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Abstract:

Particularly drawing on the theory of Jacques Attali and Horkheimer and Adorno, this article considers popular music in Pynchon's novels as more than simply a 'soundtrack' to the plot. Much attention has been paid to Pynchon's original songs, but not to the manner of their dissemination; therefore, this article examines the role of the popular musician in the production of consumer culture, focusing on McClintic Sphere (*V.*), The Paranoids (*Lot 49*), and Billy Barf and the Vomitones (*Vineland*). Pynchon depicts a modern 'culture industry' in which recording artists, voluntarily or not, ape their forbears, but in which the idea that live performance is liberating whereas recording is constraining, is problematized. The article explores Sphere's struggles to become successful in the face of live audiences that constantly compare him to Charlie Parker rather than assessing his music on its own merits, and the twin inspirational and coercive 'moulding' forces he experiences during the recording process that represents the only chance for musicians to disseminate their music widely and find a properly appreciative public. Similarly, the disjunction between the Paranoids' deviant lyrics and behaviour, and their thoroughly generic sub-Beatles musical texture, which adheres to the tropes of recorded music (one song 'fades out' even when played live!) is discussed; they too are caught in an excluded middle between transgression and conformity, as are the Vomitones, who in one live performance suppress their rebellious 'punk' aesthetic when they gain employment performing Italian ballads at a Mafia wedding. Ultimately this article argues that popular music is equally moulded by live audiences and by recording bosses and that its absorption into networks of capital is inevitable, so musicians, given the chance, may as well 'sell out', and hope to balance commercial success with at least a modicum of creative control.

“Sell Out With Me Tonight”: Popular Music, Commercialization and Commodification in *Vineland*, *The Crying of Lot 49*, and *V.*

George William Twigg

I

Music is demonstrably a major concern of Thomas Pynchon’s fiction; critic William Vesterman tells us that ‘even disallowing translations and quotations, his books average over a line of verse for each printed page’.¹ Much of this so-called ‘verse’ does not just ‘comment, ironically but gently, on what is transpiring’,² but also comes with details of performance directions asking ‘where did the swing band come from?’ (*GR*, p. 638) or specifying that ‘sort of a Hoagy Carmichael piano can be heard in behind this’ (*GR*, p. 618), almost as if the musical accompaniment is appearing out of the ether and forming a syncretic whole with the lyrics to what Eric Solomon calls ‘Pynchon’s typically awful songs’.³ To describe them thus is to be too dismissive, however. The words to these ditties may be invariably more zany than those found in our own, less Pynchonian world, but they can provide an enlightening window onto the depiction of consumer culture within the skewed reality of Pynchon’s novels, particularly when we consider so-called popular music, which is a type of music that is central to Pynchon’s vision of capitalist society and its processes of commercialization and commodification. This article will consider three significant musical acts from Pynchon’s corpus; McClintic Sphere in *V.*, The Paranoids in *The Crying of Lot 49*, and Billy Barf and the Vomitonies in *Vineland*. An appraisal of their music, their lyrics, their relationships with their audience and their relationships with recording technology, will demonstrate that while Pynchon depicts a matrix of musical writing and musical production that is much more diverse and complex than the most frequently-cited critiques of the so-called ‘Culture Industry’, the absorption of music, no matter how innovative or countercultural it may appear to be, into networks of capital and consumer culture is inevitable.

In *Gravity’s Rainbow*, Säure Bummer, ‘once the Weimar Republic’s most notorious cat burglar and dooper’ (*GR*, p. 434) and his musician friend and

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'unwelcome doping partner' (*GR*, p. 843) Gustav Schlabone argue about Beethoven. Their value judgements – the composer is presented alternately as 'one of the architects of musical freedom' (*GR*, p. 522) and a composer of music for 'going out and invading Poland' (*GR*, p. 523) – demonstrate not only that Pynchon's fiction is suffused with music and musical allusions, but that music itself is not a value-neutral aesthetic form. Complex and often divergent meanings can be attributed to it, and while Pynchon explores this dynamic in regard to classical music such as that of Beethoven, music of the popular variety is an equally important theme in novels like *V.*, *The Crying of Lot 49*, and *Vineland*. Furthermore, not only is the philosophical and aesthetic value of popular music important to Pynchon, but its examination, particularly with respect to the degree of control that performers have over their music and how it is received, reacted to, and commodified, is a significant concern of many critics and philosophers.

