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ARTICLE

## The Pynchon Playlist: A Catalog and Its Analysis

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The Pynchon Playlist is a catalog of 927 identified historical musicians and works of music in Thomas Pynchon's work to date. It allows for a bird's-eye view on the relative importance of different genres and time periods throughout Pynchon's career and is able to answer some questions that were hitherto mainly addressed in an intuitive manner: Which novels have the highest density of musical references? Which musicians, works of music, or genres are referred to most often? Can the novels be meaningfully grouped according to the musical references?

If one were to draw two lines of influence for Pynchon's choice of musical material, it would be the technological and commercial developments on the one hand (in other words, a line that has much to do with a historically plausible depiction of the musical landscape) and what seems to be Pynchon's own predilections and musical interests (or those of his and subsequent generations), which seem to have become less 'serious' and less experimental as his career progressed.

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## Introduction

Starting as early as J. O. Tate's 'Gravity's Rainbow: The Original Soundtrack' from 1983, scholars have compiled catalogs of musicians and works of music referenced or alluded to in Thomas Pynchon's novels. Since late 2006, playlists for some of Pynchon's novels can be found on Tim Ware's PynchonWiki. However, to my knowledge, there has not been an effort to gather the 'playlists' or 'soundtracks' for all of Pynchon's work and analyze them in a statistical or empirically meaningful way.

Intending to fill this gap, I compiled such an all-encompassing playlist in the course of writing my dissertation on music in Pynchon's work. I put together every identifiable reference to non-fictional musicians and works of music in Pynchon's eight novels, one short story collection, and his uncollected articles, essays, endorsements, and liner notes published to date. It can be seen as an homage to Pynchon's own delectation in listing items, but, more importantly, the intention is to give an accurate picture of the characters' musical horizons and perhaps a glimpse into their creator's. The result is a catalog of 927 references, about 190 of which have multiple entries (the playlist is available as an Excel spreadsheet as a supplementary file to this article). The most important sources for compiling the catalog were the PynchonWiki, a number of articles from *Pynchon Notes*, particularly the Index Issue (*Pynchon Notes* 36–39), and the *Companions* to Pynchon's novels by Steven Weisenburger and J. Kerry Grant. To these I added the references and allusions I spotted myself.

Such a substantial catalog cannot be analyzed based solely on intuition, which is why I made a series of analyses and plotted graphs. Some of the questions of interest included, but were not limited to: Which musicians or works does Pynchon reference most frequently? Which genres occur most often? Which novels contain most references? Are there any notable anachronisms? Does the number of musical references increase or decrease over the course of Pynchon's career as a writer or are they dependent on the periods in which the novels take place?

One of the merits of the resulting statistical analysis is that it is able to qualify or rectify some assumptions that may have been made intuitively. For instance, at the 2015 International Pynchon Week, Justin St. Clair stated that the majority of songs in *Inherent Vice* are not associated with a particular subculture or counterculture but are mainstream tunes, a nostalgic soundtrack with most songs from the 1950s

and early 1960s. While this is true to a certain extent, my playlist reveals that, firstly, there is a good a number of tracks in *Inherent Vice* that are clearly not nostalgic and, secondly, that Pynchon always tends towards something like a musical mainstream.

Such a bird's eye view naturally has its limits, which is why it is designed to complement rather than replace close readings and historical contextualizations.<sup>1</sup> Even someone like Franco Moretti, who is credited as the founder of distant reading, cannot do without contextualizing and interpreting his quantitative findings. The Pynchon Playlist and its analysis will hopefully entice other researchers to investigate Pynchon's musical references in a similar manner with different research questions or to verify or falsify my own findings. In order to ensure intersubjectivity among other researchers, parts of this article are purely descriptive, explaining in detail what I did and the rationale behind the decisions.

Within the catalog, each reference or allusion to a singular work or musician on a book page comprises a unit. If the unit spans more than one page but is uninterrupted, it is considered one unit and hence one entry. If the unit spans more than one page but is interrupted, the entry is repeated. Most references (of which there are 760) are direct, unambiguous references made by the characters or the narrators. They include the name of the musician or the title of the work. For instance, when Puck says 'everything's coming up roses, as Ethel always sez' (*Inherent* 247), it is coded as a direct reference because it contains the song title (as well as the artist's first name), in this case Ethel Merman's recording of 'Everything's Coming Up Roses' from the Stephen Sondheim musical *Gypsy*. Some

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<sup>1</sup> Pynchon scholarship infrequently offers such readings, often with a high level of lucidity and accuracy. To only mention a few: David Cowart's *Thomas Pynchon: The Art of Allusion* and *Thomas Pynchon & The Dark Passages of History*, Carmen Pérez-Llantada Auría's and Robert Redfield and Peter L. Hays' writings on the fugue in 'Entropy,' Sean Carswell's exploration of the ukulele in Pynchon's work, John Joseph Hess's 'Music in Thomas Pynchon's *Mason & Dixon*' or some of Bénédicte Chorier-Fryd's articles. Finally, my dissertation *Pynchon's Sonic Fiction*, which I hope to publish in 2018 or 2019, also includes close readings and historical contextualizations. Furthermore, it includes three analyses omitted here for the sake of brevity: the gender distribution of musicians; the media through which the characters are exposed to music; and the 210 songs and 19 larger works of music Pynchon made up. The dissertation also includes a list of characters whose names are inspired by music (this will not be included in the published book but can be obtained directly from me) and an index of all musical instruments in Pynchon's work. For a list of musicians and music inspired by Pynchon, see my article *Pynchon on Record*, Vol. 4 on [thomaspynchon.com](http://thomaspynchon.com).

references (98) are allusions. They are more easily overlooked and require more investigation to identify (mostly as simple as entering the passage into a search engine). Such is the case, for instance, when Puck says, 'overnight, forever, et cetera et cetera, and so forth as the King of Siam always sez' (*Inherent* 248), a reference to the song 'Puzzlement' from the Rodgers/Hammerstein musical *The King and I*. When it appears evident that Pynchon is referring to a specific piece of music or an artist, the entry is coded as 'indirect' reference. Finally, there are 69 entries that are likely musical references but are seamlessly woven into the narrative, often-times without a musical context. When Jet says to Mason, 'Don't forget to-night, Charles' (*Mason* 78) and a few lines later Dixon says 'Tell me [...] what'd I say?' (79), I assume that these are allusions to Frank Sinatra's 'Don't Forget Tonight, Tomorrow' and Ray Charles's 'What'd I Say.' In this case, linking the name of Charles Mason to that of Ray Charles corroborates the validity of the deduction. Another example is Maxine linking Gabriel Ice to the 'Evil Empire' (*Bleeding* 48), a notion of Ronald Reagan's. However, I attribute it to the 1996 Rage Against the Machine album of that title because two lines down, Driscoll says: 'fodder for the machine.' Some of the deduced references can be contested and many were undoubtedly not noticed because of their clever placement. For brevity's sake, in what follows, direct references, allusions, and deductions are all termed (musical) references, unless explicitly referring to one particular category.

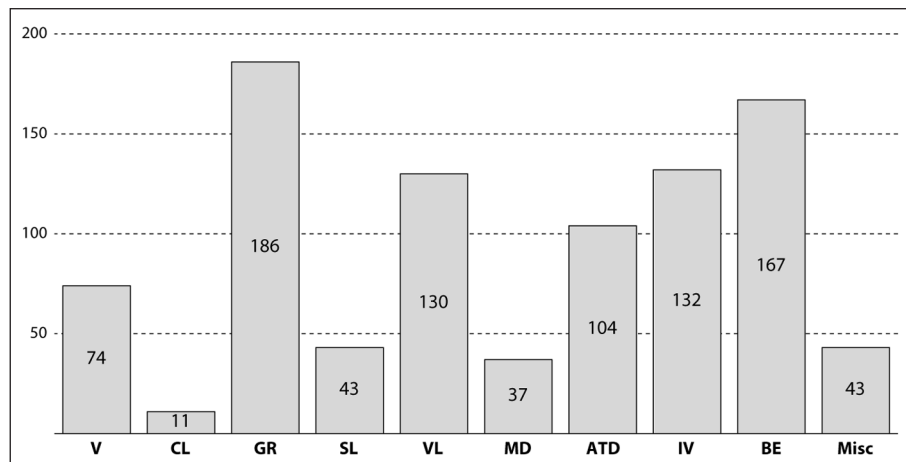
The only references I omitted in the catalog are those from the liner notes of *Spiked! The Music of Spike Jones* and Lotion's *Nobody's Cool* that directly pertain to the musicians and the songs on the respective albums. It is to be expected that liner notes include information about the artists and tracks, and the inclusion of the many musicians and songs, particularly in the long *Spike Jones* liner notes, would have distorted the overall picture.

