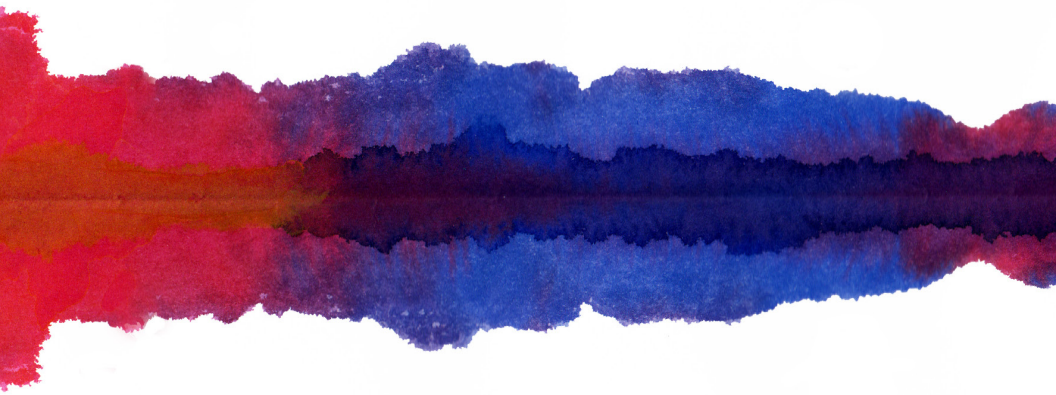
JULIUS GREVE & SASCHA PÖHLMANN (EDS.)

AMERICA
AND THE MUSICAL UNCONSCIOUS



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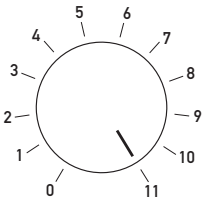
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AMERICA
AND THE MUSICAL UNCONSCIOUS

JULIUS GREVE & SASCHA PÖHLMANN (EDS.)

America and the Musical Unconscious

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"HARMONICA, KAZOO—A FRIEND."

PYNCHON'S LESSONS IN ORGANOLOGY

Christian Hänggi

In his entire œuvre, Thomas Pynchon refers about 800 times to 140 different musical instruments. Three instruments he treats with particular sympathy are the harmonica, the kazoo, and the ukulele. These somewhat strange subjects of organology have a lot in common and resonate with many of Pynchon's preferred themes and concerns. As Sean Carswell has already written extensively about Pynchon's use of the ukulele, I will investigate the other two instruments that in many ways seem aligned with the small Hawaiian guitar.[1]

Although the three instruments have predecessors that go back hundreds, if not thousands of years, they acquired their current form in the nineteenth century and quickly rose to wide popularity, especially in the USA. They were never considered respectable instruments but rather toy-like sound-producers for the common man, woman, and above all, child. One could say that they are preterites of organology; instruments that are passed over and not given much serious attention by the music critics of the day. The disdain of the critics also meant that, for a long time, there were few if any professional musicians playing these instruments. When in 1942 and 1947, the American Federation of Musicians went on strike against the recording companies, the harmonica, the ukulele, and the kazoo were exempt because their players were not unionized. As cheap

1 See Carswell's dissertation chapter "An 'Ukulele Guide to Contemporary Resistance." Carswell reads the ukulele in Pynchon's work as a symbol of hope and resistance to Empire (in Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's sense): "It is born of colonialism, global markets, and militarization [...], but it is also born of celebration, community, and cultural identity" (Carswell 193). At the time of the submission of his dissertation, Jim Tranquada and John King's excellent *The 'Ukulele: A History* was not yet published but Carswell wrote to me that he heavily relied on an academic essay written by those two authors.

and easy-to-learn instruments, they were at all times affordable for households with meager economic outlooks. Their compact size and inexpensiveness also led to their wide distribution among soldiers of different wars, most notably the two World Wars. One could argue that their inexpensiveness and simplicity lend them an air of democracy: they are instruments that, as a ukulele advert in 1915 had it, "Anybody Can Play" (Tranquada & King 97). More than other instruments, the harmonica, the kazoo, and the ukulele are figured out in the hands of the learner and not at the advice of a teacher. Something similar seems to be true for the early inventors and manufacturers who were clockmakers or carpenters and figured out how to build these relatively simple instruments. The producers quickly found their mass market niches and exploited them with ingenuity, and it was the migrations across the Atlantic which formed the basis of the instruments' development and success: from Madeira to Hawaii, from Germany to Canada and the USA, but also from Africa to the USA.

I will attempt to retrace the harmonica's and the kazoo's history with respect to Pynchon's work, always with a view to their entanglement in social struggles, warfare, power games, and consumer culture. This allows for discovering a multiplicity of connections, both historically grounded as well as speculative, in the way Pynchon stages these instruments. While he mostly treats them as comical, in line with their historical reception, Pynchon problematizes this position and employs his sly signature humor to shed light on the darker sides of the contexts in which they appear.

ATTEMPTED MOPERY WITH A SUBVERSIVE INSTRUMENT

The first European harmonica appears in Vienna around 1820. Kim Field reports that "[b]y 1830 most Europeans knew the mouth organ as the *mundharmonika* […]" (25). Already in 1827, the mouth harmonica came to the German village of Trossingen where thirty years later, Matthias Hohner opened his own business and turned out 650 instruments that year (26). In 1862, Hohner began exporting

instruments to the United States, which laid the foundation of a global musical instruments empire, overshadowing its early competitors by high-quality instruments, clever marketing, industrial espionage, diversification, and buying up rivals.[2] Unexpectedly, it would be the USA where the harmonica enjoyed most success, starting in the regions with large German immigrant populations, such as Texas and the Carolinas (cf. Wenzel & Häffner 58). The small and affordable instrument that allowed to bend notes for less rigidly defined tonal systems than the European one soon came into the hands of African-Americans as "even the poorest cotton picker could scrape together the few cents needed to acquire one" (58–59).