These include, notably, Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, who consider 'The Culture Industry', contrasting the commercial, 'consumer culture' music of modernity with 'high art [where] meaning is derived from the artists themselves'⁴ rather than from capital. Adorno in particular was concerned with this cultural paradigm; in his work, according to Andreas Huyssen, '[t]he political impulse [...] was to save the dignity and autonomy of the art work from the totalitarian pressures of fascist mass spectacles, socialist realism, and an ever more degraded commercial mass culture in the West.'⁵ Adorno associated popular music with this 'degraded commercial mass culture', writing in a significant 1941 essay that '[p]opular music [...] is usually characterized by its difference from serious music'.⁶ In this so-called serious music, '[e]very detail derives its musical sense from the concrete totality of the piece which, in turn, consists of the life relationship of the details and never of a mere enforcement of a musical scheme.'⁷ By contrast, '[t]he whole structure of popular music is standardized, even where the attempt is made to circumvent standardization. Standardization extends from the most general features to the most specific ones.'⁸ Adorno's characterization of popular music feeds into his seminal work with Horkheimer on 'The Culture Industry' in 1944, but in the wild, multiplicitous world of Pynchon's novels, this characterization of popular music as homogeneous is inadequate, as an examination of the three diverse musical acts mentioned above will demonstrate.⁹ However, although the generative qualities of the culture industry, in terms of reinforcing a rigid homogeneous style of popular music, are downplayed in Pynchon, its absorptive qualities are emphasised. Popular music, from punk to jazz, is inevitably commodified thanks to a combination of factors. Bands such as The Paranoids who prize commercial success above

all else feel compelled to produce derivative (though not standardized as Adorno would have it) music for this purpose, but even if the music is complex and challenging like Sphere's bebop, an uncomprehending audience may see it as akin to models of music that they are already familiar with, and the audience may even *demand* that a band plays a certain kind of music, as Ralph Wayvone does in *Vineland*. Musicians are therefore constrained and moulded even at a non-commercial level, and so may as well be paid for the privilege, by engaging with the commercial recording and radio industries. The culture industry may not be as coercive and homogenizing as it is for Horkheimer and Adorno, but the general public's distrust and misunderstanding of the truly countercultural means that assimilation into the capitalist matrix of commodification begins to look like a tempting alternative.

II

Jacques Attali states that in this matrix, thanks to its dissemination via radio and recording, 'music escapes from musicians'.¹⁰ Pynchon's musician characters have functionality in his novels unrelated to their musical skill; musicians escaping from their music, so to speak. We have McClintic Sphere's famous 'bumper sticker motto'¹¹ ('Keep cool, but care'),¹² and 'Isaiah Two Four'¹³ (aka Billy Barf, leader of the punk outfit The Vomitones) is not just a singer – in the loosest sense of the word – but a politically conscious figure,¹⁴ and a key component in the protagonist Zoyd's complicated domestic situation. However, the interaction of these figures with the nexus of consumer culture's production is often the most intriguing facet of their character arcs. Pynchon's novels contain a carnivalesque variety of musical styles, which leads us, as we have said, to question Horkheimer and Adorno's emphasis on the uniformity of popular music, but he admittedly places particular emphasis on certain musical genres (such as pop, punk and jazz), and depicts a 'culture industry' in which recording artists, voluntarily or otherwise, end up aping their forebears. The Frankfurt School duo write that 'the culture industry as a whole has moulded men as a type unfailingly reproduced in every product',¹⁵ and Pynchon's novels, as well as containing a wealth of original songs, dramatize, through their often pop culture-based referential modes, a world full of musical lodestars to be imitated stylistically *within* these genres. Notable musicians such as Blue Cheer (of 'Summertime Blues' fame) are heard in *Vineland* during 'the last hours of the People's Republic of Rock and Roll', (*Vineland*, p. 247) 'miles in the distance, from faraway Anaheim Stadium' (*Vineland*, p. 247), their commercial success providing an ironic counterpoint to the government destruction of the

'Marxist mini-state, [the] product of mass uprising' (*Vineland*, p. 212) that is 'symbolically the counterculture America of the sixties, delirious with freedom, under surveillance, doomed'.¹⁶ This utopian vision of the United States is further compromised by the overarching power of the commercial recording and radio industries, in which 'something is provided for all so that none may escape',¹⁷ according to Horkheimer and Adorno, and rock and roll becomes 'just another way to claim our attention' (*Vineland*, p. 314). Pynchon is (characteristically) ambivalent about the power of musicians to express and disseminate their music without its being shaped by forces other than the performers themselves, but with the above statements in mind, consideration of his musician characters tells us that 'selling out' or being 'moulded', in some form, is inevitable, and that the only viable option is to engage with the musical culture industry, as McClintic Sphere does, and hope (however vainly) to find a successful niche amongst the multifarious styles, whilst attempting to marry elements of uniqueness, creative control, and commercial success.