Each entry in the Excel file of the Playlist is complemented with additional information, such as the composer, year of publication, gender of the artist, or the likely or referenced recording/performing artist, mainly with the help of websites such as Wikipedia, Discogs.com or AllMusic.com. The musicians' entries are complemented with brief biographical notes. If a reference is deemed too obscure

for the reader to make out immediately, the respective passage from the novel is included.

## Number and Frequency of References

**Figure 1** shows the number of references in each book.



**Figure 1:** Total number of musical references in each book, ordered by publication date. Henceforth: V: *V*; CL: *The Crying of Lot 49*; GR: *Gravity's Rainbow*; SL: *Slow Learner*; VL: *Vineland*; MD: *Mason & Dixon*; ATD: *Against the Day*; IV: *Inherent Vice*; BE: *Bleeding Edge*; Misc.: uncollected miscellaneous writings.

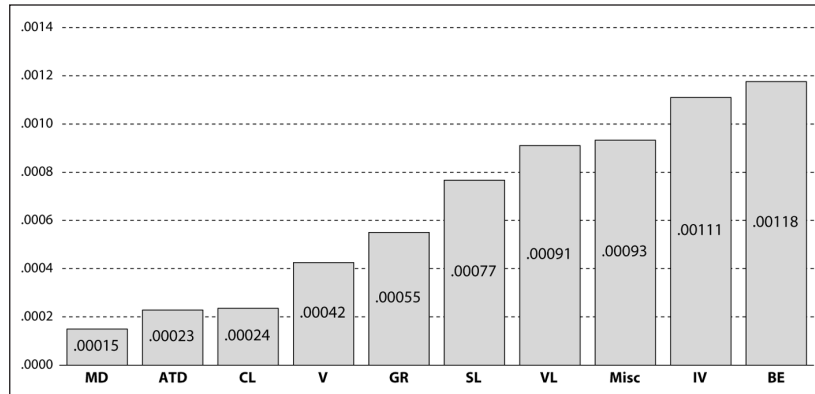
This general overview in itself does not reveal much as it does not take into account the length of each book. Since each novel has a different page layout and different editions with differing numbers of pages, it is more useful to relate the references to the number of words in each book. **Table 1** shows the number of pages of the editions I worked with and the word count. To obtain the number of

**Table 1:** Publication years, editions I worked with, and total numbers of pages and words for each book.

	V	CL	GR	SL	VL	MD	ATD	IV	BE	Misc.
<i>Year</i>	1963	1966	1973 (1984)	1984	1992	1997	2006	2009	2013	var.
<i>Edition</i>	1975	1984	2006	1984	1990	1998	2007	2009	2013	var.
<i>Pages</i>	492	152	776	174	378	773	1220	369	477	158
<i>Words</i>	174,209	46,771	338,208	54,749	141,737	259,928	446,050	118,953	142,021	46,087

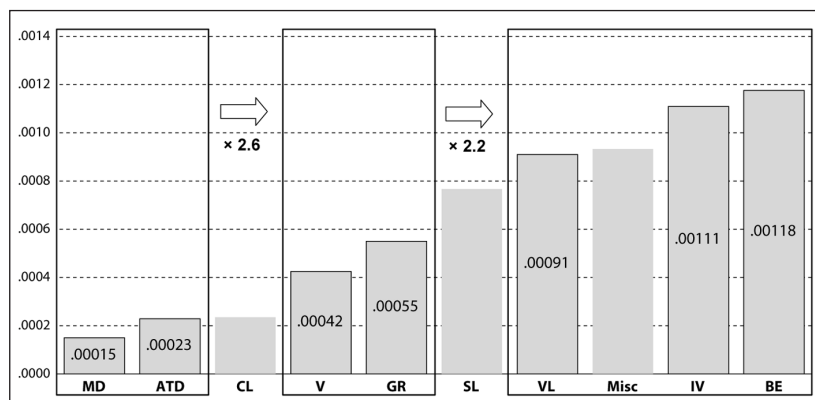
words, the texts were copied into a LibreOffice file and an InDesign file and then counted.

Dividing the number of references by the number of words in each book and arranging them in ascending order, the above diagram looks as follows (**Figure 2**).



**Figure 2:** Density of musical references (references/words), in ascending order.

Three different time periods are noticeable: the first period comprises *Mason & Dixon* (set in the second half of the eighteenth century) and *Against the Day* (between 1893 and c. 1923); the second period comprises *V*. (between 1898 and 1956) and *Gravity's Rainbow* (mainly in 1945/46); the third period comprises *Vineland* (1968 and 1984), *Inherent Vice* (1970), and *Bleeding Edge* (2001). **Figures 2** and **3** thus roughly confirms a hypothesis entertained at the outset of this investigation: the



**Figure 3:** Groups of major novels according to density of musical references (references/word).

density of references corresponds not to Pynchon's writing career but to the eras in which the novels are set, with fewer references in the eras in which music was less present in everyday life, especially before the advent of mass-distributed recorded music. In his references to historical musicians and works of music, Pynchon therefore displays an element of realism or verisimilitude, which will also be noticeable in some of the following diagrams.

*The Crying of Lot 49*, *Slow Learner*, and the miscellaneous writings do not fit the picture in **Figure 3**, and this will often be the case in other diagrams that follow. A number of explanations can be offered: the miscellaneous writings are made up of 52 texts of various literary and journalistic genres that appeared between 1952 and 2006. *Slow Learner* is made up of five short stories initially published between 1959 and 1964 and an introduction written in 1984. One of the short stories is set in the late nineteenth century (the one that later developed into chapter 3 of *V.*), the rest are likely set in the late 1950s or early 1960s. However, each of the short stories as well as all of them together do not yield enough data to compare them to the longer works. While 'Entropy,' constructed as a fugue (see Pérez-Llantada Auría [1991] or Redfield and Hays [1997]), has the highest number of entries compared to the other short stories (21) and almost twice as many as all of *The Crying of Lot 49* (11), 'The Secret Integration,' in part revolving around a black jazz musician, only has one reference, 'The Battle Hymn of the Republic.' *The Crying of Lot 49* is by far the shortest novel (a little more than a third the length of *Vineland*, *Inherent Vice*, or *Bleeding Edge*). It is conceivable that it would have received more musical references if it had somehow been developed into a novel the length of the aforementioned three. For the reasons outlined, *Slow Learner*, *The Crying of Lot 49*, and the miscellaneous writings will not be much commented upon in what follows.

Besides the temporal pattern, it also appears that the density of musical references is higher when large portions of the plot are set in or around major urban centers, Los Angeles in *Inherent Vice* and New York City in *Bleeding Edge*. *Vineland* may rank lower because the locations of the plot are geographically more scattered. In other words, while *Gravity's Rainbow* and parts of *V.* are already set in a time of mass distribution of recorded music—albeit much less pronounced than in the other



novels—, the fact that the plot takes place in large parts outside the US and outside the main urban centers may further explain a lower density of musical references.

When focusing solely on *Vineland*, *Inherent Vice*, and *Bleeding Edge*, it seems that the general trend of the correlation of chronology and density of references is reversed. Without trying to explain this away, some explanations can be offered. *Vineland* may rank lower than the other two because the central medium of the novel is TV and, to a lesser degree, film. It is therefore probable that Pynchon was more attuned to TV and film references rather than musical ones. With reference to *Inherent Vice's* ruminations on headphones and communal music reception (175–76), one could also claim that the proliferation of solitary listening devices, first the Walkman (introduced in 1979) and then MP3 players, have led to a different way of consuming music. The musical experience is less communal, hence the characters have fewer opportunities to talk about music or to sing along together.

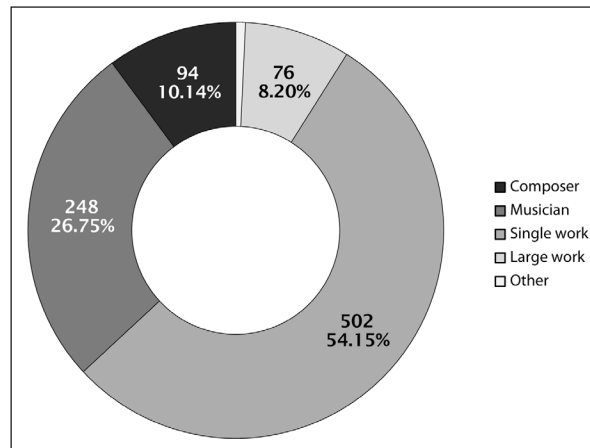
What remains, then, are three groups: *Mason & Dixon* and *Against the Day* before the mass distribution of music and set in various parts of the world; *V.* and *Gravity's Rainbow* in a transition period and also set in several locations; and *Vineland*, *Inherent Vice*, and *Bleeding Edge* after the advent of a full-scale music industry, mainly set in or around large urban centers. The average density of musical references for each group is about 2.2–2.6 times higher than that of the previous one.

