social and political activism that negated the systemic altogether. As in real life, collage music implies a thin and not always discernible line between open system and non-system, and between equilibrium and entropy. In the politicized milieu of the 1960s, such issues of systemic vs. non-

149 See Adlington 2009b; Beal 2009; Dietrich 2009.
systemic, controlled freedom vs. total freedom, were as significant to political activists as they were to collage composers.

One must be aware, however, that what is usually referred to in a global manner as “avant-garde music” is in the 1960s an umbrella term for a wide variety of aesthetic approaches and creative practices, from aleatorism, collective improvisations and happenings, to free jazz and “freaky” psychedelia; from texturism to minimalism; and from musique concrète, Elektronische Musik and tape music to the post-serialist music of the (post-)modernist composers. Labeling this or that trend as “modernist,” “post-modernist,” “post-serialist,” and comparing the “avant-gardism” of these directions – their degree of avant-garde intensity or integrity – can be excruciatingly tricky, given the huge semantic load each of these terms carries, and their dynamic interdependence. Things become even more difficult and blurry when one realizes that in the late 1960s, “avant-garde” ceases to be an exclusive manifestation of the elite high culture, and infiltrates the popular culture as well. Psychedelia demonstrates that popular music, too, can be “avant-garde,” or, better said, experimental.

Trying to avoid this trap of pedantic stylistic labeling, and to embrace instead a more-or-less essentialist but necessary approach, we should perhaps take notice of two fundamental attitudes that divide the musical aesthetic field of the “avant-garde” in the 1960s: a modernist or high-modernist attitude, versus an experimental attitude. This duality corresponds to and is inspired by Georgina Born’s distinction between musical modernism and postmodernism. In her wonderful anthropological study of
IRCAM, Born takes the classic route of the modernism/postmodernism division, in order to differentiate between two musical avant-garde movements that originated sometime in the late 1950s (or even earlier, if one takes into account the chronology of Cage’s involvement with the idea of indeterminacy) and become particularly visible in the 1960s. I reproduce below Born’s antagonistic model that updates from a musical perspective Ihab Hassan’s famous table of oppositions between modernism and postmodernism:\(^{150}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Modernism / Serialism, Postserialism</th>
<th>Postmodernism / Experimental Music</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Determinism</td>
<td>Indeterminism, nondeterminism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rationalism</td>
<td>Irrationalism, mysticism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scientism, universalism</td>
<td>Sociopoliticization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cerebral, complex</td>
<td>Physical, performative, simple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text-centered</td>
<td>Practice-centered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linear, cumulative, teleological</td>
<td>Cyclical, repetitive, static</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Within a unity of difference to popular music**

Nonreference, absolute difference, nonacknowledgement

Reference, transformation

**Within a unity on technology**

Scientistic, theoreticist

High-tech, institutional

Empiricist, artisanal

Low-tech bricolage, entrepeneurial

**Institutional base**

East Coast universities

Institutionally and state-backed

West Coast, art colleges, art institutions

Self-employed, performance-backed

Born’s table of oppositions is self-explanatory. Pierre Boulez and Milton Babbitt would be on the left side, while John Cage would be on the right side of the table. The artisanal and impressionist *musique concrète* of the bricoleur Pierre Schaeffer would

\(^{150}\) Born 1995: 63; see also the Postface to Hassan 1971: 267-68.
contrast with the hi-tech and abstract *Elektronische Musik* of the technocrat and scientistic Karlheinz Stockhausen. Of course, not all avant-garde music of the 1960s fits perfectly or even comfortably in the above matrix, especially when this matrix is taken strictly as a sort of positivist taxonomical tool for dividing musical styles and technical methods, rather than as a convenient way of looking at two general *aesthetic attitudes*. The two poles in Born’s model are not stylistic boxes where one puts different musics, but rather attitudinal magnets, attractors toward which different musics tend. Furthermore, an opposition may be valid at one or more levels in the table, and contradict other levels. A certain degree of flexibility is therefore required when discussing the above oppositions. Thus, the post-serialist mass-textural music of Xenakis, Ligeti, and of the sonorist Polish School (Serocki, Kilar, Penderecki, Lutoslawski) would be in opposition with the processual minimalism of Reich or Riley, despite the fact that both these types of music are “determinist,” and maybe “sensorial” (as opposed to “cerebral”).

This flexibility and relativity of Born’s oppositional model becomes especially evident when one considers the issue of collage, which, as mentioned earlier, represents a generalized practice in the 1960s, a practice embraced equally by the scientist “modernists” and the empiricist “postmodernists.” It is indeed extremely difficult to generalize about “the 1960s musical quotation and collage” – in other words, to find the common attitudinal link between such diverse collagistic and multi-referential music as Ken Friedman’s fluxus *Orchestra Requiem Variations* (1967), Wolf Vostell’s de-collagistic *Sun in Your Head* (1963), John Cage’s aleatoric *Rozart*

Collage can be quotational or non-quotational, and these quotations can be intentional or non-intentional. By “quotation” we understand a segment of a pre-existing music that makes its appearance in a new piece of music. An “intentional quotation” implies that one particular quotation is specifically chosen by the composer for its particular semantic or structural value. An intentional quotation can thus have a structural impact in the overall collagistic design. The Scherzo from Mahler’s “Resurrection” Symphony is one (albeit the most important) intentional quotation among countless other intentional quotations that have structural roles in Luciano Berio’s third movement of *Sinfonia*. By contrast, the aleatoric radio collages of John Cage do not exactly “quote;” they simply include whatever happens to be broadcasted on the radio at the time of the performance – the material in these collages is therefore non-intentional. Furthermore, the material of a collage is not always musical. The sounds
of bird chirping, ocean waves, toilet flushes, vacuum cleaners, and an infinite array of other environmental sounds and noises can be incorporated in a collagistic design.

The majority, though not all the examples in our list above, intentionally quote. They intentionally borrow one or multiple, small or large bits of pre-existent music, in order to play with them, decontextualize and recontextualize them, analyze and document them, deconstruct them or construct something new starting from these “found objects.” Regardless of what specific function this gesture of quotation has – parodic and playful appropriation, ironic faux-homage, irreverent subversion or on the contrary reverent homage, commemorative memorial, revivalist/restorative nostalgia, documentarist impetus, exercises in cultural relativism or utopian projects of space-time unification – one constant aspect is the fundamental engagement of the composer with the historical and contemporaneous musical tradition – or, better put, historical and contemporaneous surrounding (Stockhausen has defined “tradition” not as something in the past, but “everything that is available to me, that has already been formed.”151)

It would appear that quotation and collage music would break Born’s modern/postmodern oppositional model, since the names of the composers in our list above (some of those are not even composers, in the proper sense of the word) are clearly from both sides of the avant-garde spectrum. And yet, we could simply add above Born’s cultural-heavy headings of “modernism” vs. “postmodernism” a supra-

heading consisting of another pair of words having a more simple and thermodynamic connotation: Stable vs. Unstable, or Equilibrium vs. Non-Equilibrium. And we could now ask the regular, musician or non-musician listener: where exactly would collage tend to be, from an intuitive, Gestalt-perceptual rather than structural-analytic perspective? On the stable, or unstable side of the table? Even the highly-structured and intentional collage works of post-serialist composers like Berio, Pousseur, Zimmermann, Stockhausen, would probably tend toward the category of the “Unstable.” But things are still complicated and problematic with these essentialist dualisms and generalized oppositions. I would argue that collage music is not primarily or essentially modernist, nor postmodernist. It is simply experimental – a word that has strong echoes in the 1960s, and a word that implies some of Born’s left-side attributes without excluding the right-side properties. Thus, collage as “experimental music” would not be exclusively “postmodern,” like in Born’s table, but somewhere in-between (post-)serialist modernism and postmodernism. We will return to this point after a discussion of Berio’s (post-)modernist experimentalism in his heteromorphic Sinfonia.
In the third movement of *Sinfonia* (1968), one of the most celebrated and
symptomatic examples of collagistic music, Luciano Berio constructs an intertextual
and stratified collage starting from two basic texts, one musical and one literary: (i)
the Scherzo from Mahler’s Second Symphony (“Resurrection”), which is a constant,
implicit or explicit presence throughout the duration of the movement, running like a
river or a *perpetuum mobile* underneath the musical texture, but becoming at times
inaudible, submerged, or obliterated by the weight of the collagistic supra-
structure; and (ii) various excerpts from Samuel Beckett’s *The Unnamable* (1952),
whose “Keep going” exhortation is heard at several points in Berio’s movement as a
reminder to keep the already frantic musical action in a constant state of dynamic
flow and molecular expansion. These two basic texts serve as pretexts, subtexts, and
unifying threads for a radical process of glossification, generating an endless chain or
web of intertextual, interrelated, associative musical and literary quotations – called