By 1911, the company—renamed Matth. Hohner AG—shipped out around eight million instruments and had branches in New York, Toronto, London, Warsaw, and Vienna (cf. Wenzel & Häffner 21). The harmonica was already widely distributed during World War I. In 1930, Curt Sachs wrote: "Inexpensiveness and smallness have earned the harmonica the favor of the broad masses […]. The role it played in the World War will be a glorious chapter in its history; on never-ending marches, the undemanding harmonica […] replaced entire regimental bands" (Eickhoff 66; my translation). The harmonica in World War I was recently commemorated with the exhibition *Lebensretter und Seelentröster* ("Lifesaver and Soul Comforter") held at the Deutsches Harmonika Museum in Trossingen in 2014, where, among other things, harmonicas were on display that had caught bullets and saved their owners' lives. In order to be able to export to countries such as France and Great Britain during the war, Hohner opened a branch in neutral Switzerland (cf. Wenzel & Häffner 24).

2 In the course of the company's history, Hohner also manufactured saxophones, recorders, and a number of other instruments. While most other Hohner instruments were not as highly regarded as the harmonicas and accordions, some instruments such as the Melodica and Clavinet acquired outright cult status among musicians in the 1960s and on.

By the 1930s, Matthias Hohner AG employed 4,000 workers and manufactured about 25 million harmonicas each year.[3]

During World War II, Hohner was unable to export to the USA and had to dedicate two thirds of the factories to the war effort, producing armaments with the use of Russian and Eastern European forced labor. The remaining production was geared toward soldiers. A Hohner advertisement from the time of World War II shows two happy soldiers with harmonicas in their hands and reads: "Wer dem feldgrauen Mann eine wirkliche Freude bereiten will, schenke eine 'Hohner'" ("If you want to bring real joy to the field-gray man, give him a Hohner," reproduced in Häffner 43 and Eickhoff 62). More than any other musical instruments manufacturer, at least to my knowledge, Hohner was not only instrumentalized by a war-waging government but in turn also instrumentalized the war to further sales. Hohner was quick to capitalize on the circumstances by producing a number of war-themed harmonicas—ranging from sentimental to martial—, by targeting families of soldiers as a new market, and by cooperating with the Nazi government. The main reason, however, why Hohner was able to capitalize on the war—within the limits afforded in times of crisis—was its well-oiled marketing machinery and the fact that the harmonica is a small, inexpensive, and easy-to-learn instrument which is well suited for distribution in great numbers.

Pynchon's perhaps most famous harmonica scene takes place in *Gravity's Rainbow*. During a hospital visit in 1939, where Tyrone Slothrop receives an injection of the truth serum sodium amytal, he has a vision of visiting Boston's Roseland State Ballroom where a young Malcolm X works as a shoeshine boy and Jack Kennedy is a regular, albeit absent that night. As Slothrop vomits in the men's room, he accidentally drops his harmonica in the toilet bowl, "the low reeds singing an instant on striking porcelain" (*Gravity's Rainbow* 64,

3 The sources differ slightly. Eickhoff writes that the first major shipment to the USA took place in 1868 (29) and that 25 million harmonicas were produced in 1939 (30).

subsequently cited as *GR*). While he is deciding whether he should go after it, the 1938 jazz standard "Cherokee" is resonating through the walls from downstairs. Slothrop remembers the sweet and sentimental lyrics of the song alternatively titled "Indian Love Song" and calls it "one more lie about white crimes" (*GR* 65). As he plunges into the toilet bowl in search of his beloved harmonica and disappears down the white ceramic rabbit hole into the collective unconscious of the shit-brown sewage system, he very nearly escapes being sodomized by Red Malcolm and his gang. If Slothrop's penis is not his own (cf. *GR* 219), at least his anus is. His descent into the underworld in the hope of retrieving his instrument is a first intimation of his becoming Orpheus later on in the novel. Slothrop disappears, as would become his habit, but only when he is reunited with his harmonica will he be able to disappear for good.

As he is looking for the harmonica, that German-Austrian instrument which in its African-American idiom allows "tunes to be played, millions of possible blues lines, notes to be bent from the official frequencies," he vainly places his hopes in Kennedy Jr. to help him retrieve it: "If anybody could've saved that harp, betcha Jack could" (*GR* 67). If anybody could have saved those lost, the preterite—the African-Americans, the Native Americans, and anyone who came under the scrutiny of Joseph McCarthy and the Nixon administration—and acknowledged what is bent from the official frequencies of white Anglo-Saxon capitalism, Slothrop seems to say, John F. Kennedy could. But before the novel is published, Kennedy will have gone the way of all flesh, and it is Richard M. Nixon/Zhlubb who survives until the very last page.

As Slothrop reaches street level again, he hears a "mouthsucking giant five-note chords" harmonica accompaniment to "Red River Valley" with altered lyrics informing him that "the toilet it ain't going nowhar" (*GR* 69). To choose "Red River Valley," a sentimental song about a girl who must leave the valley, comments on the fate of both the harmonica as well as Eurydice. While many other lyrics were set to this song during World War II, the original lyrics go: "From this

valley they say you are going / We will miss your bright eyes and sweet smile / For they say you are taking the sunshine / Which has brightened our pathways a while," and in the sixth verse: "As you go to your home by the ocean / May you never forget those sweet hours."

N. Katherine Hayles and Mary B. Eiser argue that White-Red-Black is the basic triad in *Gravity's Rainbow,* and "red, the third term, is meant to open a space in which color can again appear. […] [R]ed is the mediating third term that comes between black and white to signify a potential for transformation, a germ of passion […]" (7). It is the color associated with the preterite. Red and its washed-down, pale companion pink/rose are very much present in this scene: Red Malcolm, Cherokee, the Roseland Ballroom, Roosevelt, to name a few. Still, Pynchon does not simply use the three colors white, red, and black (which were also the colors of the flag of Nazi Germany) as stand-ins or symbols for, say, white Americans, Native Americans, and African-Americans. This triad would exclude everything in between these colors, such as the West Indian bartender (cf. *GR* 64). Instead, Pynchon complicates matters and undermines the notion of authenticity along ethnic lines: "Cherokee" is a song about an Indian maiden written by a British composer after his emigration to the USA. Only by being performed by African-Americans, most notably Charlie Parker, was it able to lose its sentimental undertones and become something other than "one more lie about white crimes."

Fast forward to August 6th, 1945, or August 5th in German local time: While the atomic bomb is dropped on Hiroshima—or shortly before—"a crowd of Army personnel, American sailors, NAAFI girls, and German fräuleins" convene at a bar in Cuxhaven, the launching site of the V-2 rockets, to celebrate (*GR* 603): "Ukuleles, kazoos, harmonicas, and any number of makeshift metal noisemakers accompany the song ['It's Mouthtripping Time'], which is an innocent salute to Postwar, a hope that the end of shortages, the end of Austerity, is near" (*GR* 603). The harmonica, the kazoo, and the ukulele are staged as instruments of communal music-making of the common man and woman. They were the ones most likely to be

available in a postwar setting as they were shipped in large quantities to soldiers during the war or possibly distributed by organizations like the British NAAFI, the Navy, Army and Air Force Institutes.