### Types of References

The references can be divided into references to composers, musicians, musical works comprising multiple pieces such as operas or albums ('larger work'), and single musical pieces such as songs or arias. The category 'composer' was used both for composers of music and librettists, and it was applied if the person is mainly recognized as a composer and not as a performer. The category 'musician' was applied to singers, instrumentalists, conductors, bands, and orchestras. A passage such as 'Evan [...] began to sing Deh, vieni alla finestra from Don Giovanni' (*V.* 158) is a reference both to the aria and to the opera. For the purposes of this study, the more specific reference overrides the more general one (single piece > larger work > composer/musician). Seven entries from *Against the Day* were categorized as 'other,' six of which because, in the context, they appear as ethno-musicologists even though some of them are

mainly recognized as composers: Béla Bartók, Zoltán Kodály, Joseph Canteloube, Ralph Vaughan Williams, Eugénie Lineff, and Hjalmar Thuren (1057).

The total number of references for all of Pynchon's work is shown in **Figure 4**.



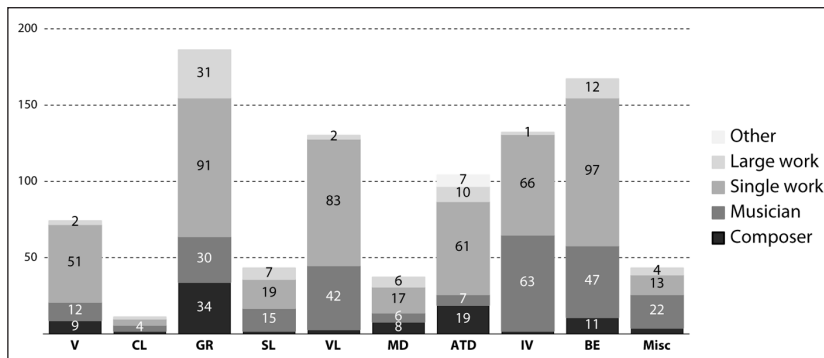
**Figure 4:** Total number of references to composers, musicians, and works of music across all of Pynchon's work.

The large number of references to single musical pieces (mostly songs) relative to the other categories is partly owed to my decision that the most specific attribute of a unit determine the overall category of the entry. If this was changed to include multiple entries for the same unit, the absolute number of single work references would remain the same but the number of composers, musicians, and larger works would rise, albeit not to the level of the song entries. The same is true if composers and musicians were grouped together. Only in *Inherent Vice* and *The Crying of Lot 49* do the musicians and composers taken together make up half or more than half of the references.

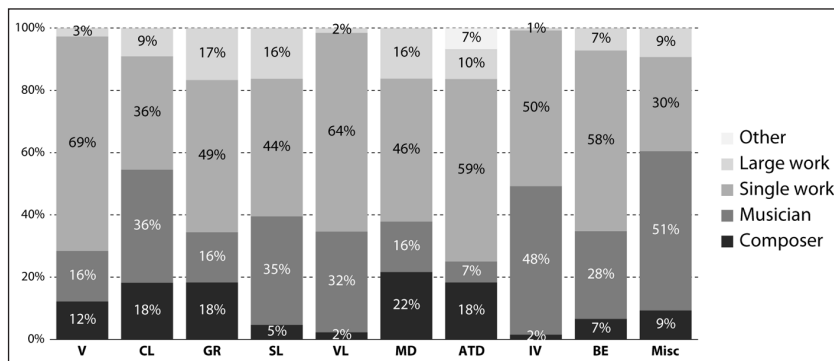
Fifty-two songs are not explicit references or allusions but more obscurely woven into the narrative. They had to be deduced from the context or certain key words, and it is possible that some of them are merely products of fancy or chance due to what I perceived to be strong resonances. If every single one of those references were contested as overinterpreted and inadmissible by another researcher, the number of songs would drop to 450. Nevertheless, even if the decision to have the most specific attribute override the others skewed the overall picture or if my deductions were too far-fetched, the single music piece remains the most important musical reference for

Pynchon as it allows him to reference the lyrics or the title, explicitly or implicitly, and have them contribute to or comment on the scene or plot or foreshadow what is to happen.<sup>2</sup> The high number of single works of music is also in line with the music industry's development after the 1940s when the 45 rpm single, the DJ, and the jukebox began to make an impression on popular culture, up to today when songs can be downloaded and purchased in online stores. The single song also appears to be more important for mass markets and radio airplay than the album.

The distribution of the different categories of references is shown in **Figures 5** and **6**.



**Figure 5:** Type of reference (absolute) per book, N = 927.



**Figure 6:** Type of reference (relative) per book.

<sup>2</sup> Such is the case, for instance, with the references to Shirley Temple on the orgy boat Anubis in *Gravity's Rainbow*. By way of Graham Greene's criticism of Temple's child movies and the male pedophile gaze they invite, Pynchon comments on the abuse of the child Bianca. In fact, many of the Temple references throughout Pynchon's work are somehow linked to child abuse and pedophilia.

The California novels (*Inherent Vice*, *The Crying of Lot 49*, *Vineland*) have the highest relative percentages of references to musicians, closely followed by *Bleeding Edge*, which may be considered an honorary California novel: Scott McClintock and John Miller (2014) made a case for a distinct group of California novels and characterize the affinities between *The Crying of Lot 49*, *Vineland*, and *Inherent Vice* as follows: 'In addition to their setting [...], [they] are the shortest of his novels; their plots, generally organized around a single protagonist, tend to be more linear [...]; they all invoke a genre often associated with Southern California, the detective story; and two of them center largely on female characters' (1). After the publication of *Bleeding Edge*, they added the following footnote: 'If the qualities recited in that sentence are taken as criteria, *Bleeding Edge* would qualify as the most typically "Californian" of Pynchon's work to date, putting aside the fact that it is set almost entirely in New York City and its immediate environs' (14).

*Inherent Vice* has almost as many musician references (63) as song references (66), and the musician references would be significantly higher without my decision to use the most specific attribute to determine the category. *Vineland*, *Inherent Vice*, and *Bleeding Edge* also have almost negligible numbers of composer references. This may be owed to the characters' musical preferences because these three novels revolve around a small number of protagonists. In *Gravity's Rainbow*, for instance, Pynchon was able to distribute the musical preferences among a much higher number of characters. The five novels that are set in an era before the music industry has grown to its current cultural significance have the highest relative percentages of composers and the lowest relative percentages of musicians. There are two ready explanations for this: On the one hand, composers have long had a medium to preserve their art—sheet music—, whereas performers either rely on live performance or on a medium that can record sound waves to further their recognition beyond hearsay. We only know from books what the admired singers and musicians of the past may have sounded like to the ears of the contemporary commentator or listener. On the other hand, much of the pop music industry's money is made with the star system where fame and recognition is a function of the decision—backed with the necessary financial resources—to boost a musician (mostly a singer) that displays certain

qualities, among them being photo- and telegenic, having a good stage presence, and having an appeal, mostly of the sexual kind, to the target audience.

When adjusted to the number of references per word (**Figure 6**), *Vineland*, *Inherent Vice*, and *Bleeding Edge* have by far the highest numbers of song references and the lowest numbers of composer references. *Inherent Vice*'s first composer entry is Charles-Louis Hanon (who was also a music pedagogue): 'Spotted Dick's keyboard player Smedley [is] doing Hanon exercises on his Farfisa, a little Combo Compact model he had obtained on the advice of Rick Wright of Pink Floyd' (128–29). The second one is Vivaldi, probably of the Muzak kind (like in the opening lines of *The Crying of Lot 49* except for the kazoos), playing on the sound system of a restaurant (276). While the first composer entry is immediately linked to a surf band and a psychedelic rock band, the second one does not at all engage with the music. *Vineland* has one reference to Rossini, the other two are to popular music composers Andrew Lloyd Webber (mentioned twice in *Bleeding Edge*) and Bernard Herrmann. This further contributes to the kinship the reader feels those three novels have: they are about the same length and are largely set in an urban America after 1968; *Inherent Vice* and *Bleeding Edge* are both a detective story; and *Vineland* and *Inherent Vice* both comment on the decline of the late 1960s' counterculture.