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152 Alfred Schnittke sees Mahler’s scherzo as a *cantus firmus* that generate “polystylistic contrapuntal
variations” (Schnittke 1970s a: 216). Metzer aptly describes the same fluvial scherzo as a *perpetuum mobile* (Metzer 2003: 131). The aquatic-fluvial metaphor belongs to Berio: “If I were asked to explain the presence of Mahler’s scherzo in *Sinfonia*, the image that would naturally spring to mind would be that of a river running through a constantly-changing landscape, disappearing from time to time underground, only to emerge later totally transformed” (Berio 1986). An interesting parallel can be drawn here between Berio’s tactic of occasionally obliterating Mahler’s music in order to make room for the chain of musical and literary “commentaries,” as he calls these quotations, and Lukas Foss’ practice of “submerging into inaudibility” the various sound layers in his *Baroque Variations* (1966–67) and *Geod* (1969). For a discussion on how Berio’s obliteration of Mahler’s music affects the form of the movement see Osmond-Smith 1985: 43-53. For Foss’ “inaudible playing” see Foss 1970.
by Berio at various times, “commentaries” or “proliferations.” The quotations are organized horizontally and vertically in the contrapuntal orchestral and vocal texture as to form a chain reaction: every quotation generates other commentaries, other quotations. A close analysis of the movement reveals that this mesmerizing intertextual labyrinth is a coherent construct, strategically planned and “composed,” with each literary and musical quotation organically generated by and interrelated with the surrounding context. Yet, this “forest of musical presences,” as Berio himself defined the movement, as fascinating as it is on an analytical level, remains a dense forest on a perceptual level – even with repeated listenings. The constant and chained proliferation of quotations at the surface of the music creates a labyrinthine universe in permanent expansion – which in turn creates a mild sense of dizziness, somewhat counterbalanced by the Mahlerian river flowing underneath the forest and providing a necessary continuity to the music.

The third movement of Berio’s Sinfonia perfectly illustrates that double possibility of the heteromorphic collage of being simultaneously organized and entropic. Despite its solid infra-structural foundation (Mahler’s Scherzo) and despite its rigorously constructed multi-textual and multi-layered surface where everything is analytically

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153 These two words, “commentary” and “proliferation,” appear almost every time Berio has commented on his work, in CD presentations, interviews, Frank Scheffer’s film, etc. For two of these instances see Berio 1969: 88, and Berio 1985: 107, 109.
155 Berio 1986.
156 The idea of “expansion” comes from Metzer (Metzer 2003), for whom the collage idioms of the 1960s are dominated by two dynamics: expansion and connection (110). More specifically, Metzer sees Berio’s third movement as “constantly branching out” (133); it “constantly expands” (134).
inter-related, the high-density and continuous molecular expansion of quotations and associative significations places the music in a heteromorphic “far from equilibrium,” almost gaseous or hazy state.

There are other aspects that generate entropic heat in *Sinfonia*, besides this ever-expanding universe of quotational proliferations and semiotic excrescences. First, this collagistic universe is not only expanding, but also rotating. Without being a carousel-waltz directly evocative of circus, Berio’s movement is nevertheless a maniacal waltz-machine, not unlike Ravel’s *La Valse*. Despite a number of abrupt but momentary interruptions of the musical discourse, a sense of fluidity and continuity is always present here, urged by Beckett’s “keep going” refrain, and by the title of Mahler’s Scherzo which also becomes the caption of Berio’s movement: “In ruhig fliessender Bewegung” (with a calmly flowing motion). The whole movement is driven by this triple-time Scherzo, seen by Berio as a river, and by David Metzer as a *perpetuum mobile*.\(^{157}\) Mahler’s various programmatic notes for his Scherzo include imagery which, given the intertextual profile of *Sinfonia*, would probably shed one or two lights on Berio’s own project. Among Mahler’s images, stated in at least three different programs, are “turmoil of life,” “turmoil of appearances,” “outburst,” and “deafening traffic of mundane affairs.”\(^{158}\) Metzer summarizes one of these programs:

> … a forlorn character spying on a dance from the darkness outside a ballroom. Unable to hear the music, he sees the dancers as silent

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\(^{157}\) See footnote 152.  
automatons endlessly “turning and twisting,” a distorted vision that incites a scream of despair.\textsuperscript{159}

Berlioz’s program to the second movement of his \textit{Symphonie Fantastique} where the image of the beloved haunts the artist even in “the tumult of a festive party”\textsuperscript{160} comes immediately to mind at this point, and it is no wonder that the waltz from “Un Bal” is quoted in \textit{Sinfonia}, along with (the) other two emblematic, explicit or subtle waltzes of the twentieth century already mentioned in the first part of our study, namely Strauss’ luxuriant final scene of \textit{Der Rosenkavalier}, and the delirious finale of Ravel’s \textit{La Valse}.

… “Keep going”…

Berlioz’s and Mahler’s “ballroom of the damned,”\textsuperscript{161} where dancers-automatons are turning and twisting on a circular \textit{perpetuum mobile}, would indeed seem to place Berio’s waltz-machine in the company of Ravel’s vertiginous \textit{La Valse}, as Louis Andriessen has noticed.\textsuperscript{162} While the modernist, hallucinant spasms in \textit{La Valse} were a postscript to a war that had just ended, we should remember that \textit{Sinfonia} was similarly created in a tumultuous time of socio-political unrest and of psychedelic haziness, and reflected more or less consciously on this dual turmoil with a modernist tone which by 1968 had been already spoiled by a (postmodernist) \textit{experimental} attitude. Alfred Schnittke’s description of the movement as “a poetic musical picture

\textsuperscript{159} \textsuperscript{Metzer 2003: 131.}
\textsuperscript{160} \textsuperscript{From Berlioz’s first version of the program notes (Berlioz 1845).}
\textsuperscript{161} \textsuperscript{Metzer 2003: 132.}
\textsuperscript{162} \textsuperscript{In \textit{Voyage to Cythera}, Frank Scheffer’s 2000 film about \textit{Sinfonia}, Andriessen says that what Berio does in this collagisitic movement is similar to what Ravel did with the waltz: “deconstructing and rebuilding, creating an ‘apotheosis.’” Cf. Ozorio 2005.}
of the modern world being shaken and torn apart”\textsuperscript{163} would probably be relevant for Ravel’s piece as well.