Alhough the setting is quite different from the one in *Vineland* discussed further down—taking place in a bar in postwar Germany and not on a beachhead in Southern California during the Vietnam war—they share some characteristics. Both scenes take place in a territory where sovereignty is either unclear or temporary. The Potsdam Conference ended on August 2 and Cuxhaven became part of the British Zone as agreed at the Yalta Conference, but it was planned to restore Germany to the German people once the demilitarization was completed and democracy reinstated. The British Zone is simultaneously a postnational and a prenational one. Consequently, the crowd celebrating in Cuxhaven is composed of British, Americans, and Germans—civilians, military personnel, and civilians in uniform. Pynchon shows that preterition is a condition that defies separation into military or civilian functions and is not restricted to any one nation state. While the preterite are not sovereigns over a territory, what is required for them to convene in a joyful way is a territory where the elect's sovereignty is also in dispute. Only in the absence of power can there be a community of like-minded people who play along with no clear objective other than making music together, not in a hierarchical entertainer/entertainee setting but with everyone having an equal share in the participation and enjoyment, that is, in the production and consumption of music.

During his meanderings through post-war Germany, Slothrop eventually finds the harmonica he lost in his vision of the Roseland Ballroom (or the harmonica finds him), and he immediately recognizes it as his, as it must be if there is "[o]ne of everything" (*GR* 69) in the world. The rediscovered instrument comes up after the tail end of the bickering between Gustav the composer and Emil "Säure" Bummer about whether tonality as exemplified by "Spohr, Rossini, Spontini" (*GR* 634) or the Row as exemplified by Schoenberg is of higher musical value. This is significant insofar as neither the tonality

whose end Richard Wagner (who is ever present in *Gravity's Rainbow,* cf. J.O. Tate) begins to introduce nor the consequences of this move by Schoenberg's invention of the dodecaphonic row is able to break out of the European twelve-tone scales. It takes an instrument as small as the harmonica in the hands and at the lips of Americans to bend the official frequencies, "bends Slothrop hasn't really the breath to do…not yet but someday…" (*GR* 67), and move into the microtonality of blue notes.[4]

After Slothrop finds his harmonica, he becomes a "crossroad […], and his chest fills and he stands crying, not a thing in his head, just feeling natural…" (*GR* 638). This scene occurs sometime after the day of the Feast of the Transfiguration, which in 1945 ironically or perversely coincided with the bombing of Hiroshima.[5] Slothrop disappears or dies or is transfigured somewhere in Germany's Harz Mountains, and if he indeed did die on the "green wet valleyed Earth" (*GR* 638), or if death is another word for his disappearance and scattering, then "They will bury [him] where you have wandered / Near the hills where the daffodils grow," as the lyrics to "Red River Valley" go. Though Pynchon does not make this link explicit by mentioning "Red River Valley" here, it harks back to the Roseland Ballroom and Slothrop's escape from the sewer. Now that he is reunited with the harmonica, he is allowed to let go and become one with the earth. Now it becomes clear why Pynchon, with one exception (cf. *GR* 635), did not choose the word "harmonica" to designate Slothrop's instrument,

4 Incidentally, Pynchon does not seem to move beyond the micro-tonalities of blue notes in Western music (though he does in "world musics" such as the Tuva throat-singing in *Against the Day*). Besides an acute ear for sounds in general, there is no mention of the turn inaugurated by John Cage, and when it comes to musical instruments, the Theremin which thrives on microtonalities only briefly appears in *Bleeding Edge* (454).

5 It also brings to mind Martin Heidegger's notion of the fourfold of the earth, the sky, the mortals, and the divinities, another crossroad—the place of dwelling in the mode of safeguarding where one of the terms always already implies the fourfold of Being (Heidegger 344–45).

but "harp," short for "mouth harp" or Hohner's famed "blues harp."[6] It allows him to link Slothrop to Orpheus, as is announced first by his descent into the underworld of the sewer and then by the insertion of an excerpt from Rilke's *Sonnets to Orpheus*. Weisenburger notes: "With his harp he is Orpheus, the dismembered Greek god [sic!]. He embodies the acceptance of pain in Rilke's *Sonnets to Orpheus,* with their climactic expression of being and flux—'To the rushing water speak: I am'" (321). And a few pages later: "Slothrop's Hohner is a sign of his identity with Orpheus, the mythic harp player and dismembered holy Fool. The Hohner is thus also a sign of Slothrop's preterition" (324–25). I would maintain that the analogy holds even though Pynchon and Weisenburger are a little imprecise when it comes to Orpheus's instrument. Orpheus is reported to have played the lyre and not the harp. Nevertheless, I agree with Weisenburger when he links Slothrop's instrument to preterition but would maintain that the harmonica—like the kazoo and the ukulele—is always already a sign of preterition in Pynchon's worlds. It is never an instrument played by the elect but always the preterite.

After Slothrop's disappearance, there is a passage where harmonica blues-playing is philosophized: "Blues is a matter of lower sidebands—you suck a clear note, on pitch, and then bend it lower with the muscles of your face. Muscles of your face have been laughing, tight with pain, often trying not to betray any emotion, all your life. Where you send the pure note is partly a function of that" (*GR* 656). The transformation of pain into laughter resonates with Slothrop's transfiguration in a state of *Gelassenheit* or selflessness. This loss of self, painful as it may be, is also liberating, as Sascha Pöhlmann writes: "At the cost of his self, he manages to break out of all hegemonic narratives that constructed and fixed his identity" (*Postnational* 358). Slothrop—if that is still his name after the transformation—finally escapes control and conditioning and cannot be

6 The blues harp product line, distributed under the name Marine Band in honor of John Philip Sousa, is Hohner's best-selling instrument and has been in production since 1896.

apprehended anymore. Some believe that fragments of his former self roam the earth and have "grown into consistent personae of their own" (*GR* 757). The novel mirrors this by falling apart into more or less disjointed scenes, episodes, and fragments with increasing frequency as it nears its end.