Sphere's audience of 'Northern liberal[s]' (*V*, p. 280) and 'types who liked to talk to each other a lot' (*V*, p. 280) mostly comprehend his 'jazzing' (*V*, p. 292) as background noise akin to Muzak, 'the herald of the general silence of men before the spectacle of commodities',¹⁸ as Jacques Attali has it, which comes in the form of 'light classical and New Age music that gently peep[s] at the edges of audibility' (*Vineland*, p. 6), and which permeates Pynchon's fiction. On the rare occasions that they do pay attention, they appreciate his music in two ways. Firstly, they intellectualize his 'sixths and minor fourths' (*V*, p. 59) as somehow indicative of 'the anti-intellectual and the rising rhythms of African nationalism' (*V*, p. 60), a standpoint which, while (like Pynchon) it 'emphasizes jazz's intellectual [or anti-intellectual] qualities'¹⁹, and intersects thematically with the idea that Sphere and Paola 'have both known colonialism and the forces unleashed by V',²⁰ reduces the improvisatory and spontaneous quality of a complex mode of jazz - featuring collaborative 'fours with the drummer' (*V*, p. 281) as well as counterpoint that is 'like a knife fight or a tug of war' (*V*, p. 59) - to an art form seen in terms of ideologies rather than aesthetics. Secondly, just as Tony Whyton states that 'the African American male has emerged as the embodiment of authentic jazz practice'²¹ (this being an example of the politico-musical theorizing that the Ivy League crowd at the V-Note engage in), certain African American males, and indeed musicians in general, appear as so-called 'icons' that influence the music and the image of subsequent artists within a certain genre. Attali writes that 'the artist becomes the replicated mode. His function is no longer musical, but unifying [...] When the spectacle dissolves

in replication, the author-performer becomes a mould.²² In Sphere's case, he feels frustration at being compared with the great Charlie Parker, also known as 'Bird', who in jazz mythology, according to Whyton, 'acts as a symbol for renewal, transforming jazz into Art.'²³ This is particularly significant when we consider Pynchon's sources and analogues for the character, as Sphere is actually 'based loosely on Ornette Coleman',²⁴ another saxophonist, and his surname is the middle name of noted jazz *pianist* Thelonious Monk. This renders his appropriation, by his audience, as Charlie Parker reborn, even more problematic. Ironically enough, attempts to 'renew' the deceased saxophonist's spirit - 'Bird Lives' (*V*, p. 60) - lead to Sphere being seen as 'a kind of reincarnation' (*V*, p. 60), and thus negatively affect his chances of achieving commercial and critical success in his own right, and inscribing himself into jazz's canon as an individual.

On the other hand, we should not view the tendency of the culture industry and its consumers to see performers in terms of 'moulds' and past 'icons' as necessarily coercive; there are those who willingly imitate their forebears in an attempt to fit the mould, and to achieve commercial success. Jon Fitzgerald tells us that '[w]hen the Beatles achieved a series of hits on the US pop charts in early 1964, they initiated what is commonly referred to as the "British Invasion".'²⁵ We can date the setting of *Lot 49* to 1964, as the Mexican anarchist Jesús Arrabal asks of 'an ancient rolled copy of the anarchosyndicalist paper *Regeneración* [... from] 1904',²⁶ 'Has it really taken sixty years?' (*Lot 49*, p. 83) Therefore it seems that the Paranoids, if not entirely modelled on the Beatles²⁷ (although there are significant parallels), aspire to be part of this fashionable wave of 'male, guitar-orientated, British'²⁸ groups [that] achieved unprecedented levels of success within the USA, thereby challenging the established dominance of US performers.'²⁹ The band consists of four adolescent men, each with a fake British accent, 'a Beatle haircut and a lapelless, cuffless, one-button mohair suit' (*Lot 49*, p. 16). As Miles is 'the manager, a drop-out' (*Lot 49*, p. 16) at a hotel, and says of the accent, 'Our manager says we should sing like that' (*Lot 49*, p. 17), we can infer that their style and image is part of an attempt by an as yet unsigned band to secure a recording contract by jumping on the 'British Invasion' bandwagon.