Berio’s choice of Mahler as structural foundation in \textit{Sinfonia} was not arbitrary. Berio has referred to Mahler’s Scherzo as a “container” that holds “a large number of references.”\textsuperscript{164} “Mahler’s music seems to bear the weight of the entire history of music,” says the same Berio.\textsuperscript{165} These remarks resonate loudly not only with Julia Kristeva’s 1969 definition of the “text” (and by direct implication the “intertext”) as a “mosaic of quotations” that “absorbs” and “transforms” other texts,\textsuperscript{166} but also with some contemporary discussions of Mahler’s music as being “intertextual.”\textsuperscript{167} Writing at about the same time, both Robert Samuels and Raymond Monelle talked, in semiotic terms, about textual and intertextual “fields” and “networks” at play in Mahler’s music.\textsuperscript{168} These (inter)textual fields and networks are formed not only by direct quotations or allusions visible in the score, but also by the collection of extramusical significations and associations generated by the music. The intertext is not

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{163} Schnittke 1970s a: 221.
\item \textsuperscript{164} Berio quoted in Metzer 2003: 133.
\item \textsuperscript{165} Berio quoted in Metzer 2003: 134.
\item \textsuperscript{166} “Any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another” (Kristeva 1980: 66).
\item \textsuperscript{167} See especially Samuels 1994, Samuels 1995, and Monelle 1996. But even before these recent intertextual discussions, Robert Morgan has compared Mahler to Ives (Morgan 1978). For one of the first studies that explicitly addressed the concept of intertextuality in music see Hatten 1985; for a more recent account of the subject see Klein 2005. The notion of intertextuality, so often encountered in literary theory, applies naturally to a good number of musical collages, especially when one considers Kristeva’s “mosaic of quotations” (see footnote above), and the relationship between “intertext” and “parody” discussed in Hutcheon 1985. Alfred Schnittke’s polystylsm would be also “a kind of intertextuality: the ‘systematic modulaton’ of text (music) results in innumerable new texts (kinds of music)” (Kostakeva 2002: 18).
\item \textsuperscript{168} See for example Samuels 1994: 157 (“…accepting the [Mahlerian] musical work as a textual field can lead beyond considerations of its autonomous organization.”); Samuels 1995: 81 (Mahler is placed “in an intertextual network of specific pieces in which formal schemes and metaphysical meanings can be equated.”); Monelle 1996: 255 (“Viewed intertextually, the music [of Mahler] is located at the centre of a textual network, a network of texts.”).
\end{itemize}
just a network of concrete quotational sources, but, as Monelle puts it, an abstract “network of significations,” which, of course, in Derridian fashion, is infinite\(^\text{169}\) (“Il n’y a pas de hors-texte,” famously said Derrida in 1967\(^\text{170}\)). This is how we should see Berio’s ever-expanding universe: it is not a textural expansion (the vertical density of quotations cannot grow indefinitely), but a *textual* or semiotic expansion, a continuous accumulation and bifurcation (dissemination, Derrida would say\(^\text{171}\)) of mental images, associations, significations, connections.\(^\text{172}\) Monelle even shows how this intertextuality may be visually represented, either as a graph of fractal bifurcations, or as a network graph.\(^\text{173}\) Fractal bifucations and networks define the middle stratum of *Sinfonia*, just above Mahler’s foundation.\(^\text{174}\) Its surface, though, is that of the forest.

It is precisely this intextual and “referential” quality that made Mahler’s music so attractive not only to Berio, but to an entire series of collage composers of the 1960s and beyond. The 1960s saw a Mahler revival, including Adorno’s 1960 book and Leonard Bernstein’s performances and recordings,\(^\text{175}\) and Lisa Robinson has dedicated an entire dissertation on the subject of Mahler’s reception by the collage

\(^{169}\) Monelle 1996: 256.  
\(^{171}\) Derrida 1981.  
\(^{172}\) Osmond-Smith calls this process “semantic proliferation” and compares it to the “labyrinthine stratification” of Joyce’s *Finnegans Wake* (Osmond-Smith 1985: 53, and passim for Berio’s well-known involvement with Joyce’s world in his music).  
\(^{173}\) See the two figures in Monelle 1996: 256-57.  
\(^{174}\) In his commentary on *Sinfonia*, Schnittke refers as well to this intertextual tectonic as “a subtle network of hints, allusions, and oblique associations” (Schnittke 1970s a: 221).  
\(^{175}\) Adorno 1960. For a brief account of Bernstein’s involvement with Mahler see Seldes 2009: 144-48. Berio’s *Sinfonia* is dedicated to Bernstein, and Berio has said that his use of Mahler in the third movement was also a tribute to the conductor (Cf. Berio 1985: 108).
“postmodern” composers, the majority of whom were from the ’60s. At the same time, it is nevertheless true that, if Mahler’s music is a “container,” “a pile that grows larger and larger until it is on the brink of spilling over,” Berio defined his music, once again, as a “forest.” It is possible that for Berio, this image of the forest was, in fact, a metaphor of intertextuality, just as for his close friend Umberto Eco the very same forestier image symbolizes the labyrinthine adventures of narrativity. But the image of a dense, luxuriant, possibly tropical forest differs somewhat from Monelle’s symmetric fractals and asymmetric but structured networks.

The sense of instability and decenteredness in Berio’s movement is also provided by its literary argument and actor, Beckett’s alienated Unnamable, who is “trapped in a Dantesque limbo” and “identifies himself with a voice … made up of words that have originally been received from others.” In Beckett’s novel, the character of the Unnamable is genuine rather than an actor uttering scripted lines, but his schizoid self-contradicting and auto-reflexive consciousness fits perfectly in Berio’s ventriloquist theater. Like the Unnamable, both Mahler and Berio hear the voices of others, and speak through these other voices. In his relativist and Derridian take on the notion of intertextuality, Monelle goes as far as questioning the textual authoriality of some of Mahler’s music – that is, the auctorial authority, or the

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176 Robinson 1994. For a list of collage music referencing Mahler see pp. 6-7.
177 This is Metzer’s gloss on Berio’s description (Metzer 2003: 133).
178 The Italian and English editions of the volume of lectures held by Eco in 1992-93 at Harvard University have the following suggestive titles: Sei paseggiate nei boschi narrativi, and respectively Six Walks in the Fictional Woods.
180 Raili Elovaara quoted in Hicks 1984: 54-55.
presence of the composer’s “voice.”\textsuperscript{181} “Who is the composer of Mahler’s Fourth Symphony?,” he asks.\textsuperscript{182} And “who is this speaker whose intensity Mahler so anxiously describes” in the “persuasive” and “oratorial” fourth and sixth movements of the Third Symphony? “He is, perhaps, Zarathustra … But he is also the Viennese Lieder composer.”\textsuperscript{183} And who is the composer of the “schizophrenic” fifth movement from the same Third symphony?\textsuperscript{184} From the initial pseudo-programmatic movement-titles, we know about the Bakhtinian “polyphony” of voices heard in this symphony: the voices of Nature, Man, Angels, and Love.\textsuperscript{185} And from Adorno, we know about Mahler’s comment where he sees the symphony as “mirroring” a “whole world,” a symphony-world which “it seems as if I hadn’t written it at all.”\textsuperscript{186}

Romanticist-Naturalist aesthetic idealism aside, the fact remains that Mahler’s music presents us with “intertextual fields” precisely because of its textual plurivocity – that is, its ambiguity and polyphony of narrative and authorial voices.

Beckett’s novel is not exactly intertextual – it does not mirror a “whole world,” only the Beckettian world (the Unnamable often speaks about or through the mouth of other protagonists from Beckett’s earlier fiction, whom he calls “vice-existers” or puppets). And its narrativity is not exactly polyphonic – the novel’s plurivocal energy

\textsuperscript{181} The notion of the “composer’s voice” here, and in Monelle, has of course nothing to do with Edward Cone’s narrative theory of musical personas where the composer is such a masked persona (see Cone 1974, and Klein 2005: 139), and everything to do with narrative theories seen from an intertextual perspective – theories that are ultimately rooted in that fundamental questioning of “the author” and intentio auctoris (Eco) in the post-structuralist French milieu of the ’60 (cf. Barthes’ 1967 “The Death of the Author,” and Foucault’s 1969 “What is an Author”).

\textsuperscript{182} Monelle 1996: 250.
\textsuperscript{183} Monelle 1996: 252-53.
\textsuperscript{184} Monelle 1996: 254-55.
\textsuperscript{185} See Franklin 1991: 24-25 for the 1896 list of movement-titles.
\textsuperscript{186} Franklin 1991 (whose source is Adorno 1960, the German edition): 12; Monelle 1996: 253.
is instead concentrated or “contracted” in a monologue. The novel is, in this sense, the opposite of Berio’s expanding universe. But the Unnamable’s soliloquy of constant logical paradoxes and ontological contradictions raises similar questions to those asked by Monelle, this time vis-à-vis the identity conflict between Beckett’s auctorial voice and the Unnamable’s narrative voice(s). At one point, Beckett’s character realizes that instead of speaking about others, “I should have spoken of me.” “But who is me? – asks Gabriel Josipovici. Samuel Beckett? But what does that mean? Who is Samuel Beckett? Who is the person who writes ‘Where now? Who now? When now?’”