There are some surprises that countered my expectations. *V.* only has two references to larger works: the Puccini operas *Madama Butterfly* and *Manon Lescaut*. Intuitively, I would have expected more larger works, possibly because of the reimagination in chapter 14 of Igor Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*. As it turned out, all the other classical references were either composers or arias/movements/themes/overtures and thus coded as 'single works.' The *Manon Lescaut* reference also appears twice in 'Under the Rose.' Reading both the short story and chapter three of *V.* may have reinforced the false impression that there would be more opera references as their overlaps possibly fused the two texts into one in my memory. Finally, the reader experiences references to single works differently in *V.* than in the other novels because *V.* is the only novel where titles of songs are not set in quotation marks and are therefore more easily overlooked. The unexpectedly low number of opera references will be corroborated further below when discussing genre, which for *V.* only reveals five opera entries.

Another interesting finding is that *Gravity's Rainbow* and *Mason & Dixon*, among Pynchon's most accomplished works, have almost identical percentages and the most evenly distributed references between the different categories despite being very different in absolute terms.

### **Genre distribution**

One of the more challenging tasks was that of assigning a particular genre to every artist, composer, and work of music. Many attempts have been made to classify music according to genres or styles, but since music is in constant evolution, evaluation, and reevaluation, and since one style develops out of another one or several others, there is ultimately no model that is able to provide clear-cut demarcation lines. In the end, unless one works with countless nested subcategories, one will never succeed in creating an intersubjectively reliable model. For the purposes of this study, I broadly distinguish between the three most encompassing genres popular music, classical music, jazz, and the two compound categories military/patriotic, and traditional/folk/world/religious.

In the context of this analysis of Pynchon's oeuvre, 'classical music' designates 'serious' or 'high' European music starting with Baroque (around 1600 A.D.), often orchestral or chamber music, and ending with Karlheinz Stockhausen. This also includes music that is less 'serious,' such as opera buffa and music that is less tonal, such as Webern. To identify 'pop' music, I use some positive criteria: 'low' or 'popular' Western (generally American or European) music, from the late nineteenth century (circa Tin Pan Alley) onward, which strongly relies on easily identifiable repetitive structures, often eight or twelve bars, and often has a chorus which is repeated several times. It is mostly music that revolves around a vocal melody line. To a large extent, its popularity was made possible through technologies of mass reproduction, from sheet music to sound recording, and it often has a broad appeal. This description makes it clear that, musically speaking, an intuitively easy category such as pop music cannot always be distinguished from other genres such as jazz, blues, or some folk and world music. Generally, I coded intuitively, but if in doubt, reliable criteria to distinguish the ambiguous references between pop and jazz were syncopation,

phrasing, and, to a lesser degree, instrumentation specific to many forms of jazz. Since Pynchon often references showtunes and Broadway musicals, I wanted to be able to designate this subcategory as well. Considering that opera is to classical music what musicals are to pop, I introduced a subcategory for popular music called 'musicals.' 'Jazz' music designates the trajectory of jazz, starting with ragtime and extending all the way to modern and free jazz. I include blues and early soul music in the jazz category as they are musically related and grew out of an African-American socio-economic context. While most jazz references are unambiguous, there are some that could also be labeled pop. Some popular and showcase tunes have become jazz standards; some pop singers, for instance the oft-mentioned Frank Sinatra, also had a career as a jazz singer and some of his recordings have become part of the standard big band repertoire. To distinguish these, I rely on context and on the schemes introduced for pop music.

The other prominent genres in Pynchon's work, although with far fewer counts, are patriotic and military-related songs and marches (e. g. the 'Horst-Wessel-Lied,' Sousa's 'The Stars and Stripes Forever,' and national anthems); a few instances of 'world' music (e. g. Carmen Miranda, the Karakaş Efendi, or the ethno-musicologists of *Against the Day*); some well-known 'traditional' material (e. g. 'For He's a Jolly Good Fellow,' 'O Tempora, O Mores,' or Stephen Foster) and some 'religious' or 'sacred' music (e. g. 'Lead Me Lord,' 'Amazing Grace,' or S. Cosma of Jerusalem).<sup>3</sup> In the analysis below, patriotic/military was left as a single category and world, traditional, folk, and religious were grouped together.<sup>4</sup>

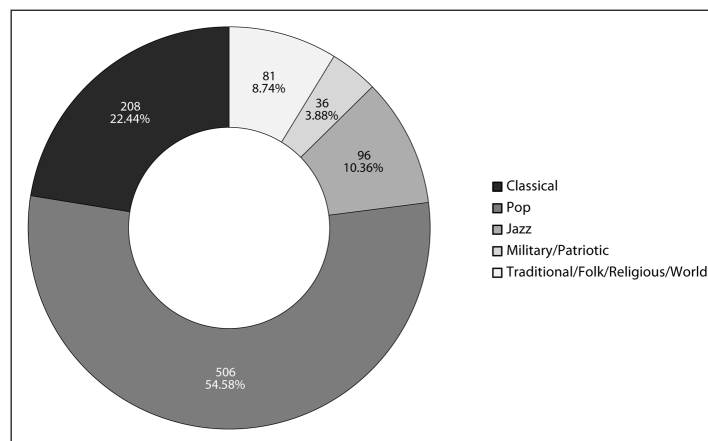
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<sup>3</sup> Bach was always categorized as 'classical' even though he wrote a lot of sacred music. Christmas tunes (eight in total) were categorized as 'religious' only if their subject matter was clearly religious: 'Silent Night' was categorized as religious; 'The Twelve Days of Christmas' as traditional; and 'Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer' as pop.

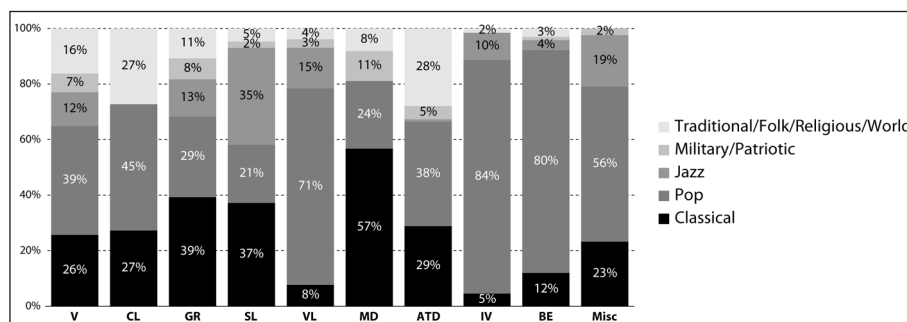
<sup>4</sup> 'Folk' in this context does not designate the 1960s-onward folk music of Bob Dylan, Richard Fariña, and others that became popular in an era of mass markets (Pynchon was not very fond of this music) but the socially conscious (or even socialist) folk music and labor songs from the nineteenth and early twentieth century, which I felt did not belong in the category 'pop' music. The most current song that received this designation is Woody Guthrie's 'This Land Is Your Land' from 1944.

Some of the subcategories that I initially created were surf, rap, folk music, labor songs, Christmas carols, tango, instrumental film music, and jingles/commercials. Due to the relatively low number of entries, these categories did not yield much of interest and that project was abandoned.

As **Figure 7** shows, pop music accounts for 54.6%, classical music for 22.5%, jazz for 10.3%, traditional/folk/world/religious for 8.8%, and military/patriotic for 3.9%. Although pop music has the highest number of references, partly due to the decision to make it inclusive of many sub-genres, many of Pynchon’s more sustained ruminations on the form and history of music are found in the categories classical and jazz. **Figure 8** shows that the average percentages across all of Pynchon’s writings deviate greatly from the distribution in the individual books.



**Figure 7:** Total references by genre (absolute and relative).



**Figure 8:** Distribution of genres for each book.



Except for *Vineland*, *Inherent Vice*, and *Bleeding Edge*, which are roughly in the same range in their distribution of genres (and have by far the highest percentages of pop music), each book is quite unique. Even *V.* and *Gravity's Rainbow* are different in that their share of popular music and classical music is—very roughly speaking—inverted. Still, the pattern observed above also holds true here: the larger, more serious works (*V.*, *Gravity's Rainbow*, *Mason & Dixon*, and *Against the Day*) can be distinguished from the shorter, more light-footed ones (*Vineland*, *Inherent Vice*, and *Bleeding Edge*) by the distribution of genres. The former have more classical and fewer pop music references, and the distribution between the genres is more even.