However, their clean-cut image belies their rebellious and deviant nature; although it may be true that in terms of image and instrumentation the Paranoids 'alternately imitate and placate their elders',³⁰ the lyrical content of their songs and their general behaviour are deeply countercultural. For example, they hijack a boat, and voyeuristically 'check in at whim on any

bizarre sexual action' (*Lot 49*, p. 31); they are much more decadent than even the 'well-known punker[s]' (*Vineland*, p. 16) that The Vomitones appear to be, despite the punks' stylistic appropriation of 'nukehappy cyberdeath graphics' (*Vineland*, p. 54) and 'miniature iron skulls' (*Vineland*, p. 54). In addition, musically, the Paranoids appear not to fit this so-called 'mould' of which Attali writes. The titles of the songs they sing during the course of *Lot 49* – 'Miles's Song' (*Lot 49*, p. 17), 'Serenade' (*Lot 49*, p. 25), and 'Serge's Song' (*Lot 49*, p. 101) – are all generic, and, as with Pynchon's naming of characters,³¹ are 'probably undermining and mocking the very act of names';³² these would presumably be given 'proper' titles in the event of their being released on an album. Notably, the last of these songs is completely unsuitable for public consumption, with its references to 'Humbert Humbert cats' (*Lot 49*, p. 101) and 'a date last night with an eight-year-old' (*Lot 49*, p. 101). Popular music may, in the 1960s, have become 'the synonym for the new life style of the younger generation, a life style which rebelled against authority and sought liberation from the norm of existing society',³³ but the band seems to be caught in an 'excluded middle' (*Lot 49*, p. 125) between youthful, countercultural impulses that may well come under the auspices of 'SILENT TRISTERO'S EMPIRE' (*Lot 49*, p. 116), and the role they must perform in order to succeed within modern consumer culture. As such, their identity as performers is confused and muddled; they are, in the end, unable to achieve individuation, not just within the morass of identikit Beatles-aping groups, but personally, appearing only as 'Miles, Dean, Serge, and/or Leonard' (*Lot 49*, p. 117), 'a kind of Greek chorus',³⁴ rather than as individualized characters. We never even learn which members play which instruments, unlike the Corvairs in *Vineland*; early on in that novel, Pynchon makes us aware that Zoyd had 'been playing keyboard [with them] since junior high' (*Vineland*, p. 22), Van Meter is Zoyd's 'old bass player' (*Vineland*, p. 9), and that Scott Oof is 'lead guitarist and vocalist' (*Vineland*, p. 23). The Paranoids are countercultural deviants in their personal lives and lyrics, but utterly bland in image and, as we shall see, in musical composition, and this ultimately renders them an unsatisfying melange; an act that disrupts the binaries and polarities posited by the early Frankfurt School scholars³⁵ to an extent, but one which is nevertheless plugged into a kind of culture industry.

This sense of ambivalence crops up in Attali's writing on music; for him, 'the music of today stands both as a promise of a new, liberating mode of production, and as the menace of a dystopian possibility which is that mode of production's baleful mirror image.'³⁶ Just as the Paranoids are caught between their countercultural instincts and the desire to engage in the recording industry that promises to disseminate their music into the sphere