Beckett’s character often speaks through the voices of other “vice-existers.” He also hears a multitude of voices, without being able to distinguish whether the voice that speaks is his or someone else’s. In Sinfonia, the Unnamable’s disembodied voice (heard mostly in the spoken/recited tenor part) is, appropriately, lost among other textual variations and proliferations, and surrounded by a counterpoint of multilingual vocal expressions and gestures, from singing to Sprechstimme and speaking, from playful solfège to angry shouts, from sotto voce to Wagnerian heroic screaming. The Unnamable’s deep ontological uncertainty finds its equivalent in a concluding

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187 “The contractive art of Beckett contracts more in The Unnamable” (Hassan 1971: 230).
188 Josipovici 1997. Hassan explains the paradoxical tension between subject and author as follows: “The Unnamable, understood as the subject of the novel, wants his independence from the “master,” the author, in order to cease existing; and the Unnamable, conceived as a creator of such fictions as Mahood and Worm, therefore an author himself, depends on them for his own existence” (Hassan 1971: 231).
189 As Osmond-Smith notices (1985: 55-56), this counterpoint of different vocal expressions is characteristic of Berio’s works from the 1960s, from Visage (1961) and Passaggio (1962) to the almost forty emotive adjectives in Sequenza III (1966) (cf. Berio 1985: 96). A more evident display of this schizoid vocal gestuality is shown by Ligeti’s Aventures (1962) and Nouvelles Aventures (1965). See Firca 2005: 53 for a possible difference between Ligeti’s works and Berio’s Sequenza III.
non-Beckettian line that could stand as motto for the entire movement: “the unexpected is always upon us, in our rooms, in the street, at the door, on a stage.” Commenting on this final line, one can say that Berio’s project with the calculated collage of *Sinfonia* was precisely to *stage the unexpected*.

Finally, among the countless musical and literary voices, shouts, mumbles and whispers heard in *Sinfonia*, there is one voice with a particularly strong heteromorphic significance, already familiar by now: the voice of the crowd, the voice of the street. Mahler’s “turmoil,” “outburst,” and “deafening traffic of mundane affairs” find their more direct reflection in Berio’s quotations of political student slogans and revolutionary graffiti texts from the Parisian May ’68. At the same time, Schnittke also hears in the vocal part “the mixing of street sounds we hear on the soundtracks of Italian neorealist films”\(^{190}\) – a striking and pertinent observation, coming from a composer who knew film and film music. Whereas Boccioni’s futurist crowd in Steadman’s *Streetnoise* was noisy and riotous, Berio’s often indistinguishable vocal magma evokes indeed the no less heteromorphic *murmur* of the crowd and the quotidian sounds in the Italian neorealist street of Pietrangeli, Castellani, Lattuada, Rossellini and early Fellini.

Berio’s movement opens with a “big bang,” an orchestral tutti followed right away by an abrasive scalar brass gesture, with the trumpets and the trombones moving quasi-glissando in opposite directions. This particular gesture has a series of connotations,

\(^{190}\) Schnittke 1971: 89.
more or less intertextual. First, this is clearly a gesture of spatial expansion. With the simultaneous ascension of the trumpets and descension of the trombones, this incipit effectively opens up a space, and initializes the process of continuous expansion of the textual universe. Second, this brief brass segment is in fact a quotation, taken directly from the first measures of the ultra-expressionist, tormented fourth movement of Schoenberg’s *Five Pieces for Orchestra Op. 16* (1909). Everyone would probably agree that the imagery evoked by Schoenberg’s original movement is not far away from one of Mahler’s images in his Scherzo (an image that resonates, as we have seen, with both Berlioz and Ravel), as it was described above by Metzer: a “distorted vision that incites a scream of despair.” In fact, Metzer’s paraphrase of Mahler’s program would catch something from the expressionist *Einfühlung* and from the acoustic-visual ethos of a Munch, Schoenberg, or Bergian Wozzeck, with their introspective screams and anxious gazes (incidentally, Berio quotes Berg’s *Wozzeck* later in his movement, and he quotes precisely the more “internalized,” Freudian scene of Wozzeck’s drowning rather than Marie’s extrovertive “Hilfe” scream). But there is more than Munch’s or Berg’s expressionist “scream” in Schoenberg’s (and by

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191 This effect of expansion is often lost in various recordings of the score, where the trumpets are almost always louder than the trombones, making it seem as if the gesture would be only upwards. And this unbalance is also heard in performances of Schoenberg’s “Peripetie” from Op. 16, which is the source of Berio’s incipit. A perfect balance between trumpets and trombones is heard in one of Berio’s rehearsals of his piece (unknown performers), caught on film by Frank Scheffer in *Voyage to Cythera*. Berio, probably aware of previous, less-successful performances, even emphasizes there that “the descending trombones are very important.”

192 See footnote 159.

193 *Einfühlung* (roughly translated as “empathy”) is Wilhelm Worringer’s influential term. In his dissertation from 1908, *Abstraction and Empathy*, Worringer articulated one of the major explanations of the modernist artistic process: the modernist abstraction is the necessary external projection of the artist’s turbulent inner self – a thesis that had obvious resonances among expressionist circles, not the least for Der Blaue Reiter’s Kandinsky, whose essay “On the Spiritual in Art” (1912) was equally influenced by Worringer’s ideas and by Rudolf Steiner’s *Theosophie* (1904). See Firca 2005: 52, and Worringer 1953.
extension Berio’s) piece – namely, its title. At the time of the score’s publication in 1912, Schoenberg was asked by Peters, his Leipzig publisher, to add captions to the five pieces of Op. 16. Reluctant at first, Schoenberg conformed in the end, and added the enigmatic title of “Peripetie” to the fourth piece. In a journal entry from January 1912, Schoenberg lists the titles of the five pieces, and after “Peripetie” he adds in parentheses, “ist wohl allgemein genug” (it is general enough, I think).\textsuperscript{194}

The word “peripetie,” which would be spelled in English as “peripety,” has an interesting range of semantic nuances, which differ historically and culturally/geographically. The word is of Greek origins, and is found as \textit{peripeteia} at Aristotle, where it designates a sudden “reversal of fortunes” in dramatic theater, more precisely in tragedy. In this Aristotelian sense of a \textit{singular} dramatic and unexpected reversal or twist (a moment which usually happens at the climax of a classic tragedy, or of a modern novel), \textit{peripeteia}, in the singular form of the word, has been preserved in German (\textit{peripetie}) and English (the modern but very uncommon “peripety”) up to the present day. In these Germanic languages, the Aristotelian term is thus rather academic and bookish, familiar probably to those with an interest in theater or Classics, but unfamiliar to most others.

By contrast, in modern Greek, as well as in such Latin languages as French, Italian, Spanish, or Romanian, besides the strict and academic Aristotelian sense, the word is also commonly used in everyday language, conveying the more general sense of

\textsuperscript{194} Schoenberg 1974: 14. See also Richard Leppert’s account of this story in Adorno 2002: 208.
unexpected and unintentional event(s) or adventure(s) (in perfect accord with the modern Greek sense of *peripeteia* or *peripeteies* meaning “adventure(s”). Furthermore, these languages use both the singular and plural form of the word: *péripétie(s)* in French; *peripezia* / *peripezie* in Italian; *peripecia(s)* in Spanish; *peripetie* / *peripetii* in Romanian. In all these languages, the plural is more common than the singular. But even when the word is in singular form, it can still express the sense of a plurality, of a series of unexpected events or adventures. In short, it is not uncommon at all in these languages to call a journey or a voyage that is full of incidents and accidents, a “peripety.”