Some twenty pages before the end, we learn that "[t]here's supposed to be a last photograph of him on the only record album ever put out by The Fool, an English rock group. […] There is no way to tell which of the faces is Slothrop's: the only printed credit that might apply to him is 'Harmonica, kazoo—a friend'" (*GR* 757). Like the novel itself, which is bracketed between a dedication to folk musician Richard Fariña and the singing of a hymn composed by Slothrop's ancestor William, its main character Tyrone Slothrop is introduced as playing the ukulele, "an American George Formby" (*GR* 18), and is bid farewell by crediting him for playing the kazoo and the harmonica. Slothrop has left a "busted corkscrewing ukulele string" (*GR* 19) on his littered desk at the beginning of the novel, constraining the potential of the instrument. But as Slothrop gradually loses his identity and finally his self, his music-making moves in the opposite direction: from the impossibility of playing the full range due to the busted string clearly attributed to Slothrop to a fixed historical record leaving some doubt if Slothrop really is The Fool's harmonica and kazoo player. He is compared to a real ukulele and banjolele player at the beginning and to a member of a fictitious band at the end, mirroring *Gravity's Rainbow* opening with a dedication to a real musician and its ending with a fictitious hymn. What Pynchon seems to say here is that in order to liberate oneself from the imposed order and leave a trace in the world, one must move into the realm of the imagination: becoming requires letting go. Or in Pöhlmann's words: "Pynchon […] postulates no necessity except the necessity to imagine these worlds in order to change this one" (*Postnational* 365).

Although this is the last time Slothrop is referred to more than in passing, there are more harmonicas coming up. Shortly before the end of *Gravity's Rainbow*, in a prolepsis playing out around 1970, Pynchon

takes up the harmonica politics of the Third Reich to underline the instrument's preterite nature and draw parallels between Hitler and Nixon aka Richard M. Zhlubb in a mock newspaper article entitled "Orpheus Puts Down Harp":

> Richard M. Zhlubb, night manager of the Orpheus Theatre on Melrose [on which the rocket will descend in the last lines of *Gravity's Rainbow*], has come out against what he calls 'irresponsible use of the harmonica.' [...] Zhlubb states that his queues, especially for midnight showings, have fallen into a state of near anarchy because of the musical instrument. [...] Steve Edelman, a Hollywood businessman, accused last year of an 11569 (Attempted Mopery with a Subversive Instrument), is currently in Atascadero under indefinite observation. It is alleged that Edelman, in an unauthorized state of mind, attempted to play a chord progression on the Department of Justice list, out in the street and in the presence of a whole movie-queue of witnesses. (*GR* 769–70)

Edelman commits three crimes or misdemeanors: in an unauthorized state of mind he *allegedly* and in public plays a banned chord progression on a subversive instrument. Even the Nixon administration would have to recognize that these allegations are too flimsy to justify a conviction. Therefore, he can only be accused and placed under indefinite observation under a doubly vague allegation: mopery, and not even one that was carried out but only attempted. Mopery is a vague term whose exact legal ramifications are unclear. According to the OED, mopery is "[t]he action of committing a minor or petty offence, such as loitering, etc.; contravention of a trivial or hypothetical law, esp. when used as an excuse to harass or arrest a person against whom no more serious crime can be charged." In *Gravity's Rainbow,* which was published in 1973, as the Watergate investigations were unraveling but before Nixon was forced to step down, Pynchon makes accusations which, if read literally, would not be substantive. As an allegory, however, they amount to a clear political statement about the FBI's COINTELPRO and similar programs which were

assumed to be in place. The two gravest accusations Pynchon makes is that under Nixon and McCarthy (as well as under Hitler) thoughts were not free and that petty accusations were manufactured to put supposedly subversive subjects away.

The other meaning of mopery, according to the OED, is the behavior of a moper. If we were to bring these two meanings together, it would be illegal to mope, that is, to fail to display enthusiasm for what is economically and politically given. By playing his subversive chord progression, Edelman breaks up the orderly rows of moviegoers that will be fed into Hollywood's feel-good machinery of the Orpheus Theater, symbolic of the globalization of depoliticized commodity fetishism, which will be further examined in *Vineland*, a novel that accuses film and TV for lulling in formerly subversive forces and making them complicit with capitalism's consumer culture.

What appears to be a humorous fancy is based on the conflicting ways the Third Reich dealt with harmonica instruments, that is, the accordion and the harmonica. Already in 1929, one Georg Götsch wrote a "Report on the Adequacy of the Harmonica as a Students', Orchestra's, and People's Instrument" in response to a harmonica advertising campaign and criticized it harshly: "The harmonica is a machine that offers not only a ready-made tone but also a ready-made tone sequence, even a ready-made sound sequence, and is thus suited for tonal dullness at the most, but does not educate toward intellectual or creative freedom" (qtd. in Eickhoff 38–39; my translation). In 1933, it was argued that the accordion was not a jazz instrument, apparently the biggest threat to the *Volksgeist,* and there was no reason to ban it—unlike the kazoo or the harmonica in Zhlubb's world (*cf. GR* 771). Although the harmonica was already hugely popular,[7] Hohner's mass-produced instruments did not accord with the spirit of the music pedagogy at the time (cf. Eickhoff 36–37). In February 1938, the *Reichsjugendführung* (The Reich's Youth Leadership)

7 Eickhoff reports that in 1938, there were 6,000 harmonica orchestras in Germany with a total of 300,000 members (241).

prohibited the establishment of harmonica and accordion orchestras in all formations of the Hitler Youth (cf. Eickhoff 75, 241).

Steve Edelman has a Jewish-sounding name (*Edelmann* means noble man), another comment on the proposed likeness between the Third Reich and the Nixon administration. Zhlubb, on the other hand, is a slippery name with a slippery, comical sound reflecting perhaps the sound of a flushing toilet where the excretions that are part of life but too shameful to talk about are washed away never to be seen again.[8] The name Zhlubb cannot be placed in any one natural language but it rhymes with Krupp—visually, but also when pronounced in German—, the German steel production dynasty, which manufactured tanks, guns, submarines, and other war technology. The key to understanding the name Zhlubb might, however, be Allen Ginsberg and William S. Burroughs. Initially—that is, around 1953—a tender onomatopoeia to express the desire to merge with a loved one, Ginsberg later writes that schlupp means "to devour a soul parasitically" (Burroughs 6), which clearly resonates with much of the criticism directed at Hollywood's culture industry.[9] By giving the preterite a noble name and the elect a disfigured, comical one at the end of the alphabet, Pynchon implies that respectability resides with the preterite and not the elect: "So the last shall be first, and the first last" (Matthew 20:16, *King James Bible*).