of consumer culture, Pynchon presents a recording industry caught between offering expression through production, and constraining and shaping said production. The necessity of recording for the dissemination of music is undoubted; Zoyd envisages a 'dream album [...] of torch songs for male vocalist' (*Vineland*, p. 36) that will get Frenesi's attention, but in order to do that it will need to be recorded, marketed, and appear, like Pynchon's writing in *Vineland*, 'in constant complicity with the myths and forms of the simulations of reality, especially television'.³⁷ Nevertheless, there is a positive side to this necessity, as recording for the purposes of popular consumption allows new and exciting forms of music to potentially reach a wide audience. Adorno and Horkheimer write that 'not only are the hit songs [...] cyclically recurrent and rigidly invariable types, but the specific content of the entertainment itself is derived from them and only appears to change.'³⁸ This point, as intimated earlier, requires interrogating. 'The Culture Industry' was first published in 1944, and in his notable critique of Adorno, Brian Longhurst states that 'at this point it may have seemed that the products of the popular music section of the culture industry were standardized. However, it is more difficult to sustain this thesis in the light of the current variation in pop music styles.'³⁹ Reading *V.*, which is (mostly) set in 1956, supports this. In the novel, Rooney Winsome runs 'Outlandish Records' (*V*, p. 124), the ultimate niche label, which puts out such typically Pynchonian esoterica as 'Volkswagens in Hi-Fi [and] The Leavenworth Glee Club Sings Old Favourites' (*V*, p. 124), and is so devoted to the unusual that Sphere's challenging bop, which 'collegians did not dig' (*V*, p. 59) and where he seems to solo 'disregarding chord changes completely' (*V*, p. 60)⁴⁰ is seen as a 'normal record' (*V*, p. 224). In addition, 'the status of jazz as a canonical artform is [...] dependent on the legacy of its recorded history';⁴¹ although Sphere is seen as a copy of Bird by his uncomprehending V-Note audience, making a record represents an opportunity to find a new, properly appreciative, public, and even if his music is still perceived as derivative of Parker, at least it has been disseminated and earned him some money. In fact, the studio even inspires him musically. Economically, Sphere knows that 'electricity [...] was helping him reach a bigger audience, some digging, some who would never dig, but all paying and those royalties keeping the Triumph on gas and McClintic in J. Press suits' (*V*, p. 292), but in addition, while in the studio, 'a two-triode circuit' (*V*, p. 293) leads him to write 'Set/Reset' (*V*, p. 293), which becomes 'a signature for the group' (*V*, p. 293).

However, this inspiration is somewhat minimal. The Paranoids' music is derivative, while their lyrics are countercultural; Sphere is the opposite. Pynchon tells us that he is 'no lyricist' (*V*, p. 293), and the text of 'Set/Reset'

consists of 'nonsense words' (*V*, p. 293) and the same African-American dialect – 'Gwine cross de Jordan' (*V*, p. 293) – that he earlier 'reclaims' in order to internally mock the 'white Ivy League ass' (*V*, p. 281) who patronizes him. Attali writes that when it is disseminated via radio and recording, 'music escapes from musicians',⁴² and the chances that a mostly white buying public would take this patois as a subversive reclamation, rather than receiving it at face value, are remote. This shows us that recording may not be the boon it appears, and any benefits must be weighed against various constraints, happily accepted or otherwise. In common with all amplified musical groups, the Paranoids are dependent on finding 'outlets [...] to plug into' (*Lot 49*, p. 37), but it is more than that; as a band whose aim is commercial success, their songs are written for the studio, and thus cannot but be performed as such even in a live, non-studio setting. Pynchon depicts for us a performance of the song 'Serenade' with its 'shuddering deluge of thick guitar chords' (*Lot 49*, p. 25), and his transcription of the lyrics ends with the word 'Fade-out' (*Lot 49*, p. 26) in parentheses. This *diminuendo al niente* (which is rarely, if ever, used in rock concerts) shows how the Paranoids, even playing live, feel compelled to adhere to tropes associated with recorded music, just as Zuñiga's meddling with the Corvairs – 'surfers ain' spoze to be playín like that' (*Vineland*, p. 312) – demonstrates how the recording process can more coercively alter a band's sound.

Furthermore, even bands that eschew the matrices of recording and consumer culture can end up with their integrity and sound compromised, when they perform live. A paying audience – such as the Thanatoids, who demand 'an all-night rallentando' (*Vineland*, p. 225) from Van Meter's band – can dictate the make-up of a live set. In *Vineland*, the Vomitones play a Mafia wedding in the guise of 'Gino Baglione and the Paisans' (*Vineland*, p. 94), appearing in 'snappy mint-coloured matching suits of Continental cut, [with] gold jewellery and glue-on moustaches' (*Vineland*, p. 94). The inauthenticity of their dress – we must remember that in the 'punk' aesthetic, 'the only acceptable function of fashion was the overthrow (for all time) of the very metaphysics of fashion',⁴³ as the punk writer Mark Sinker has it – is matched by that of their playing. Unable to perform their nihilistic and vitriolic original songs, such as 'Hey! I'm a Cop!' (*Vineland*, p. 356), they are forced to rely on 'the indispensable *Italian Wedding Fake Book*, by Deleuze & Guattari' (*Vineland*, p. 97).⁴⁴ The band's instrumentation as they go 'twanging and crashing through a suite from *Tosca*' (*Vineland*, p. 101) is also deeply suspect. We have 'Bad, the synthesizerist' (*Vineland*, p. 98), and 'the horn virtuoso 187, who'd named himself after the California Penal Code section for murder' (*Vineland*, p. 98). Despite Dick Hebdige's assertion that punk