Schoenberg used the German *peripetie* for his title, and given the linguistic circumstances described above, one can assume that what he meant by this word was the Aristotelian sense of a singular moment of dramatic and unexpected reversal, rather than the “Latin” sense of “adventure(s)” and “eventful journey with twists.” He does add in his journal that the term “is general enough,” but “general” here probably meant simply that the title was broad, non-illustrative and obscure enough to not take anything away from the music itself. These assumptions would be substantiated by the fact that this “Peripetie” piece comes in Schoenberg’s cycle right after the famous “Farben” (which is also quoted in *Sinfonia*), its internalized scream and angst creating

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196 Schoenberg was reluctant to give titles to these pieces, saying that “if words were necessary they would be there in the first place. But art says more than words” (cf. Leppert, in Adorno 2002: 208).
thus a volcanic rupture with the previous spectral *Klangfarbenmelodie*. Indeed, no one would disagree with Adorno’s 1934 observation: Schoenberg’s “Peripetie” is an unexpected “reversal.”

A different story, though, would be told with the Italian Berio, for whom the word “peripetie” probably meant more than just “unexpected reversal.” Berio has repeatedly referred to his movement (as well as to Mahler’s Scherzo) as a “voyage.” By opening his movement with Schoenberg’s “Peripetie,” and by having the vocalists announce the title of that piece, Berio announces that what is about to unfold is, indeed, a *peripezia*: a journey full of turns and twists, unexpected events, adventures, accidents and incidents. In the hands of Berio, Schoenberg’s “Peripetie” becomes thus an explicit, almost programmatic way of saying: “yes, this is the beginning of an adventurous voyage.” For most German or English speakers though, the sense of this explicit gesture is either lost, or reduced to its Aristotelian origins.

A final confirmation of this movement as a *peripezia*, an adventurous journey or expedition through different territories or waters, comes from Berio’s comment:

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197 Adorno 2002: 204 (the observation appears in his “The Dialectical Composer” text from 1934).
198 Cf. Metzer 2003: 133. In Berio 1985: 108, he defines his movement as a “voyage to Cithera [sic] on board a Mahlerian vessel.” This is certainly one of the phrases that inspired the title and the aquatic images of Frank Scheffer’s film.
199 As far as I know, while many refers to this movement as a “voyage” or “journey,” no one of the many commentators of *Sinfonia* has made this connection between Schoenberg’s “Peripetie” and Berio’s “voyage” explicit. The only one who comes close to an *intuition* of this fact is David Metzer, who takes the Greek *Peripetia* as meaning “unexpected reversal,” and then observes that the recurrence of the word “unexpected” throughout the movement points to “the unexpected surprises of hearing well-known compositions in new contexts” (Metzer 2003: 135).
The references to Bach, Brahms, Boulez, Berlioz, Schoenberg, Stravinsky, Strauss, Stockhausen, etc. are therefore also signals which indicate which harmonic country we are going through, like bookmarks, or little flags in different colours stuck into a map to indicate salient points during an expedition full of surprises.\(^{200}\)

The fact that Berio’s *peripezia* is strategically planned or staged does not take anything away from its unpredictability. The journey is eventful, and the connections established vertically and horizontally between various “texts” are often surprising and dizzying. Metzer observes that the word “unexpected” returns throughout the movement, something which we cannot confirm.\(^{201}\) However, the words “show” and “stage” do reappear and are clearly heard at several points, being taken directly from a segment of Beckett’s novel dealing ambiguously with the images of the audience and the “public show.”\(^{202}\) Berio of course fuses Beckett’s text with other sources. I reproduce below only a part of this “public show” discourse, as it appears in Berio’s stream of consciousness conflation – a stream of words whose flow is that of Joyce and Ginsberg, and whose ethos is that of Beckett’s alienated theater and Schoenberg’s *Erwartung*:

> it's a public show, you buy your seat and you wait, perhaps it's free, a free show, you take your seat and you wait for it to begin, or perhaps it's compulsory, a compulsory show...

\(^{200}\) Berio 1985: 107.

\(^{201}\) Metzer 2003: 135. Except for the final “the unexpected is always upon us” line, I was unable to find any other instances of the word “unexpected.”

you wait for the compulsory show to begin, it takes time, you hear a voice, perhaps it is a recitation, that is the show, someone reciting, selected passages, old favourites, or someone improvising, you can barely hear him, that's the show, you can't leave, you are afraid to leave, you make the best of it, you try to be reasonable, you came too early, here we'd need Latin, it's only the beginning, it hasn't begun, he'll appear any moment, he'll begin any moment [A1] He is only preluding, clearing his throat, alone in his dressing room, or it's the stage-manager giving his instructions, his last recommendations before the curtain rises [tutti] that is the show [T1] that's the show waiting for the show, to the sound of a murmur, you try to be reasonable, perhaps it is not a voice at all, perhaps it's the air, ascending, descending, flowing, eddying, seeking exit, finding none, and the spectators, where are they, you didn't notice, in the anguish of waiting, never noticed you were waiting alone, that is the show, for the fools, in the palace, waiting [B1] the brightest star [T1] waiting alone that is the show [tutti] that is the show

When coupled with the “unexpected” musical quotations in rapid succession, these prominent and probably self-referential (in keeping with the Unnamable’s ethos) comments on the “public show” would seem to impart a sense of theatricality to the whole construct. Berio’s movement would appear in this light not only as a peripezia, a series of unexpected happenings, but also as a sort of show – or perhaps a parade. Is the above text commenting on Berio’s musical show? Donal Henahan certainly thinks so. Writing in the pages of High Fidelity in 1969, Henahan described the movement

203 Thanks again to Danny Liss.
as “a vaudeville show about the past becoming the now, a Magic Theater.” And he adds:

What *Sinfonia* most powerfully suggests … is the tone and quality of life in 1969, its complications, its flux, its dizzying changes, its chance encounters, its raw, uncontrollable surges. Most importantly, Berio manages to bring a sense of momentary order to the expanding universe he puts before us in sound. But that order, if it can be called that, is the imposed, tentatively accepted order of the theater, the penny show.

Like Berio’s *Sinfonia*, Henahan’s comments certainly sum up a certain “tone” characteristic of the late 1960s life and art. Complications, flux, dizzying changes, chance encounters, uncontrollable surges, expanding universe, theater and penny show – many if not all these attributes would describe in equal measure Berio’s *Sinfonia*, Tati’s *Play Time*, Pink Floyd’s theater of the mind, the happening culture, and most other examples of carnivalesque and heteromorphic articulations discussed in the present study. The psychedelic carousel, the heteromorphic street, and carnivalesque tropes are all here, in Henahan’s short description.

More specifically and more significantly is the way in which Henahan considers Berio’s collage as having a “momentary order,” but an order which is that of the “penny show” or the “Magic Theater.” From this remark transpires a broader and
widespread critical as well as intuitive view that still prevails today, where collage (musical or otherwise) is more-or-less instinctively associated – via metaphors such as the “riot of sound” – with both chaos, and with a carnival, parade or circus.

Before elaborating on these entropic and carnivalesque connotations of collage in our final section, we should conclude our discussion here by agreeing with Henahan: like Tati’s *Play Time*, Berio’s heteromorphic *Sinfonia* is without a doubt a product *of and for* its time – that is, something that would be hard to discuss in formalist, Hanslickian terms. As with Mahler’s music, *Sinfonia*’s “content” is more than a Hanslickian absolute and pure musical “form.” Its third movement is “an arresting musical mirror of life in the sixties.” But Hanslick’s “the content is the form” thesis is also quite true, to the extent that Berio’s “super-collage,” through its formal construction, presents itself as an expansive universe, a process in constant flow, metamorphosis, and cellular multiplication that has larger semiotic implications. In other words, the formal-analytic labyrinths, networks and fractals of this construct, and its perceptual forest, are its “content.” It all depends in the end whether one is willing to go beyond formalist positions, and take such words as “network,” “fractal,” “river,” “forest,” “waltz-machine,” “container,” “vessel,” “peripezia,” “show,” as signs invested with cultural and intertextual meaning, metaphors of the intertextual opera aperta and ultimately of life; or on the contrary, if one would rather consider

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206 “In music there is no content as opposed to form, because music has no form other than the content.” Hanslick 1957: 80.
these words strictly as descriptors of the inner-dynamics in a high-modernist,
organicist, immanentist, auctorial and authoritative “work.”