While this scene at first appears to be an allegory on and critique of the Nixon administration by drawing parallels to Hitler, Nixon's anti-communist predecessor, Joseph McCarthy, is also present. In this reading, the Hollywood executive Steve Edelman would stand for the mouth organ virtuoso Larry Adler, who was of Jewish descent and much present in Hollywood. While *Adler* in German means eagle, *adlig* is also a synonym for *edel,* noble. Larry Adler's father

8 In his comic book series *Sin City* (1991–92), Frank Miller chooses the name Burt Shlubb for an incompetent criminal charged with disposing of dead bodies.

9 For a more detailed discussion on schlupp and schlupping, see Kahn 299–312.

changed their family name from Zelakovitch to Adler because he was tired of being the last one called in the immigration queues (cf. Freedland). Larry Adler was a member of the Committee for the First Amendment protesting the blacklisting of Hollywood writers. Before long, the House Committee on Un-American Activities blacklisted him as well, which resulted in the virtual impossibility for Adler to find work in the USA and led to his emigration to Britain (cf. Freedland). While Edelmann plays a banned harmonica chord progression, so does Adler: he plays the tune of resistance to repression and constraint of creativity of the film industry to Joseph McCarthy. If history repeats itself, then Adler/McCarthy was the tragedy and Edelman/Zhlubb the farce.

I would, however, claim that Pynchon's lineage of totalitarianisms that are to be criticized for their ways of dealing with the arts extends beyond this. In his preface to *The Bass Saxophone*, Josef Škvorecký, who had lived in Czechoslovakia as an amateur musician and jazz lover during both the Hitler and the Stalin eras and emigrated to Canada after the Prague Spring, observed that "many titles on Senator Joe McCarthy's index of books to be removed from the shelves of US Information Libraries abroad are identical to many on the Index issued in Prague by the Communist Party early in the seventies" (8). He also observes that the propaganda machinery of the Third Reich and communist-era Czechoslovakia dealt in a very similar—and not always consistent—way with jazz music. When he published a decalogue of regulations issued during World War II by the local *Gauleiter* in Czechoslovakia's first jazz almanac in 1958, the censors promptly confiscated the entire edition (cf. Škvorecký 11). If it were not tragic, the list of regulations from today's vantage point appears almost comical and makes Edelman's breaking of laws and regulations seem less farfetched than at first glance.[10]

10 The list of regulations, republished from memory in *The Bass Saxophone*, prohibits "Jewishly gloomy lyrics"; "Negroid excesses in tempo"; "drum breaks longer than half a bar"; "plucking of string instruments"; and scat singing. Double basses must be bowed, saxophones replaced with

To come back to Pynchon: Pöhlmann makes a point that Pynchon's novels transcend the boundaries not only of nation-states but of nation-ness as well: "*Against the Day* leaves no doubt that a nationalized view of the world is simply too narrow, even dangerously restrictive in many regards; it emphatically demands a global approach from its readers" ("The Complex Text" 24). Indeed, anarchist dynamiter Veikko Rautavaara—possibly a nod to Finnish composer Einojuhani Rautavaara—had "never seen much difference between the Tsar's regime and American capitalism. To struggle against one, he figured, was to struggle against the other. Sort of this world-wide outlook" (*AtD* 92). While the totalitarian conception of society starts from a conception of nation-ness, of us and them, inside and outside, and may attempt to transcend the boundaries of the nation-state to gain further influence, anarchism—like communism before its corruption by real politics, personal greed, and hunger for power—has always had a transnational outlook. This also allows Frank Traverse, Irishman Wolfe Tone O'Rooney, and the African-American musicians of the Merry Coons jass band to have a discussion about Anarchist theory (cf. *AtD* 416–417), and it is further illustrated by the fact that both the Chums of Chance and their Russian counterparts Tovarishchi Slutchainyi ("accidental comrades") eventually break all ties with their respective governments.

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the cello or the viola, and mutes "which turn the noble sound of wind and brass instruments into a Jewish-Freemasonic yowl" are prohibited. "Pieces in foxtrot rhythm (so-called swing) are not to exceed 20% of the repertoires" and "so-called jazz compositions may contain at most 10% syncopation." Finally, preference is given "to brisk compositions over slow ones (so-called blues); however, the pace must not exceed a certain degree of allegro, commensurate with the Aryan sense of discipline and moderation" (10–11).

STRAINS OF SUBVERSIVE MUSIC DAY AND NIGHT

In *Vineland,* the harmonica serves as a prop for strengthening communal bonds against the overwhelming military power. On the outskirts of an army base on the Trasero County coast,

> Against the somber military blankness at its back, here was a lively beachhead of drugs, sex, and rock and roll, the strains of subversive music day and night, accompanied by tambourines and harmonicas, [...] finding the ears of sentries attenuated but ominous, like hostile-native sounds in a movie about white men fighting savage tribes. (*Vineland* 204, subsequently cited as *VL*)

The harmonica finds itself placed between warfare and subversion again. The instrument which had afforded soldiers consolation in the trenches and barracks of the European wars and the American Civil War is reappropriated by dope-smoking hippies for their Dionysiac frolicking, mocking the orderly procedures of chains of command before the sentries' very eyes and ears. The beachhead meant to be reserved for military forces is situated on the periphery, in line with Pynchon's preference for staying at the margins. The threshold between land and water, but also between occupied and occupiers, becomes an extraterritorial space wedged between the forces of subversion and the forces of repression defying the dichotomy between the open beach related to drugs, sex, and rock'n'roll and the closed fortress related to discipline and hierarchy. From this dichotomy will arise a process of "deterritorialization" and "reterritorialization" as described by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari:[11] "Deterritorialization must be thought of as a perfectly positive power that has degrees and thresholds (epistrata), is always relative, and has reterritorialization as its flipside or complement. An organism that is deterritorialized in relation to the exterior necessarily

11 *Vineland* also refers to the fictitious "*Italian Wedding Fake Book,* by Deleuze & Guattari" (*VL* 97), to my knowledge Pynchon's only direct reference to French theory.

reterritorializes on its interior milieus" (5). Thus, the space around the College of the Surf which was deterritorialized by usage later "secedes" from California and becomes the self-proclaimed People's Republic of Rock and Roll (or PR^3, where one cannot fail to hear 'public relations to the third power,' or in Deleuze and Guattari's words the reterritorialization of the interior). In other words, the informal deterritorialization becomes solidified, formalized, before it is again reterritorialized by the armed forces.