At an earlier stage of this project, I distinguished classical music from post-tonal or avant-garde music (what could also be termed modernist or high modernist), for instance Webern, Schoenberg, and Stockhausen. However, those entries only made up 1.6% of all entries. Then I noticed that after *Gravity's Rainbow* in 1973, Pynchon's narrators and characters seem to have lost interest in such music (Stravinsky and Schoenberg are only mentioned again in the Spike Jones liner notes). Various explanations may be offered. It is possible that Pynchon himself lost interest in this type of music after his early years or felt that the groundbreaking paradigms (the move to atonality of the early 20th century and then the inclusion of all sounds and noises as musical material in a Cagean turn) were musically or philosophically exhausted. To quote Alain Badiou:

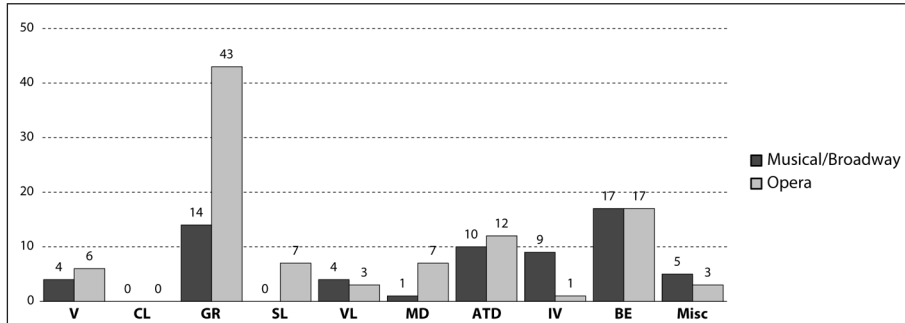
[T]owards the end of the 1970s, [serial music's] 'corporeal' capacities, those that could inscribe themselves in the dimension of the work, were more and more limited. One could no longer really find 'interesting' deployments, significant mutations, local completions. Thus an infinite subject comes to its finishing [finition]. (2007: 30)

In other words, until, say, the 1960s, an intellectually versed person might disregard pop culture but feel that the post-tonal music trajectory was something one would have to at least be aware of; after the 1960s, these roles seemed to have become reversed.

Another explanation is that the novels published after *Gravity's Rainbow* are either set before the atonal turn (or just around that time, in the case of the ending of *Against the Day*) or that the predominance of pop music and the medium TV (with its effect on the viewers as discussed in *Vineland*) would make it unlikely that the characters display an avid interest in avant-garde music. And again, the lower number of central characters in *Vineland*, *Inherent Vice*, and *Bleeding Edge* gave Pynchon fewer opportunities to distribute musical tastes among different characters.

While the share of classical music is lowest in *Vineland* and *Inherent Vice*, it rose somewhat in *Bleeding Edge*, in part thanks to Maxine Tarnow's parents' interest in opera, which they were able to convey to their grandchildren Ziggy and Otis. It is indicative for the high share of pop music, however, that in a discussion accounting for one third of the novel's classical references, Otis maintains that the greatest performance of 'Nessun dorma' from *Turandot* is that of Aretha Franklin while his grandmother Elaine opines for that of actress Deanna Durbin in *His Butler's Sister* (1943) (97–98). The reason *Against the Day* has such a high percentage of the compound category traditional/folk/world/religious is partially because its locations are distributed around the world (often in rural areas) and partially because there are more folk and labor songs and traditional tunes in *Against the Day* because of its anarchist and miner characters. *Gravity's Rainbow* and *Mason & Dixon* have more patriotic/military songs than the other novels. In the case of the former, it is because it is set around World War II, in the case of the latter because military music at the time was a more important part of the musical landscape. Although the absolute figure for *Mason & Dixon* is relatively low (only six, two of which were deduced and not directly referenced), the discussions around bagpipes as a means of sonic warfare, the long discussion around the American national anthem, and the inclusion of some military or patriotic songs written by Pynchon lend further support to this interpretation.

Almost half of the 208 classical references are opera references (99), whereas only about an eighth of the 506 popular music references are musical/Broadway



**Figure 9:** Number of opera vs. Broadway/musicals references.

references (59, plus five Broadway references coded as 'jazz'). **Figure 9** shows the number of opera and musical references.

What is particularly interesting about these two sub-genres is that—except for *The Crying of Lot 49* and *Slow Learner*—Pynchon has references to these two types of stage productions in every single book as well as in his miscellaneous writings. Even in *Mason & Dixon* he sneaks in a brief allusion to 'Singin' in the Rain,' and in *Inherent Vice*, Doc orders Eel Trovatore. The largest number of references to opera is in *Gravity's Rainbow* with its many references to Wagner, Rossini, Verdi, Puccini, and others. The largest number of references to musicals is in *Bleeding Edge*, the novel that is mainly set in New York City. *Against the Day* only has five references to musicals but there are a number of fictional operettas or early forms of musicals, particularly when the plot is set in New York City. Productions with a narrative—opera, operetta, musical, but also film—may be particularly useful for Pynchon as alluding to them also allows for alluding to their plots, dramas, and conflicts and the light they cast on Pynchon's own stories. Particularly in *V* and *Gravity's Rainbow*, as David Cowart has demonstrated, many of the Puccini and Wagner references comment on or foreshadow the novel's plot: 'Porpentine dies [...] at the Cairo Opera House, where *Manon Lescaut* is playing. Porpentine is destroyed, like Des Grieux in the opera, by misguided chivalry' (1980: 69).

If classical music and opera are part of the 'high' art discourse, then pop music and musicals are part of the 'low' art discourse. By continuously referencing two different types of stage productions that are nearly identical in their outward and visible form, Pynchon as a postmodern writer undermines this high/low distinction.

With the exception of deriding Andrew Lloyd Webber and the occasional crooner, virtually no musician or form of music is portrayed or referenced in a condescending manner, no matter how 'high' or 'low.' The undercurrent seems to be that it can all be appreciated for what it is and for the joy it brings its audience.

There are hardly any references to musicals that hit the stage after the mid-1970s when the genre seemed to enjoy a revival following the successes of Englishman Webber. This is partly due to the fact that most novels take place before that time. However, the derisive treatment of Webber also allows for other explanations: one, Pynchon does not think the newer musicals are as exciting as the more classic Broadway musicals and that they are less subtle in driving home their message; two, it was the classic Broadway musicals, in Pynchon's estimation, that were a cultural force with many of the tunes becoming jazz standards, while the more current musicals, although widely popular, did not have a reach far beyond the stage performance and the occasional film adaptation.

Throughout Pynchon's work, certain themes, objects, and characters recur as intratextual links between his novels. Such is the case with toilets, light bulbs, ukuleles, or drugs, to name only a few. Sometimes, these links indicate a historical or social continuity between the novels and their themes and concerns, sometimes they allow the writer to give a new twist to something developed or hinted at before, and sometimes they merely appear as tongue-in-cheek resonances placed for the delectation of the readers who can spot them. Many of these recurring themes, objects, and characters were present already in his first two novels, and perhaps part of the insistence on referencing both operas and musicals throughout his work—often with recurring composers and librettists—simply has to do with Pynchon's love for intratextual references between his novels. However, he also seems to imply that the great themes of literature in a broad sense—novels, operas, or musicals—, the great themes of humanity perhaps, namely love and death, remain the same, from Orpheus to Broadway.

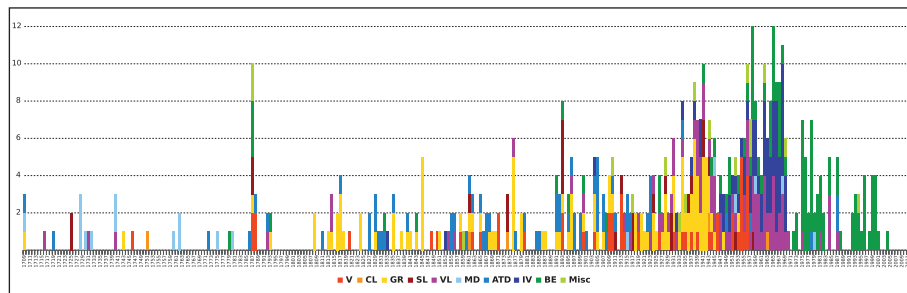
### **Temporal distribution**

Partially overlapping with the genre considerations are the publication years. Years were only assigned to works of music and not to composers or musicians. I leave it to future researchers to catalog the active years of composers and musicians.