music generally consists of 'a barrage of guitars with the volume and treble turned to maximum [...] against a background of cacophonous drumming and screamed vocals',⁴⁵ there were a handful of punk bands on both sides of the Atlantic that used synthesizers and horns, but it seems that Pynchon has chosen to mention these instruments because they are more commonly associated with the sort of music Wayvone demands than with punk. The band still affects a rebellious 'punk' ethos, but the edgy stage names, when juxtaposed with the unusual instruments, dramatize the tension between youth rebellion and the demands of the paying audience. In terms of both image and music, they have put themselves at the service of a violent über-Italian gangster culture – in which songs like 'Floozy with an Uzi' (*Vineland*, p. 104) are met with 'wild applause' (*Vineland*, p. 105) – rather than their usual DIY punk aesthetic 'flushed with ideologies of authenticity and creativity'.⁴⁶ It seems unlikely that the Vomitones play for the Mafioso Wayvone in an attempt to shock, as did the punk artists of the 70s who appropriated Nazi iconography; with his cry of 'We got the gig! We got it! Awesome! I can't believe it!' (*Vineland*, p. 20), Isaiah seems pathetically grateful for the chance to earn money,⁴⁷ and to disseminate his band's music. Although one could argue that lack of commercial success makes the group indiscriminate in its choice of patrons, this is 'selling out' just as much as is embracing radio and consumer culture. The mafia is as much a business as any recording conglomerate; as Martin Short states, 'its actions are not impulsive but rather the result of intricate conspiracies, carried on over many years and aimed at gaining control over whole fields of activity in order to amass huge profits.'⁴⁸ The difference between this association with 'Ralph Wayvone Enterprises' (*Vineland*, p. 93) and Sphere's association with the studio is that Sphere has a chance to become acclaimed, because he fully engages with commercial recording, whereas being 'the house band' (*Vineland*, p. 104) in a mafia club won't make a group successful.⁴⁹

What will make a group successful is dissemination of its music via commercial radio, which is what Sphere aims at. Nevertheless, we can perceive certain adverse effects of this medium, which is depicted as transmitting 'the fraudulent dream of teenage appetites' (*Lot 49*, p. 9), is able to seduce jazz legends such as Herb Alpert into performing 'the subhip syncopation...of Ohio Express's "Yummy Yummy Yummy"',⁵⁰ and renders the fictional 'Vivaldi Kazoo Concerto' (*Lot 49*, p. 6) as Muzak that negates David Cowart's idea that 'most subversive of all [...] is not a composer or a piece of music, but an instrument – the kazoo itself.'⁵¹ The instrument used in a 'suppressed quartet' (*GR*, p. 844) in *Gravity's Rainbow*, and banned as a symptom of 'an unauthorized state of mind' (*GR*, p. 896) by Richard M.

Zhubb, is presented as just another tool of pacification in *The Crying of Lot 49*. In *Lot 49* the radio appears as addictive as the Tube in *Vineland* that necessitates 'a dryin'-out place for Tubefrecks' (*Vineland*, p. 33), and any assertion that the rock and roll emitted by 'Mucho Maas's stereo system [...] stands for the revolution',⁵² should be treated with extreme caution in the light of the later novel, in which the same figure is a 'music-business biggie' (*Vineland*, p. 307). The former LSD-influenced mind-explorer now practises 'dedication to the Natch' (*Vineland*, p. 311), and is part of the culture industry. 'Indolent Records' (*Vineland*, p. 307), with its reputation for 'its unusual choices of artists and repertoires' (*Vineland*, p. 309), is a more successful version of Rooney Winsome's concern in *V.*, and demonstrates how all genres and styles of music are inevitably commodified in late capitalism, and sold for radio transmission. For the ordinary consumer in modernity, music of any genre truly is 'just another way to claim our attention' (*Vineland*, p. 314), and as the experience of the Vomitones shows, even without dissemination via recording, the absorption of music into networks of capital and consumer culture cannot be prevented. In the end, this may be less of a worry for performers than for consumers. Adorno writes, 'Individuals of the rhythmically obedient type are mainly found among the youth – the so-called radio generation. They are most susceptible to a process of masochistic adjustment to authoritarian collectivism.'⁵³ For performers, however, considering Attali's assertion that 'Janis Joplin, Bob Dylan, and Jimi Hendrix say more about the liberatory dream of the 1960s than any theory of crisis',⁵⁴ participation in commercial consumer culture may, if forces of 'moulding' can be traversed, lead to immortality through commercial success, albeit only for a select few. This is a best-case scenario, but even if Sphere, The Paranoids and The Vomitones do not rise to the level of Joplin, Dylan or Hendrix, a type of culture industry, while less totalizing and homogenizing than the version conceived by Horkheimer and Adorno, colours all of popular music in Pynchon's novels. If the popular musician is unable to perform without their sound being misunderstood or moulded by niche audiences, mass audiences and recording executives alike, then 'selling out' may, Pynchon disturbingly implies, be the least worst option.