The tambourine accompaniment harks back to the percussive nature of African musics, reminding the guards of "hostile natives." The tambourine is also an inexpensive instrument that requires little skill, apart from a feeling for rhythm. Anyone can pick it up, and many did, not always to the great delight of the classically trained listener such as Nixon/Zhlubb, as we learn in *Gravity's Rainbow*: "'At least it's not those tambourines,' Zhlubb mutters. 'There aren't as many tambourines as last year, thank God'" (*GR* 772). What Zhlubb cannot bear is the democratic nature of the tambourine, the harmonica, and the kazoo, the fact that anyone can participate without the intervention of an authority and everyone's voice is heard without passing through the filters of censorship. Zhlubb's comments on the tambourine are uttered or muttered in the early 1970s, after the deaths of icons of hope such as Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy and after the Altamont Speedway concert which marked the end of the peace and love movement. As Zhlubb correctly remarks, by the 1970s, there were far less tambourines played in public than just a year or two before, a sure sign that the repressive forces were getting the upper hand again.

The "savage tribes" and the "hostile-native sounds" resonate loosely with Barbara Stewart's supposition about the initial use of the kazoo's sound-producing mechanism by African shamans as "weapons of intimidation" and to convey messages from the beyond (cf. Stewart 2). Significantly for *Vineland,* there is no "authentic" image of the savages; it has already passed through the filters of Hollywood and is mediated by film or television. Towards the end of the novel,

Isaiah Two Four (whose name harps on the Bible verse as well as on the 24-frames-per-second celluloid film)[12] brings Pynchon's critique of the former subversives' surrender to the establishment to the point and sheds light on why Pynchon made Richard M. Zhlubb the owner of a movie theater: "Whole problem 'th you folks's generation […] is you believed in your Revolution, put your lives right out there for it—but you sure didn't understand much about the Tube. Minute the Tube got hold of you folks that was it, that whole alternative America, el deado meato" (*VL* 373). Or, as Thomas Hill Schaub observes, "In *Vineland*, primary among the mechanisms maintaining the status quo is the mediating power of television and film" (35). The soldiers' worldview relating the subversive strains of music to savages has already been co-opted by television and film but the hippies will not be spared either as time progresses and an entire generation promising of change comes of age.

The fate that already hovers over *Vineland*'s first harmonica scene is spelled out in the second one. Zoyd Wheeler and his baby Prairie embark on a bus to Vineland, cross the Golden Gate Bridge, and head into the countryside towards Eureka:

> Aislemates struck up conversations, joints appeared and were lit, guitars came down from overhead racks and harmonicas out of fringe bags, and soon there was a concert that went on all night, a retrospective of the times they'd come through more or less as a generation, the singing of rock and roll, folk, Motown, fifties oldies, and at last, for about an hour just before the watery green sunrise, one guitar and one harmonica, playing the blues. (*VL* 315)

12 "And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (Isaiah 2:4, *King James Bible*). In both his Inaugural Ceremonies (1969 and 1973), Richard Nixon had his two family Bibles open to Isaiah 2:4.

The nostalgia of a youth outgrown is celebrated, first as a festive retrospective in which everyone takes part, a reliving of the old and carefree times, which in the early morning hours reverts to a lone blues with minimal instrumentation, symbolic of a community split up into individuals by Nixon's state apparatus's strategy to divide and conquer. Blues lyrics, which are as integral a part of the blues as its musical form, are usually first-person accounts that focus on the human condition as it is experienced personally. LeRoi Jones writes: "Blues was a music that arose from the needs of a group, although it was assumed that each man had his *own* blues and that he would sing them. As such, the music was private and personal" (82). The blues is a democratic form of music, and this is why the harmonica is so well suited to the needs of it—apart from the fact that it can bend notes. Jones believes that the blues is not only African-American in origin but also in spirit, that, unlike jazz, it is not an American form of expression but an African-American one. Still, it speaks to the musical form and its resonance that it can be performed and understood by people of other sociocultural and ethnic backgrounds as well. Pynchon does not specify the ethnic origin of the person playing the blues, which is why it can be assumed that he does not intend to limit its value to any one ethnicity.

Blues melody lines begin with a high note, usually the octave or the fifth, and descend from there all the way down to the tonic (Jahn 28).[13] The descending melody lines point towards a sense of helplessness, resignation, or decline, but the return to the tonic also expresses a return home. This return to the tonic is not only reflected in the melody line but also in the overall structure of the standard blues form where the last two bars are set to the tonic. One could say that the bus riders' return home is accompanied by the distinct feeling that the celebration is over and the state of affairs has not changed. The blues developed in the cotton fields as a more or less solitary pas-

13 Additionally, blues scales are the only ones that are noted from the highest note to the lowest, and not vice versa.

time and later moved to the city where it became music performed for the entertainment of others. The bus ride reverses this chronology. As the bus pulls out of San Francisco, the passengers celebrate the Haight-Ashbury spirit where music could be played for its own sake but where concerts were also the order of the day. As the bus heads "for nothing but trees, fish, and fog" (*VL* 315), fatigue eventually sets in and the passengers doze off one by one. What remains is two people playing music for no one in particular other than for their own comfort. This music may be performed, it may be heard, but it is not listened to. It reverts from public and collective to private and personal.

IN THE INTRICACIES OF GREED AS PRACTICED UNDER GLOBAL CAPITALISM

It is in *Against the Day* that Pynchon brings the full comic potential of the harmonica to bear. In a cartoon-like episode worthy of a Spike Jones soundtrack, he has the Chums of Chance, the young skyship explorers and heroes of a fictitious boys' adventure book series, "drift into the brief aberration in their history known as the Marching Academy Harmonica Band" (*Against the Day* 471, subsequently cited as *AtD*). They stay at a harmonica boarding school in Decatur for an unspecified period of time, hiding from Trespassers from another time or dimension (cf. *AtD* 471–78).