Where sources only indicate an approximate time of publication or creation (such as ‘1890s’), I calculated a fictional average (1895).

The earliest publication years of the referenced works of music are 1261 (‘O Salutaris Hostia’ by St. Thomas Aquinas) and the fourteenth-century ‘In dulci jubilo’ by Heinrich von Seuse, followed by three works from the seventeenth century. The most recent ones are Detsl’s ‘Ulitchnyi Boyets’ from 2001 (*Bleeding* 141) and 50 Cent’s ‘Piggy Bank’ (282), although the latter is anachronistic and only inferred from the context of Darren’s rap song (‘Tryin to do Tupac and Biggie thangs/with red velvet Chairman Mao piggy banks’). There is one allusion from 2012, the year before *Bleeding Edge* was published, that may not have been intended but which I decided to include for the beauty of multiple resonances: ‘Chalk Outline’ by Three Days Grace.<sup>5</sup>

**Figure 10** shows the temporal distribution of the 567 datable works of music. This distribution does not come as a surprise. Firstly, Pynchon is writing in the twentieth century and the musical references closer to his time can be expected to be of greater importance and familiarity to the author. Secondly, the distribution also mirrors the periods in which the novels take place, with most novels and episodes



**Figure 10:** All datable musical references on a timeline (for better legibility, ten references before 1709 were omitted).

<sup>5</sup> Since the song ‘Chalk Outline’ reached one-digit positions on a number of Billboard charts, it is possible that Pynchon was aware of it. Chalk marks are present at the scene where Lester was killed (*Bleeding* 206) and later, when Maxine is thinking about him, the reader finds the words ‘the dead can’t speak’ (358), which corresponds to a line of the song. I decided to include this reference since the album containing the song is entitled *Transit of Venus*, so there is a likelihood that this was intentionally inserted by Pynchon.

being set in the twentieth century. Whether the eighteenth (*Mason & Dixon*) or the nineteenth century (parts of *V.* and *Against the Day*) is more prominent in terms of the narratives is open for discussion. The distribution may also mirror the availability of mass-produced music in households, first as sheet music, then additionally as recorded music, paralleled by the availability of musical instruments and access to music education.

Broken down to decades, the 1960s have the highest number of entries, followed by the 1950s, the 1940s, and the 1930s. The most frequent years are shown in **Table 2**.

**Table 2:** Most frequent years of origin of the works of music.

Year	Entries	Year	Entries
1965	13	1893	8
1958	11	1934	8
1968	11	1940	8
1787	10	1959	8
1941	10	1964	8
1956	10	1939	7
1962	10	1943	7
1938	9	1957	7
1966	9	1975	7
1967	9	1978	7

Pynchon managed to have at least one reference for every single year between 1913 and 1970. The major gaps in the twentieth century are in the 1980s (four years missing), 1990s and 1900s (three years each), and 1970s (two years).

1965 is the most frequent year. Its references are distributed almost equally between *Vineland*, *Inherent Vice*, and *Bleeding Edge*. Although no entry is repeated, as is the case with many other high-ranking years, six entries refer to music from TV or film. At first, it may not be unexpected to see 1968, the eponymous year of a countercultural generation, appear near the top of the list. However, the actual references show a different picture. All 1968 references are part of nostalgic mainstream culture, except for two Tiny Tim songs (whose unique strangeness perhaps allows teenagers, their parents, and their grandparents to enjoy them); Iron Butterfly's

'In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida,' which, depending on the recording, reaches up to seventeen minutes in length; and the Bonzo Dog Band's recording of 'Bang Bang (My Baby Shot Me Down).' Much of the 'hippie' or psychedelic music (Jimi Hendrix, The Doors, The Rolling Stones, The Byrds, Jefferson Airplane, Pink Floyd, Procol Harum) is listed in 1967 and 1966. This may indicate that the summer of love of 1967 (and its Monterey Pop Festival) was a turning point after which television, the commercial music industry, and petit-bourgeois sentiments started to co-opt and reterritorialize the counter-cultural energies.

The prominence of 1958 is accounted for by four entries for 'Volare' and two entries for 'The Chipmunk Song,' together making up more than half of that year's entries. The high number of entries for 1787 is owed to Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, the musical work most frequently referenced or alluded to by Pynchon (nine entries), and Mozart's 'Ein musikalischer Spass,' K. 522, from the Spike Jones liner notes (one entry).

1893, the starting point of *Against the Day*, is also the year when Puccini's opera *Manon Lescaut* (with seven entries the runner-up of musical works) premiered. The other 1893 reference is a medley of Tchaikovsky's *Pathétique* (Symphony No. 6 in B minor, Op. 74) (*Gravity* 716). *Against the Day* itself, however, does not contain a single reference to music published in 1893.

To have a closer look at the books, relate them to one another as well as to the time of narration (including analepses), one would ideally catalog every single item according to its context and draw up a diagram ranging from the thirteenth century to 2012 to locate every musical entry (and, to top it off, the active time in the referenced composers' and musicians' lives). This, however, is beyond the scope of this investigation.

**Figure 10** shows—at this point not unexpectedly—that Pynchon and his narrators and characters have a broad knowledge of music, spanning from classical works to contemporary pop music. I expected that the publication years of the entries would concentrate somewhere shortly before the time of the plot. However, except in the case of *Inherent Vice* and, to a lesser degree *V.* and *Gravity's Rainbow*, this

does not seem to be the case. The majority of entries in *Inherent Vice* start with Doc Sportello's adolescence. By 1970, when he turns thirty, the music he grew up with has transitioned into the music just before the time of the narration, which may account for a pronounced peak (between 1958 and 1969), which cannot be observed in any of the other novels except possibly for *Vineland* (of course, it also coincides with Pynchon's own youth as he is Doc's senior by only three years) and the approximate age of the Whole Sick Crew and Herbert Stencil in *V*. In the case of *Bleeding Edge*, the entries peak, broadly speaking, between 1964 and 1981, which is probably the time between Maxine Tarnow's birth and the end of her adolescence (assuming she was born sometime between 1960 and 1965). Another less pronounced peak is the five years leading up to 2001. In *Gravity's Rainbow*, there is also a greater number of entries between Tyrone Slothrop's birth (c. 1920) and early twenties but it is less visible than in *Inherent Vice*, *Vineland*, and *Bleeding Edge* with their respective protagonists. What this may indicate is either a surge in music, likely pop, worth listening to in the 1960s (after the somewhat bland 1950s), that the baby boomers are less erudite than previous generations when it comes to music, or that a shift has taken place toward taking pop music seriously. As has been observed before, it may also have to do with the smaller number of main characters through which Pynchon focalizes the story. Or, finally, it could be the more encompassing media environment focusing on contemporary popular music that sets the musical tone of these novels (discotheque [1947], LP [1948], 45 rpm single [1949], color TV [1954], surge in FM radio [end of 1950s], Musicassette [1962], first DJ mixers [1960s], color TV in majority of households [1965]). One could argue that it does not suffice to discuss only the protagonists since Pynchon's novels are populated with a great number of characters, but it turns out that many of the supporting characters are within the same age bracket as the protagonists: the members of the Whole Sick Crew, except for Stencil, appear to be more or less within the same age bracket; the same goes for Maxine Tarnow's, Doc Sportello's, and Zoyd Wheeler's friends and for a number of characters around Tyrone Slothrop. The antagonists tend to be slightly older but they show little if any inclination toward music.



## Anachronisms

There are some anachronisms in these diagrams. Many of them are owed to deductions the reader may or may not make from certain allusions cleverly planted by Pynchon. This is particularly visible in *Mason & Dixon*, for instance the 'Moses supposes' line from *Singin' in the Rain* (456), Frank Sinatra's 'Don't Forget Tonight, Tomorrow' (78), Ray Charles's 'What'd I Say' (79), The Bellami Brother's 'You Ain't Just Whistlin' Dixie' (441), and Tammy Wynette's 'Stand by Your Man' (621). Since *Mason & Dixon* dates back the farthest, it lends itself most to these anachronistic games. These allusions are part of dialogues and not embedded in a musical context, and it appears that Pynchon is just having fun with them. The full lyrics of the songs alluded to may also comment on the plot but this usually remains at a superficial and local level. The anachronisms do not appear to comment on the story or its themes as a whole and they do not seem to comment on, for instance, the history of music. There is one instance, as far as I can tell the only one in Pynchon's work, where the anachronism is openly revealed. In a dream, Mason is visited by Death: "Well Hullo, Death, what's that you're whistling?" – "Oo, little Ditters von Dittersdorf, nothing you'd recognize, hasn't happen'd yet, not even sure you'll live till it's perform'd anywhere,— have to check the 'Folio as to that, get back to you?'" (750). Since Dittersdorf (1739–1799) was already an active composer then and 'scraps' of his music are played earlier on in the novel (104), the reader would not recognize the anachronism if Pynchon had not hinted at it.