End notes

1. William Vesterman, 'Pynchon's Poetry', *Mindful Pleasures: Essays on Thomas Pynchon*, eds. George Levine and David Leverenz (Boston and Toronto: Little, Brown & Co., 1976), p. 101.
2. Thomas Pynchon, *Gravity's Rainbow* (London: Vintage, 1973), p. 265.

3. Eric Solomon, 'Argument by Anachronism: The Presence of the 1930s in *Vineland*', *The Vineland Papers: Critical Takes on Pynchon's Novel*, eds. Geoffrey Green, Donald J. Greiner and Larry McCaffery (Normal, IL: Dalkey Archive Press, 1994), p. 164.
4. Simon Frith and Howard Horne, *Art into Pop* (London and New York: Routledge, 1987), p. 2.
5. Andreas Huyssen, *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1986), ix.
6. Theodor W. Adorno, 'On Popular Music', *Essays on Music*, ed. Richard Leppert (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2002), pp. 437-469, at p. 437.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 439.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 438. Adorno, rather overstating the rigidity of the schematics, goes into specifics of standardization; 'Best known is the rule that the chorus consists of thirty-two bars and that the range is limited to one octave and one note. The general types of hits are also standardized: not only the dance types, the rigidity of whose pattern is understood, but also the "characters" such as mother songs, home songs, nonsense or "novelty" songs, pseudo-nursery rhymes, laments for a lost girl.' (*Ibid.*, p. 438)
9. 'There are a number of points to be made about Adorno's analysis [in 'On Popular Music']. First, we must acknowledge that he is writing in 1941. Popular music has changed a great deal since then. However, having said that, Adorno never thought to change his analysis following the changes that occurred in popular music up until his death in 1969. Is popular music as monolithic as he would have us believe? For example, does pseudo-individualization really explain the advent of rock'n'roll in 1956, the emergence of the Beatles in 1962, the music of the counterculture in 1965?' John Storey, *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: An Introduction* (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2012), p. 69.
10. Jacques Attali, *Noise: On the Political Economy of Music*, trans. Brian Massumi (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), p. 115.
11. Michael Hartnett, 'A High School Record for Disturbing the Peace', *Pynchon Notes*, 20-21 (1987), 115-120, at p. 115.
12. Thomas Pynchon, *V*. (London: Vintage, 1963), p. 366.
13. Thomas Pynchon, *Vineland* (London: Vintage, 1990), p. 17.

14. Samuel Thomas notes that 'typically for Pynchon, one of [*Vineland's*] wisest, most insightful observations comes from the mouth of a mohawked teenage 'Vomitone'.' Samuel Thomas, *Pynchon and the Political* (London: Routledge, 2007), p. 143.
15. Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, 'The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception', *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming (New York: Continuum, 1972), p. 127.
16. David Cowart, 'Attenuated Postmodernism: Pynchon's *Vineland*', *The Vineland Papers: Critical Takes on Pynchon's Novel*, eds. Geoffrey Green, Donald J. Greiner and Larry McCaffery (Normal, IL: Dalkey Archive Press, 1994), p. 10.
17. Horkheimer and Adorno, p. 123.
18. Attali, p. 112.
19. David Witzling, *Everybody's America: Thomas Pynchon, Race, and the Cultures of Postmodernism* (New York and London: Routledge, 2008), p. 51.
20. William M. Plater, *The Grim Phoenix: Reconstructing Thomas Pynchon* (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1978), p. 177.
21. Tony Whyton, *Jazz Icons: Heroes, Myths and the Jazz Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 16.
22. Attali, p. 118-9.
23. Whyton, p. 29.
24. Witzling, p. 31.
25. Jon Fitzgerald, 'Lennon-McCartney and the Early British Invasion', *The Beatles, Popular Music and Society: A Thousand Voices*, ed. Ian Inglis (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan, 2000), p. 53.
26. Thomas Pynchon, *The Crying of Lot 49* (London: Vintage, 1966), p. 83.
27. Miles 'sing[s] with an English accent' (*Lot 49*, p. 17), not specifically a Liverpudlian one. In American parlance, 'a phony British [or English] accent' (*Lot 49*, p. 23) tends to mean Received Pronunciation.
28. We must remember, however, that the Paranoids only pretend to be British.
29. Fitzgerald, p. 53.
30. Joseph W. Slade, *Thomas Pynchon* (New York: Warner Books, 1974), p. 154.
31. From *The Crying of Lot 49*; Mike Fallopian, Randolph Driblette, Emory Bortz, Diocletian Blobb, Stanley Koteks, and many more!