Like Slothrop's Roseland Ballroom episode, the Marching Academy Harmonica Band takes place in the excluded middle between consciousness and unconsciousness or between the "real" world and a dream world. In both episodes, the characters later remember it as if it had been real, and objects or persons from the dream suddenly appear in the protagonists' waking state. The name of the institution where the Chums—or possibly their stand-ins—reside also keeps shifting. Pynchon variably uses the designations Marching Academy Harmonica Band, Harmonica Band Marching Academy, Marching Harmonica Band Academy, and Harmonica

Academy Marching Band. By assigning different names to the academy and its various subroutines, Pynchon plays on the boarding school's elusiveness, its u-topic position, and its resistance to identity formation. As an institution with several names and an ambiguous location,[14] it cannot be apprehended and remains outside the grasp of external forces. It is a microcosm ruled by an ambiguous power—reterritorialized on the interior—and it remains such in the memories of the Chums.

Into this hypothetical space "not strictly speaking on the map at all" (*AtD* backcover blurb), Pynchon infuses a number of novelty instruments like the D-flat Reverberating Harmonica, the I.G. Mundharfwerke "Little Giant," the "two-hole silver and pearl Microharmonica," as well as the "bell-metal bass harmonicas six feet long—great whopping *tubas* of harmonicas" (*AtD* 473). He shows knowledge of the various shapes and sizes of harmonicas that have been manufactured over time as well as the names of the models—and exaggerates them to comical effect.

Harmonicas are available in all tunings, but according to Martin Häffner, director of the Deutsches Harmonika Museum, most diatonic harmonicas produced are tuned to D-Flat.[15] While in a classical, European musical setting, D-Flat is not the most usual of keys, a number of compositions were written in this key, and if Pynchon had one of them in mind, it might well have been the second movement ("Largo") of Antonin Dvořák's *Ninth Symphony*, also known as the *New World Symphony*. The mood of the second movement contrasts the merry goings-on at the Academy and brings to the fore the darker undercurrents of the school. Although Pynchon does not mention Dvořák, there are a number of connections that lend plausibility to this interpretation, literary and musical ones. Dvořák was present at

14 Pynchon does not specify which Decatur, other than the school's advertisement which states it is located in "The Heart of the Mississippi Watershed" (472). There are cities, towns, and villages named Decatur in fifteen U.S. states.

15 Personal e-mail (13 Nov. 2014).

the Chicago World's Fair where he conducted his *Symphony No. 8* in G major on 12 August 1893 and some of his *Slavonic Dances* (Downey 174; Tibbetts 17). In a *New York Herald* article from 15 December 1893, Dvořák, who by then had been in the United States for a little more than a year, is quoted: "Now, I found that the music of the negroes and of the Indians was practically identical" ("Dvorak on his New York" 11). In an article in the *Boston Herald* from 28 May 1893, he stated: "I am now satisfied that the future music of this country must be founded upon what are called the negro melodies" ("American Music"). Possibly, he based his judgment on the use of pentatonic scales or the rhythms and drones in some native American musics, but today, there seems to be agreement that he must have had a shallow understanding of Native American music, as opposed to African American music (cf. the articles by John Clapham, Charles Hamm, or Michael Beckermann in *Dvořák in America* [Tibbetts, ed.]). According to Dennis B. Downey, his

> comments transgressed the boundaries between elite and folk culture. But his more cosmopolitan sensibilities also ran contrary to the *educational* philosophy of the fair's own music department, which traced America's musical heritage to West European antecedents. Furthermore, and most controversial, Dvorak's statement contradicted reigning racial stereotypes of the day, ones firmly embedded in the cultural symbolism of the 'White City' itself. (176)

Perhaps unaware of the controversy this might provoke, Dvořák created a community of the marginalized by bringing together the diverse ethnic backgrounds of Americans for a future foundation of American music. His gesture is also Pynchonian or postmodernist in stepping across the boundaries of high and low art. The admiration for African-American music and his linking it to that of the Native Americans takes us back to the Roseland Ballroom with its many references to both African-Americans and Native Americans. Thus, in

the D-flat Reverberating Harmonica, Dvořák's appreciation reverberates into the past of 1893 as well as into the future of 1939.

With the remaining three instruments of Pynchon's imagination, he stakes out the extremes between which the other harmonicas find their place in a continuum of possibilities of musical expression. The largest harmonica currently offered by Hohner is a Chord 48 with an impressive 192 holes, but its length is 58.7 cm, a far cry from Pynchon's six-foot harmonica. The smallest harmonica manufactured is Hohner's four-hole "Little Lady," mere 35 mm in length. Pynchon plays on the name of that model by opposing it to the I.G. Mundharfwerke's "Little Giant." It would hardly make sense to manufacture a two-hole harmonica as such an instrument would only produce four notes (two for drawing and two for blowing, or, as Pynchon prefers: sucking and blowing) and no chords (or harmonies), as opposed to the "Little Lady" with four holes and the full range of an octave. Pynchon does not specify the range or size of the Little Giant but its name indicates that it must be somewhere between the two extremes. With these four instruments, Pynchon posits something funny against the somber background of the harmonica academy and implicitly argues for diversity as no single instrument could cover the entire range of expression or the different musical sensibilities.

Hohner was and is not the only manufacturer of harmonicas, but there is little doubt that Pynchon has Hohner in mind when he writes about the harmonica. The I.G. Mundharfwerke is a portmanteau of Hohner, rendered as mouth harp works, and I.G. Farben, the chemical industry conglomerate frequently referred to in *Gravity's Rainbow* known for having collaborated with the Nazi leadership and producing Zyklon B, the gas used in the extermination camps. This unsavory amalgam between music and war is historically precise, since Hohner produced munitions with the use forced labor and collaborated with the Nazi government. Hohner's market dominance, then and now, is also reflected in *Against the Day:*

> The institution [i. e. the Harmonica Marching Band Academy] had its origins […] in the intricacies of greed as then being practiced under global capitalism. German harmonica manufacturers, who led the world in production of the instrument, had for some years been dumping their surplus inventory on the American market, with the result that soon every community in the land had some kind of harmonica-based marching society, often numbering in the hundreds. […] It was only a matter of time before this unforeseen outcome of the Law of Supply and Demand was consecrated as the Harmonica Marching Band Academy […]. (*AtD* 472)