Occasionally, musical references help to place the chronology of the events, especially in the more convoluted plots. Such is the case, for instance, when in *Against the Day* Umeki says that, 'There is a new Puccini opera. [...] Butterfly' (*Against* 636). *Madama Butterfly* was first performed in 1904 and came to the United States in 1906, which gives the reader temporal orientation. Since the reader can expect Pynchon to be very exact and informed about his references, an anachronism can be disorienting. Such an inconsistency can be frustrating when trying to keep track of the chronology but it may also open the field for novel interpretations: history may be repeating itself while its lines of conflict remain the same; an early bootleg version—perhaps a fictional one—of which only the author has knowledge was in

circulation; the reader should question long-held assumptions about storytelling and historiography; the author is making an attempt to rewrite history; the source the author consulted is in conflict with that of the reader; the reference in that exact place was too tempting to resist or a private joke; it is a reminder that the novel is, in Linda Hutcheon's terms, a work of historiographic metafiction, and not everything dressed up as historical fact is to be taken as a "page right out of history," as the Flintstones might say' (*Inherent* 235). In spite of all these explanations, it may also be that, at times, Pynchon was simply 'too lazy to find out' (*Learner* 16).

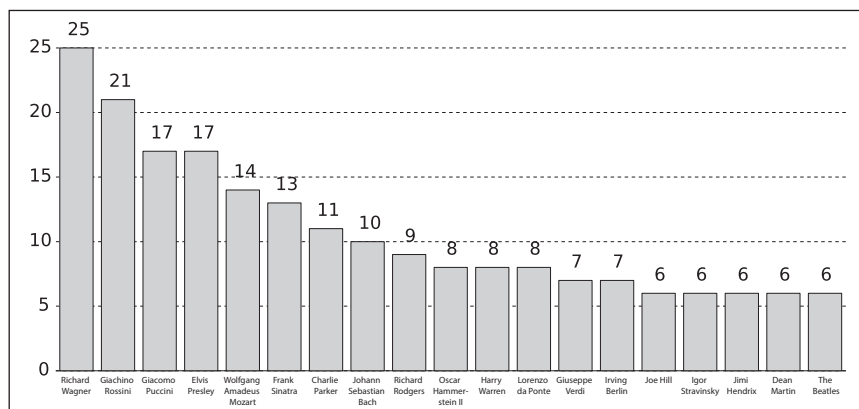
Apart from the entries in the Playlist that were inferred from context, there are a number of anachronisms that Pynchon either did not get right (or maybe his sources differed from mine) or that he placed fully knowing that they did not belong in those times. In *Mason & Dixon*, George Washington's slave Gershom sings "Havah Nagilah," a merry Jewish Air, whilst clicking together a pair of Spoons in Syncopation' (285), likely a sign of the brother- and sisterhood of Preterites around the world. The Hebrew folk song only originated in the 1910s or 1920s. In *Vineland*, 'on some stereo, Zoyd Wheeler could hear Little Charlie and the Nightcats singing "TV Crazy"' (43). Although the band was already formed in 1976, it is unlikely that Zoyd could hear a recording of them in 1984, except as a bootleg, since their first album (containing 'T.V. Crazy') was issued in 1987.

In 1893 or thereabouts, Lew Basnight attends an anarchist meeting where the 'company began to sing, from the *Workers' Own Songbook*, though mostly without the aid of the text, choral selections including Hubert Parry's recent setting of Blake's "Jerusalem," taken not unreasonably as a great anticapitalist anthem disguised as a choir piece' (*Against* 55). Although William Blake published his poem around 1808, it was only in 1916 that Hubert Parry set it to music. It may be that the 'recent setting' is from the narrator's viewpoint but that also seems unlikely as the story extends to about 1923, which would stretch the notion of 'recent' to some extent. Besides, it would not explain why the anarchists would sing the anthem more than twenty years before it was created. The reference to 'Ausgerechnet Bananen' (803) also seems misplaced as the plot at this point is somewhere around 1905–07 and the tune originated c. 1922. Maybe Pynchon's fondness of bananas made this insertion irresistible.

*Against the Day* is the novel that appears to have more chronological inconsistencies than the other ones, especially around 1900/1903, as various contributors to the PynchonWiki have noticed and unsuccessfully tried to make sense of. Readers of *Gravity's Rainbow* are already familiar with the reversal of cause and effect. Along the same lines, the most readily available explanation for the anachronisms in *Against the Day*—besides simply being mistakes or flights of fancy—is that this is the novel that introduces time travel in various forms, technological and otherwise, hence a song could somehow have hailed from the future.

### Most frequent references

The Playlist (including complementary information) was run through the Linguist extension for LibreOffice and through wordcounter.net for a word frequency count. The most frequent words were then matched up manually with the Playlist again to ensure that no mistakes have been made (for instance multiple entries for different people with the same last name). The most frequently referenced composers and musicians are shown in **Figure 11**.



**Figure 11:** Most frequently referenced composers and musicians.

Wagner, Rossini, and Puccini do not come entirely as a surprise.<sup>6</sup> Elvis Presley, however, is more easily overlooked. This may be because there are no musicological

<sup>6</sup> One Puccini reference is from a paragraph in a review copy of *Bleeding Edge* that was deleted in the final edition. I still chose to include it because relatively few changes had been made and one month before the official release, it was still in there. This is purely my personal preference; deleting that

discussions in Pynchon's oeuvre involving the King of Rock'n'Roll. Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II are rarely mentioned explicitly, but as the co-authors of numerous musicals, they have made it to the top of this list. The same goes for Mozart's librettist Lorenzo Da Ponte, Tin Pan Alley composer Harry Warren, and Irving Berlin. The Beatles as a band is only mentioned twice. However, each of its members is referenced once in Pynchon's work, adding up to six entries. Dean Martin is also easily overlooked, making appearances only in *Bleeding Edge* and *Inherent Vice*, and context does not always allow to distinguish between Dean Martin the actor and Dean Martin the singer (the same is the case with Frank Sinatra). Of the 19 top-placed musicians, composers, and librettists, eight are associated with classical or new classical music, four with musicals or Tin Pan Alley, three with rock music, two crooners, and only one—the idol of the Beat Generation—is clearly a jazz musician. Joe Hill, the hobo, union leader, and musician, made it into this list partly because of Pynchon's sympathy with the plight of the working class, partly for writing the lyrics to 'The Preacher and the Slave' (also known as 'Pie in the Sky').

Ten entries are Americans, four Italians, two Germans, one Austrian, one British, and one Russian. About half of the top-placed musicians (ten) are associated with composers of musical works for the stage (mainly opera or Broadway). Starting with *V.* but not maintained all the way to the more recent works, Pynchon made use of the plots of opera to structure his own plots or to allude and foreshadow (for instance Porpentine in *V.*, as exemplified above). However, there are other explanations for the high number of reference to classical composers. One is that, unless employed anachronistically, references can only be made ex post. An explicit Beatles reference in *V.*, *Against the Day*, or *Mason & Dixon* would not work (an allusion still might), but a Bach reference can appear in all of Pynchon's books. Another explanation is that, when it comes to classical music, there is a limited number of canonical composers available for reference unless one were to unearth obscure composers, whereas pop music, being closer to our time, is much more fragmented and has a much higher number of recognizable artists.

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reference from the Playlist would not change any of the findings.

Not all musicians and composers are equally distributed over Pynchon's work. The high number of Wagner and Rossini references are primarily due to *Gravity's Rainbow*. While Mozart and Charlie Parker appear in seven different books (grouping the miscellaneous writings as one 'book'), followed by Elvis and Puccini (six books), the Wagner and Rossini references are less evenly distributed (four and three books, respectively). Generally, Pynchon seems to have been more interested in 'serious' or 'high' European classical and new classical music in his early work (*V.*, *Gravity's Rainbow*, *Slow Learner*) where he mentions Beethoven, Wagner, Schoenberg, Stravinsky, Webern, Berg, and a number of others, sometimes discussing their work or their place in music history. After c. 1973, they appear less often or not at all, and the only references to opera are romantic operas or opera buffa.