The genius of Berio’s “In ruhig fliessender Bewegung” resides ultimately in its
“double-coding” of modernist and postmodernist traits, structuralist and post-
structuralist thinking, “network” and “forest,” closed work and opera aperta, and
most other oppositions in Georgina Born’s table. For architect Charles Jencks,
“double-coding” is the most prevalent attribute of postmodernist hybridization, a
hybridization that goes not only “beyond unity,” as Jonathan Kramer has put it,\(^\text{209}\) but
also beyond what Andreas Huyssen has famously called “the great divide” between
modernism and postmodernism.\(^\text{210}\) In this sense, Berio’s Sinfonia is probably
postmodern. But then, if Berio is “postmodern,” how is Cage? Or Zappa? Or the
“avant-gardist psychedelia” and collagistic music of such groups as White Noise,
Cromagnon, Fifty Foot Hose, or even United States of America? I think one way to
avoid this endlessly circular,\(^\text{211}\) Beckettian and already tiring and annoying semantic
of “modernism vs. postmodernism” is to focus on a more neutral term, already
present in Born’s discussion: experimentalism. Berio, Cage, Zappa, and the avant-
gardist edges of psychedelia are all experimental. If nuances are required, Cage and
Zappa would be “postmodernist experimentalists,” while Berio and most other

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\(^{209}\) Kramer 1995 and Kramer 1996. For the opposite position – that of musical postmodernism as a
return to the sense of narrative continuity, see the end of Nattiez 1990.


\(^{211}\) Cf. Lyotard’s thesis that “a work can become modern only if it is first postmodern” (Lyotard 1982: 13).
(post-)serialist composers from the “class of ’45”

dealing with collage would be “modernist experimentalists.” For Born, experimentalism is exclusively postmodernist. For us, the same experimentalism would be, in the 1960s, an interstitial space, a bridge, or a buffer between the attitudinal poles of “modernism” and “postmodernism” – and even more (or perhaps implicitly), between “high culture” and “popular culture.” Experience and experiment were indeed keywords of the 1960s, from Cage’s “experimental music” to Hendrix’s “Are You Experienced.”

Berio has acknowledged that the third movement of Sinfonia was “perhaps the most ‘experimental’ music I have ever written.” It is indeed safe to say that the collage practice – in the 1960s as in other decades – is fundamentally and primarily experimental. Whether this experimentalism is of modernist (Berio or Stockhausen) or postmodernist (Cage or Pärt) extraction, it is perhaps of secondary importance.

Susan Bradshaw’s “class of ’45” is a more neutral and probably more suitable name than “Darmstadt School.” This generation of composers would include Boulez, Pousseur, Stockhausen, Henze, Maderna, Nono, and Berio. See Bradshaw 1995.

Berio quoted in Metzer 2003: 139.
Musicircus and soup

He who says collage says the irrational
(Max Ernst, 1948)

In its dizzying display of quotational materials, comments, references, Berio’s peripezia may indeed be read as a theatrical parade, or as a fast-changing cinematic scenery. Moving incessantly, vertiginously through different textual landscapes, Berio’s score does have a psychedelic or hallucinatory quality, like all collages do. Berio’s adventurous journey would thus be read by musicologists as a tourist and schizophrenic escapade through a/the Mahlerian “whole world” in just ten minutes, while the same voyage would be seen by the late 1960s popular music aficionado as a sort of “theater of the mind,” a psychedelic trip or ride, or, to use Henahan’s metaphor, a visit to the time- and mind-bending “Magic Theater.” As we mentioned at the beginning of our study, Hesse’s novel was revived in the 1960s, and his “Magic Theater” had a profound and natural impact not only on Rochberg’s 1965 piece of ars combinatoria, but on late 1960s psychedelic sensibilities, more generally.

There are, however, a few aspects in Berio’s movement that would differentiate it from dozens of other collages in the 1960s – especially those coming from the Cagean camp, and from avant-psychedelic music. First, Berio’s music may be cinematic, but it is not cartoonish (despite a couple of solfège moments which are rather hilarious). Second, Berio’s theater is thoroughly intentional and “staged,” rather than unintentional and indeterminate. Third, this theater is cinematic – that is, it is dynamic, processual, transformative, and always in motion; it is a sequence of
moving images, rather than a set of static tableaux. And finally, Berio’s music is, once again, fundamentally “double-coded.”

It is in light of these distinguishing features, and in light of the negative connotations that the word “collage” had in high-modernist circles, that one should understand Berio’s firm refusal of the word “collage” as a description of Sinfonia’s third movement. In a 1981 interview, after denying that that movement is “a collage of quotes,” Berio adds:

I’m not interested in collages, and they amuse me only when I’m doing them with my children: then they become an exercise in relativizing and “decontextualizing” images, an elementary exercise whose healthy cynicism won’t do anyone any harm.214

Instead of a childish “elementary exercise,” Berio preferred to see his movement as being analytical – an “art of commentary,”215 rather than an ars combinatoria:

I’d had in mind for a long time to explore from the inside a piece of music from the past: a creative exploration that was at the same time an analysis, a commentary and an extension of the original. This follows my principle that, for a composer, the best way to analyze and comment on a piece is to do something, using materials from that piece. The most profitable commentary on a symphony or an opera has always been another symphony or another opera. My Chemins are the best analyses of my Sequenzas, just as the third part of my Sinfonia is the most developed.

214 Berio 1985: 106.
215 Cf. the title of Osmond-Smith 1975.
commentary that I could have possibly produced on a piece by Mahler.\textsuperscript{216}

Berio’s alternatives to the word “collage” are thus “analysis,” “commentary,” and also “documentary” (in \textit{Sinfonia},\textsuperscript{217} as well as in \textit{Laborintus II} and \textit{A-Ronne}) and “anthology” (in \textit{Coro}).\textsuperscript{218} All these words imply degrees of rationality, logic, well-formed and well-ordered structures, systematization, analytical and taxonomical thinking. Here is where Berio’s modernist roots become visible.

By contrast with these terminological substitutes, “collage” had (and still has) more problematical connotations, especially for modernist-serialist composers like Pierre Boulez. Boulez had a brief flirt with \textit{musique concrète} in 1951 in Pierre Schaeffer’s RTF studio in Paris, and at first he was enthusiastic about the possibility of manipulating pitches and durations through what he called “montage:” “you see all the richness which it is possible to exploit!,” he wrote to Cage in December 1951. “That will require time and is a question of montage (like cinematic montage).”\textsuperscript{219}

But it did not take long for Boulez to realize the profound incompatibility between Schaeffer’s concretism and his own structuralism. Already by 1952-53 the relationship between the two came to a halt, and Boulez seemed now to be more attracted by the scientist \textit{Elektronische Musik} developed by Stockhausen in the WDR

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{216} Berio 1985: 107.
\item \textsuperscript{217} “The whole point of this section of \textit{Sinfonia} [is as] a documentary on an objet trouvé recorded in the mind of the listener” (Berio quoted in Simms 1996: 398). See also Frank Scheffer’s film, where Berio refers once again to this movement as a “documentary.”
\item \textsuperscript{218} This replacement of “collage” with other terminological substitutes parallels Berio’s reevaluation of another problematic term: opera. Berio’s “operatic” works are not “operas.” He calls them \textit{messa in scena} (\textit{Passaggio}), music theatre (\textit{Outis}), and \textit{azione musicale} (\textit{Un re in ascolto}).
\item \textsuperscript{219} Boulez 1993: 123.
\end{itemize}
studio in Cologne – music that was, in fact, an extension of the multi-serialist technique in the realm of electronics.\footnote{To be fair, it should be noted that Boulez was cautious enough regarding the potential developments of electronic music. See in this sense the end of his 1955 article “At the Edge of Fertile Land” in Boulez 1991. As it often happens with Boulez, his attitude in this matter was not one of uncritical acceptance; he rightly acknowledged the limits of Elektronische Musik, and believed in the revival of the musical “fertile land” by means of a synthetic effort to create “a multidimensional time-space” (Boulez 1991: 168) at the intersection of instrumental and electronic territories.} And in a \textit{Fasquelle} article from 1958, Boulez attacked Schaeffer’s approach as being primitive and anarchic, partly because of Schaeffer’s reliance on collage:

The very word \textit{concrète} shows how far off the track we are and how crudely the problem has been envisaged; the term aims at defining a physical manipulation of the sound; but the sound itself answers no definition, suffers no restraints. No attention has been paid to the question of material, which is of prime importance in such an undertaking; a sort of poetical parade has acted as substitute, continuing the surrealist practice of collage – in painting or words. Quite apart from the fact that this poetics without choice has worn thin, the lack of purpose in the selection of sound material produces an anarchy which, however agreeable it may be, is fatally detrimental to composition. To lend itself to composition, musical material needs to be sufficiently flexible, susceptible to transformation, and capable of generating and sustaining a dialectic.\footnote{Boulez 1991: 226.}

A few words are to be highlighted in the quote above: “poetical parade,” “surrealist practice,” “anarchy,” and “dialectic.” Even if not all these words point strictly to collage, they do refer indirectly to it, given the illustrative, cinematic, and collagistic nature of \textit{musique concrète}. Collage then – rephrasing Boulez a bit – would be a \textit{surrealist parade, a sensuous anarchy}, incapable of sustaining a structural dialectic –
and thus, something to be placed outside the realm of “composition.” Stockhausen has expressed his dissatisfaction with Schaeffer’s approach in similar terms, considering this music “a capitulation before the undefined, a terribly dilettantish gamble, uncontrolled improvisation.”

Boulez’s and Stockhausen’s position is symptomatic of the high-modernist credo in an organicist, unitary, and dialectic artwork. Collage was seen by high-modernists as a factor of structural and semantic destabilization, an alien intrusion in the organic, well-structured tissue of the musical architecture. Jean-Yves Bosseur summarizes this danger of collage well:

> En faisant intervenir dans la rhétorique compositionelle l’éventualité même d’une perturbation de la logique organisatrice par l’infiltration de “corps étrangers,” du hazard, voire de l’incohérence, le collage est effectivement apparu comme un risqué de dislocation de la cohérence interne de l’œuvre, de rupture dans le contrôle de ses relations causale.

Both Boulez and Stockhausen complained about the lack of flexibility in the “material” of musique concrète – presumably the various objets trouvé of this music.

“We shall govern the material; it won’t govern us,” said Stockhausen. This discussion around “material” brings to mind Peter Bürger’s chapter on avant-gardist montage, and his distinction between the organic and symbolic work of the “classicists” and the non-organic and allegorical work of the “avant-gardists.” For

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223 Bosseur 1993: 37.
224 Toop 1979: 388.
Bürger, this distinction can be reduced to the presence or absence of meaning within
the material:

Artists who produce an organic work … treat their material as something living. They respect its significance as something that has grown from concrete life situations. For avant-gardistes, on the other hand, material is just that, material. Their activity initially consists in nothing other than in killing the ‘life’ of the material, that is, in tearing out of its functional context that gives it meaning. Whereas the classicist recognizes and respects in the material the carrier of a meaning, the avant-gardistes see only the empty sign, to which only they can impart significance. The classicist correspondingly treats the material as a whole, whereas the avant-gardiste tears it out of the life totally, isolates it, and turns it into a fragment.225

It would be somewhat difficult to say whether modernists such as Boulez or Stockhausen treat their material as “something living.” It is true, however, that a good part of the 1960s collagist avant-garde treats the quotational material as an “empty sign,” a de-contextualized and de-historicized fragment, a true objet trouvé whose meaning comes not from within the object itself, but rather from outside the object. This situation is particularly visible in the various musique concrète and tape music montages, in the Fluxus assemblages and happenings, and in the Cagean experiments with collagistic indeterminacy. In many of these cases, the objet trouvé is just that: a found object, rather than a “text” or “intertext.” Furthermore, when these found objects are collated together, the meaningful identity of an individual object/quotation becomes even more blurry. The meaning of such a collage comes not from an organic

inter-relationship between strongly individualized objects/quotations, but rather from the act of collating itself. In other words: *collage becomes allegory.*

Cage’s notion of *musicircus* is a prime example of this approach. Cage first coined the term in 1967, applying it to one of his improvisational “events” at the University of Illinois. Later he extended the meaning of the (musi)circus, to denote any composition based on extravagant juxtapositions and superpositions, including in this category works like *Roaratorio* (subtitled “An Irish Circus on Finnegans Wake,” 1979) – a radioplay (Hörspiel) for electronic tapes, speaker and Irish folk musicians; and *Apartment House 1776* (1976), combining anthems and congregational music of four different American traditions (Protestant, Sephardic, Native American, and African American).

There is no score for the initial 1967 *Musicircus* – only a manuscript that simply invites any number of musicians to gather in one place and simultaneously perform anything they desire, for as long as they desire. Everything is indeterminate here: the number of performers; the type of music being performed and the way in which it is performed; the length of the performance. As Jann Pasler observes, “Cage asks for no stage, no hierarchical relationship between audience and performers, no fees for performers or ticket charges.”

*Musicircus* is thus “an invitation rather than a

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226 Pasler 2008: 176.
directive,” and the result of such an invitation is “neither ensemble nor counterpoint, but rather simple coexistence.”