32. Tony Tanner, *Thomas Pynchon* (London and New York: Methuen, 1982), p. 60.
33. Huyssen, p. 141.
34. Thomas Hill Schaub, 'Influence and Incest: Relations between *The Crying of Lot 49* and *The Great Gatsby*', *Thomas Pynchon: Reading from the Margins*, ed. Niran Abbas (Madison and Teaneck: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2003), p. 142.
35. Huyssen tells us that '[t]heoretically, adherence to Adorno's aesthetics may blind us to the ways in which contemporary art, since the demise of classical modernism and the historical avant-garde, represents a new conjuncture which can no longer be grasped in Adornean or other modernist categories.' (Huyssen, p. 19)
36. Fredric Jameson, 'Foreword' to Jacques Attali, *Noise: On the Political Economy of Music*, trans. Brian Massumi (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), xi.
37. Hanjo Berressem, *Pynchon's Poetics: Interfacing Theory and Text* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993), p. 236.
38. Horkheimer and Adorno, p. 125.
39. Brian Longhurst, *Popular Music and Society* (Cambridge: Polity, 2007), p. 9.
40. It is only that he *seems* to disregard chord changes, not that he actually does. In fact, 'bebop solo improvisation is based on *preserving the fundamental chord structure of the song* while varying the rhythm and the particular notes being played.' (Witzling, p. 49, my italics) Again, this betrays Sphere's audience's lack of understanding of the nuances of bop.
41. Whyton, p. 84.
42. Attali, p. 115.
43. Mark Sinker, 'Concrete, so as to self-destruct: The Etiquette of Punk, its Habits, Rules, Values and Dilemmas', *Punk Rock: So What? The Cultural Legacy of Punk*, ed. Roger Sabin (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), p. 125.
44. Berger points out that 'the reference to Deleuze and Guattari extends *Vineland's* exploration of how to contend with the "Cosmic Fascist" that has contaminated sex, politics, and representation. Published in 1972, [Deleuze and Guattari's] *Anti-Oedipus*[...]responds to the perceived catastrophic breakdown of the '60s social movements'; James Berger, *After the End*:

Representations of Post-Apocalypse (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), p. 179.

45. Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (London and New York: Routledge, 1979), p. 109.

46. Tara Brabazon, *Popular Music: Topics, Trends and Trajectories* (London: Sage, 2012), p. 166.

47. In fact, he seems almost too grateful; Isaiah, although he may affect an anti-establishment 'punk' attitude, is in no way anti-capitalist. His 'business idea [is] to set up first one, then a chain of violence centres,[...]including automatic-weapon firing ranges, paramilitary fantasy adventures, gift shops and food courts.' (*Vineland*, p. 19) For Samuel Thomas, this commodification of urban decay 'represents[...]how the State is now fully capable of selling repression back to the repressed' (Thomas, p. 142).

48. Martin Short, *Crime Inc.: The Story of Organized Crime* (London: Thames, 1984), xiii.

49. Unless, of course, they are regulars on a talk show on the all-powerful Tube. And it is worth noting that at the mafia-run Cucumber Lounge, the clientele is such that 'Hey! I'm a Cop!' is not only permitted, but draws shouts of "'How true!" and "I can relate to that, rilly!"' (*Vineland*, p. 357)

50. Thomas Pynchon, *Inherent Vice* (London: Vintage, 2009), p. 332.

51. David Cowart, *Thomas Pynchon: The Art of Allusion* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1980), p. 92.

52. David Porush, 'Purring into Transcendence: Pynchon's Puncutron Machine', *The Vineland Papers: Critical Takes on Pynchon's Novel*, eds. Geoffrey Green, Donald J. Greiner and Larry McCaffery (Normal, IL: Dalkey Archive Press, 1994), p. 39.

53. Adorno, p. 460.

54. Attali, p. 6.

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