While Pynchon only references one Mozart opera, *Il dissoluto punito ossia il Don Giovanni*, and only three Verdi operas, *Rigoletto*, *La forza del destino*, and *Il trovatore*, he lives up to his reputation as an encyclopedic writer with Wagner, Rossini, and Puccini. Besides referencing Wagner's opera cycle *Der Ring des Nibelungen* including all four of its operas (*Das Rheingold*, *Die Walküre*, *Siegfried*, and *Götterdämmerung*), he also references *Tristan und Isolde*, *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, *Tannhäuser*, and *Der fliegende Holländer*. These are eight out of the ten operas Wagner chose to be performed on the Grüner Hügel at Bayreuth, which makes me think I may have overlooked allusions to the remaining two, *Parsifal* and *Lohengrin*. While some of these references come up explicitly, others are only hinted at. Such is the case of Miss Rheingold, a reference to the beauty pageant of the American Rheingold brewery, which has its fictional counterpart in Fräulein Müller-Hochleben (a verbum pro verbo translation of 'Miss Miller High Life').

For Rossini, Pynchon references *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, *Guillaume Tell*, *La gazza ladra*, *Tancredi*, and *L'italiana in Algeri* (since I decided not to include musical references in the names of characters, the Andrea Tancredi character of *Against the Day* does not figure on the playlist). For Puccini, he references *Manon Lescaut*, *Madama*

*Butterfly, La bohème, Tosca, and Turandot.* Many of these works remain among the most popular and most frequently performed operas in the world, which provides a link to his treatment of popular music.

The most frequently referenced works of music are shown in **Table 3**.

**Table 3:** Most frequently referenced works of music.

	<i>References</i>	<i>Different books</i>
<i>Don Giovanni</i> (W. A. Mozart, 1787)	9	5
<i>Manon Lescaut</i> (G. Puccini, 1893)	7	3
'Star-Spangled Banner'/'Anacreon in Heaven' (1760s/1814)	5	3
<i>Tannhäuser</i> (R. Wagner, 1845)	5	1
'Madamina, il catalogo è questo' (W. A. Mozart, 1787)	4	4
'Volare' (F. Migliacci/D. Modugno, 1958)	4	3
'On the Good Ship Lollipop' (R. A. Whiting/S. Clare, 1934)	4	3
'Meet the Flintstones' (H. Curtin, 1960)	4	3
<i>La gazza ladra</i> (G. Rossini, 1817)	4	2

It makes sense that longer musical works are at the top of this list since they contain more material to work with and since, for instance, the additional information in the catalog made it possible to link an aria to the opera in which it occurs. Still, Pynchon only explicitly mentions two different arias each from *Don Giovanni* and *Manon Lescaut* and no particular piece from *La gazza ladra* (except for the overture of the latter, played on an organ grinder [*Gravity 277*]). 'Volare,' as *Bleeding Edge* has it, is 'arguably among the greatest pop tunes ever written' (154). Except for the 'Star-Spangled Banner' and 'Anacreon in Heaven,' all of the above works are either from opera or TV/film. Five of the nine references are in Italian, the 'language of song,' and none of the musicals referenced are mentioned as often as the most frequent operas. Many of the explanations offered in other contexts appear to be true here: Pynchon privileges works of music that are embedded in a narrative of sorts (in this case opera, musical, or TV/film) because this gives him more freedom to draw parallels to or contrast his own narratives if the reader is familiar with those works. The

list includes both classical and pop music ('high' and 'low'), but musicals may not be represented because they may have offered less in terms of 'high culture' appeal to the young Pynchon or because there is less of a canon of musicals than of operas.

### Concluding remarks

The Pynchon Playlist is complete to the best of my ability when it comes to direct references and more or less accessible allusions. It is, however, to be expected that some of the less easily recognizable allusions were overlooked, but this should not significantly alter the outcome of the analyses. Since some of the findings countered the reader's intuition, the at times tedious work of indexing every single item and adding extra information seems to have paid off. For future research, the database is provided as an Excel spreadsheet that can be downloaded as a supplementary file to this article.

Although Pynchon's work offers a considerable amount of data within the field of music that allows for statistical analysis, the limits of such an undertaking are evident. First, the data collected only pertains to the identifiable musical references that can be linked to nonfictional musicians and works of music. I also omitted references to musical instruments, to generic musical ensembles (string orchestra, small band etc.), to fictional musicians, to unidentified pieces of possibly nonfictional music, to ruminations on music, and to musical metaphors and metonymies (for instance, the return to the tonic), to name some of the most frequent ways Pynchon employs music. Furthermore, the entries in the catalog have not been weighed according to their relative importance for the narrative or the historical, philosophical, political, or musicological insights they offer: an entire passage discussing in depth the music of a particular composer may have the same weight as a pop song mentioned in passing. I attempted to figure out the 'most musical' novel of Pynchon's by adding up the relative figures of the different categories (numbers of music references, songs penned by Pynchon, number of musical instruments, occurrence of key words such as 'music' and 'singing') but it is precisely such weighing of relative importance that does each work injustice as it would risk leveling out the differences and peculiarities. *Bleeding Edge* and *Against the Day* would then look similar despite being very different.

Second, in some cases, the amount of data was too small (*The Crying of Lot 49*) or too scattered (*Slow Learner*, miscellaneous writings) for drawing conclusions. Some categories under analysis included so few items that the picture may have changed if another researcher had coded two or three of them differently. If Pynchon's next novel includes a great number of references to another composer or musical genre, comparable to the frequent references to Wagner in *Gravity's Rainbow*, the overall picture may slightly change.

Third, a statistical overview may give an overall picture, but literature thrives not on generalities but on particularities. In many instances, it was necessary to limit the significance of a particular conclusion or to explain it by looking at singular entries. For a relatively small dataset—927 entries may be a lot for a particular writer, especially if employed with as much care as Pynchon does, but not as high as 8,000 or 80,000—there is only so much to be interpreted and discovered without taking recourse to what one knows about the particular works and reading the references in context.

For a more exact overall picture it would have been necessary to add more descriptors to each entry (for instance ethnic background of musician or composer, subgenres, origin of the musical material, chart placement) and to figure out at which point in chronological time of the narrative a particular reference was made. This, however, exceeds the purposes of this study and would have been very time-consuming since many of Pynchon's intricate plots are rife with analepses, prolepses, dream sequences, and memories triggered, not all clearly identifiable on a timeline. I also leave it to future researchers to offer other interpretations for the empirical data or to find meaningful ways of cross-referencing the categories.

In spite of these limitations, some conclusions can be drawn. The reader's intuition that *Vineland*, *Inherent Vice*, and *Bleeding Edge* are part of the same 'group' of novels is confirmed from the point of view of musical references in terms of density of references (high density) and genre (more pop music, less classical music). Although this cannot be detected in the figures I presented, it also seems that Pynchon is less generous in offering musico-philosophical passages in these three works, which may have to do with the focalization, the lower number of characters, the plots that appear less intricate, and the development away from music that is played to music



that is listened to, to employ a distinction Roland Barthes once made (1977: 149). In some categories (jazz references, density of all references), *Vineland* takes an intermediate or transitional position between the earlier and the later writings although the novel appears to lean towards the latter. The intuition that the earlier works (*V.*, *Gravity's Rainbow*, *The Crying of Lot 49*, and *Slow Learner*) are part of the same group of novels is also confirmed, although to a lesser degree, particularly in the early category of modernist/high modernist music (no references after *Gravity's Rainbow*). In some categories, *Mason & Dixon* and *Against the Day* stand out for their uniqueness and in others for sharing some characteristics both with the earlier and with the later works.

Generally, Pynchon paints a plausible picture of the musical landscape in the times in which the novels are set. By this I mean that within his work, some general trends in the evolution of music, the music industry, and the way people consume music can be traced. Whether this picture is historically precise is another question that would have to be answered by other means. Most of this plausibility is owed to the rise of the music industry and to the means of mass-producing, mass-marketing, and mass-distributing music; some of it may be owed to changing musical tastes of the characters and narrators or the author. For instance, it seems to me that the post-tonal trajectory has not yet (or not anymore) been able to live up to its promises, which may have led to a decline in its reception more or less along with Pynchon's abandoning of it.

If one were to draw two lines of influence for Pynchon's choice of musical material, it would be the technological and commercial developments on the one hand (in other words, a line that has much to do with a historically plausible depiction of the musical landscape) and Pynchon's own predilections and musical interests (or those of his and subsequent generations), which seem to have become less 'serious' and less experimental as his career progressed.

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The author has no competing interests to declare.

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