In one of the mesostics from *Composition in Retrospect*, Cage offers the following definition of a *musicircus*:

```
mus    I    circus
ma    N    y
T     hings going on
at th E    same time
a theat R    e of differences together
not a single P    lan
just a spac E    of time
a N    d
as many P    ople as are willing
performing in T    he same place
a la R    ge
pl A    e a gymnasium
an archi T   ecture
that I    sn’t
inv O    lved
with maki N    g the stage
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The *musicircus* is thus defined in an abstract and rather Deleuzian or Foucaultian manner as an “interpenetration” of space and time (“a space of time” – is this Foucault’s heterochrony?), and more concretely, as “many things going on at the same time, a theater of differences together.” There is no need to insist here on the obvious anarcho-utopian implications of Cage’s *musicircus*, or on the connections, again evident, between the political vision of the *musicircus* and the cultural milieu of the late 1960s. It is enough to say that Cage’s collagistic *musicircus* does not constitute a (open or closed) “work,” not even a “text” – at least not in the way in

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227 Brooks 2002: 221.
229 See in this regard Junkerman 1993 and Junkerman 1994.
which Berio’s *Sinfonia* still represents these words. Cage’s heteromorphic *musicircus* is nothing but a quite transparent *allegory* for utopian, or perhaps heterotopian societal (dis)organization, and a signpost for the various carnivalesque heteromorphies at play in the late 1960s. Cage said it himself: “the performance of a piece of music can be a metaphor of society of how we want society to be … we could make a piece of music in which we would be willing to live.”

Cage said it himself: “the performance of a piece of music can be a metaphor of society of how we want society to be … we could make a piece of music in which we would be willing to live.”

Is this quote coming from an idealist artist, or rather from a conceptualist-strategist of liberated urbanity in the vein of Debord? The distinction between these two classes was quite fuzzy in the utopian, radicalist, revolutionary, experimentalist, postmodernist, carnivalesque late 1960s. The *musicircus* is nevertheless a *vision*. It is Cage’s vision not only of the future, but also of the contemporaneous 1960s.

“The word ‘circus,’ – says Cage – means to me that there is not one center, but that *life itself* is a plurality of centers. This is a Buddhist idea” (our italics).

Buddhism or just “postmodern” common sense? Whatever the case, theater/spectacle, decenteredness or poly-centers, and, evidently, the omnipresent heteromorphic street, are all conflated in the *musicircus*. Cage joins here the party of Boccioni, Steadman, Berio, Tati, Godard, Jefferson Airplane, Debord, and many others, by adding his own futurist/simultaneist/(neo)realist vision of the street-circus: “In Sevilla on a street corner I noticed the multiplicity of simultaneous visual and audible events all going

together in one’s experience and producing enjoyment. It was the beginning for me of theatre and circus.”

Berio’s and Cage’s approaches to collage are, of course, *fundamentally different*. They are also *fundamentally alike*, of course. What may sound here like an exercise of sophist rhetoric is in fact a case that proves once again the deeply paradoxical, anti-essentialist nature of the carnivalesque – and, okay, “postmodern” – late 1960s. Kristeva summarizes the circularity and paradoxical nature of the carnival as follows:

“[carnival] is a spectacle, but without a stage; a game, but also a daily undertaking. … The scene of the carnival, where there is no stage, no ‘theater,’ is thus both stage and life, game and dream, discourse and spectacle.”

Cage had no intentions to “stage the unexpected” in a concert hall, as Berio did, but rather to create a “space of time” “in an architecture that isn’t involved with making the stage;” and perhaps, to plunge himself and us directly in the vortex, in the unexpected carnival of “life itself,” which happens in the street, not on the theatrical stage. But this “life itself,” *especially* in the late 1960s, was no-less a stage, a theater, a carnival, a parade, a circus… The circle and circus of metaphors is thus complete.

Berio saw “collage” as an “elementary exercise,” aligning himself thus with the high-modernist view of Boulez, for whom the same word meant not only “anarchy,” but a “surrealist parade.” As our motto above indicates, the surrealists themselves saw

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collage as a “magistral eruption of the irrational” (Max Ernst), and as part of that celebration of mental mystery and “the unknown” typical of the surrealist project.

“The mind loves the unknown – writes René Magritte. It loves images whose meaning is unknown, since the meaning of the mind itself is unknown. The mind doesn’t understand its own raison d’être, and without understanding that (or why it knows what it knows), the problems it poses have no raison d’être either.” But aren’t Berio’s “the unknown is always upon us” and Beckett’s Unnamable part of that same vision? And aren’t Ernst’s and Magritte’s descriptions a sort of manifesto of the beyond-rational psychedelia? In the second manifesto of surrealism from 1930, André Breton stated that “there is a certain point for the mind from which life and death, the real and the imaginary, the past and the future, the communicable and the incommunicable, the high and the low cease being perceived as contradictions.”

Surrealism, like carnival, would appear thus to suppress logical contradictions, to rise above the superficial reality of things that must be explained rationally; to rise to the level of the paradox (the carnival’s misalliance of extremes), the mystery (the carnival’s masks), and the mental game. Cage’s circus is such a game. Berio’s and Kristeva’s intertextuality is such a game. And what better definition of such a “theater of the mind” than the collagistic (yet non-quotational) ending of Pink Floyd’s “Bike” (1967), with its Scott Walker-like quacking (replicated later by George Harrison in the soundtrack to the 1968 Wonderwall, and sampled on Maschine No. 9’s Headmovie album of 1973) and its “room [full] of musical tunes” – a

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234 Ernst quoted in Mackie 1989: 68.  
236 Breton quoted in Fowlie 1960: 107.
*Wunderkammer*, a curio cabinet reminding of both Cage’s alternate definition of his *musicircus* as a “house full of music”\(^{237}\) and of the prop-house in Aaron Woodley’s visually mesmerizing film *Rhinoceros Eyes* (2003).

If Cage saw the indeterminate, participatory and heteromorphic collage as carnival and circus, others saw it as… *soup* – a word that is perhaps even more carnivalesque than “circus.” In a late 1968 letter to Cage, Frederic Rzewski, co-founder of the Italian-American electro-acoustic, avant-improv group *Musica Elettronica Viva* (MEV), described the latest preoccupations of the group with anarcho-playful happenings, or “joyful noisemaking:” “We have been working in the direction of ‘audience participation.’ People *do* want to play. Some interesting evening at our studio with twenty-five to thirty people playing. Some joyful noisemaking. Children too. We call it ‘Soup.’”\(^{238}\)

*Musicircus* and soup would be thus “cutting-edge” and popular (cf. Rzewski’s account above) developments of late 1960s avant-garde/experimental music, no less culturally significant than Berio’s intertextual and “analytic” *Sinfonia* or Pink Floyd’s psychedelic “Bike.” The carnivalesque valence of such collagistic heteromorphies is indeed undeniable, and it integrates seamlessly with other carnivalesque and heteromorphic modes of representation in the late 1960s discussed throughout this study. But perhaps the best illustration of the continuing and more-or-less unconscious power of the carnival metaphor comes, one more time, not from music,


\(^{238}\) Rzewski quoted in Beal 2009: 112.
but from the quintessentially popular, decentralized and carnivalesque medium of Internet, and particularly from blogosphere, with its various mash-ups of posts, RSS feed aggregators, and blog-rolls. One recent variation of such a blog-roll strategy where posts and links on a given topic are edited together and often annotated in an “intertextual” way has been called precisely … “Blog Carnival.”²³⁹

This is the end of our peripezia. It should be also a beginning.

As I try to close these pages, many other bifurcations of the late 1960s carnivalesque and heteromorphic intertext inevitably come to mind: the cartoonish dimension of Gainsbourg’s and Bardot’s “Comic Strip” (1968), or of Berio’s and Berberian’s adventures with onomatopoeia in Sequenza III (1966) and Stripsody (1966); Lawrence Jordan’s Satiesque and surreal collage animations, and Bob Godfrey’s satiric cut-ups; Fellini’s obsessive interest with clowns and the circus world, and the grotesque and magic realism and extravaganza in his two “psychedelic” masterpieces, Juliet of the Spirits (1965) and Satyricon (1969), followed by the exuberant-nostalgic and Brueghelian The Clowns (1970); the aesthetics of operatic excess in Werner Schroeter’s gestural and allegorical films, or in Van Dyke Parks’ Song Cycle (1968), a one-of-a-kind and brilliant oddity that is matched only today by Zorn or Dave Longstreth’s Dirty Projectors; the transgressive and promiscuous aspects of the carnival in the orgiastic productions of the Viennese Actionists, Hermann Nitsch’s series of ritualistic Orgien Mysterien Theater, Jack Smith’s “flaming creatures,” or Yayoi Kusama’s “nude happenings;” the heterotopian and
heteromorphic-luxuriant electronic flora in Nam June Paik’s “TV Garden;” Mauricio Kagel’s eccentricities and zoological imagination in his films and music theaters.

The subject of this study was musical and cultural metaphors, approached not positivistically and analytically, but rather hermeneutically and perhaps phenomenologically – I named and constantly read the carnivalesque and the heteromorphy, and I attempted to construct interpretative, critical “intertexts.” I tried thus to evoke or suggest possible and incomplete ways of looking at the “late 1960s carnival” as a kaleidoscopic image, a multi-colored picture, an intertext, a cultural dynamic of metaphors seen from many angles. Metaphor is the realm of poetry, and poetry refuses any sort of closings. The best possible “conclusion” of this text would be either its continuation with a series of new chapters, or its very beginning, with that discussion of word-images and the circular play of metaphors. Thus, we should perhaps end-begin with Guillaume de Machaut: Ma fin est mon commencement.

More significantly, I attempted here to suggest that these carnivalesque tropes and metaphors are not simply fictional reconstructions or revisionist re-imaginings, but rather more-or-less latent articulations of an imagination that in the idealist-utopian late 1960s feeds various cultural strata, from psychedelia to avant-garde experimentalism, from rock to pop, from hippie flower-power to strategies of radical politics. However problematic the idea of a “Zeitgeist” may appear today in our faux – and itself ideologized – politically correct climate, the fact remains that in the late 1960s the counterculture seems indeed to become the culture – a culture dominated
by a Marcusean “radical imagination,” and producing a “utopian project.” Cultural imagination is not simply a repository of literary fictions. It is the realm of possibilities, of horizons, and of expectations that guide, consciously or unconsciously, an era. And we should perhaps conclude along with Marcuse that “uncompromising adherence to the strict truth value of imagination comprehends reality more fully.” The carnivalesque treated in these pages has this strict truth value of imagination.

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240 See Haiven 2010 and Tally 2010.
241 Marcuse quoted in Tally 2010.
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