This characterization early on in the Harmonica Academy episode casts its shadow over the boyish fun the Chums experience. Pynchon draws readers in with his comically absurd sidesteps, the "spirited cakewalk allowing opportunities for brief novelty effects, locomotive noises, barnyard animals" (*AtD* 473), the lectures in "Chromatic Harp Safety, and the particular need to keep those nasal hairs closely trimmed" (*AtD* 474) and the funny harmonica routine centering around the vanished harpman Alonzo Meatman (cf. *AtD* 472–73). At a second glance, however, it becomes evident that there is a dark undercurrent of the boarding school and the respite it offers is but temporary. What Pynchon seems to ask of the readers is to look behind the act and consider the strict disciplinary regime which lies beyond a well-rehearsed show pulled off as if it were completely natural. He also cautions against accepting the notion of hospitality thoughtlessly. Like every traditional (that is, conditional) form of hospitality, that of the Academy as a safe haven from the Trespassers has its flip-side. While the youngsters are promised careers, they need to undergo hardship and submit to the rules of the sovereign. Conditional hospitality is always ambiguous and violent because it must by necessity posit a dichotomy between outside and inside, where the liberation from the rules and conditions of one always entails submitting to those of the other.

In line with the strict formations and hierarchies of a marching band, a large part of the repertoire studied at the Academy is patriotic.

Besides "My Country 'Tis of Thee," which had served as a national anthem until 1931—the melody is based on "God Save the King"—it includes the 1896 John Philip Sousa march "El Capitán," the Marines' Hymn "The Halls of Montezuma," and, on a brighter and less patriotic side, the two Kerry Mills compositions "At a Georgia Camp Meeting" and "Whistlin' Rufus." To choose Sousa is fitting as he also endorsed Hohner instruments, was a celebrated presence at the 1893 World's Fair, later composed a march entitled "Harmonica Wizard," and conducted the Philadelphia Harmonica Band on several occasions. The operetta *El Capitan*, from which the march is taken, tells the story of a Spanish viceroy in sixteenth-century Peru who kills the rebel leader and then takes on his identity to lead the rebels to defeat against the Spanish forces. The march is on the lighter side, in line with the overall mood of an operetta. "The Halls of Montezuma" is based on Jacques Offenbach's operetta *Geneviève de Brabant*. Its title is a reference to the United States army's victory over the Mexican forces at the Battle of Chapultepec in 1847. The sheet music of "At a Georgia Camp Meeting," published by F. A. Mills in 1899 advertises the song as "A Characteristic March which can be used effectively as a Two-Step, Polka or Cake Walk." The cakewalk initially made fun of the mannerisms of white plantation owners, comically exaggerating their gaits and gestures. It was an African-American form of entertainment, which was later taken over by minstrel shows, first the white ones and then black ones. Jones notes that "the first Negro minstrels wore the 'traditional' blackface over their own" (85) and muses: "If the cakewalk is a Negro dance caricaturing certain white customs, what is that dance when, say, a white theater company attempts to satirize it as a Negro dance? I find the idea of white minstrels in blackface satirizing a dance satirizing themselves a remarkable kind of irony—which, I suppose, is the whole point of minstrel shows" (86). In all of the songs practiced at the Academy, the question of authenticity and make-believe arises, that is, the relationship between "reality" and what appears on the surface (or on the stage) and the question if such a reality even exists or if it necessarily must

be framed again and again according to its context and social setting. Pynchon's choice of songs would then show how music as a living form of expression can be appropriated and changed around across borders of nationality and ethnicity, from "God Save the King" to "My Country 'Tis of Thee," from *Geneviève de Brabant* to "The Halls of Montezuma," from light operetta to patriotic march, from black to white to black entertainment. What becomes interesting is not so much the origin of a tune but its history of derivations. Especially the cakewalk with its ever-shifting disguises and "The Halls of Montezuma" lead the readers to question the position and intent of the Harmonica Marching Band Academy, the Trespassers, Alonzo Meatman, or the Authorities sending the Chums of Chance on their missions.

A-AND WAIT'LL THOSE KAZOOS COME ON!

Inherently more comical than the harmonica is the kazoo, "Pynchon's favorite preterite musical instrument" (Fowler 223). To this day, its origins are obscure, and the only (semi-)authoritative source appears to be kazooist Barbara Stewart's primer *The Complete How To Kazoo.* Stewart displays the same type of mock-seriousness as Pynchon—with her puns and humor a worthy rival of Pynchon's in his most family-friendly moments.[16]

From the family of membranophones, and more specifically tube or vessel mirlitons, the kazoo is not a musical instrument in the ordinary sense. The distinct sound is produced by humming, speaking, or singing, and not by blowing, into the instrument. A membrane or resonator such as plastic or tin foil—Pynchon calls it reed—is inserted between the main body and the turret, producing inner and outer air vibrations. Within the main body, the vibrations are detracted from

16 Stewart's own kazoo ensemble Kazoophony, dressed in black concert suits and white bow-ties, played such timeless favorites as the "William To Hell Overture," the "Beermeistersinger's Song" from *Tannheuser Busch* or "I'm Inclined to Kazoomusik" by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozartsky.

a single stream of air and intermingle. A similar effect is produced by the saxophone when, while blowing into the instrument and bringing the reed in vibration, the player hums or sings at a slightly different pitch or in harmony. This technique called growling produces a raspy sound and is described in *Inherent Vice* as humming "through the reed of a tenor or sometimes alto sax a harmony part alongside whatever melody he was playing, as if the instrument was some giant kazoo" (37).

According to Stewart, the sound-producing principle of the kazoo has been known to many African tribal cultures. Unfortunately, she is not more specific about which cultures and what times. She writes that this voice distorter was used to "impersonate voices of the dead, to make terrifying sounds and bring messages from the spirit world" which "were interpreted by tribal officials to make sure the meaning was clear" (2–3). It is thought that the American kazoo was invented in the 1840s in Macon, Georgia, by Alabama Vest, an African-American, and built to his specifications by Thaddeus Von Clegg, a German-American clockmaker (cf. Stewart 3). First exhibited at the Georgia State Fair of 1852, it was then sold to a toy manufacturer (cf. Stewart 5). Thus, the kazoo's sound-producing principle in the service of the ruling class underwent a process of profanation and became one of a small number of genuinely American musical instruments.

Early kazoos appear to have been manufactured from wood, such as the one patented "as toy or musical instrument" by Warren Herbert Frost in 1883, and a musical toy it seems to have remained ever since, making it a perfect fit for a 'preterite' instrument.[17] It was not until World War I that, according to Stewart, referring to Rudolph A. Clemen Jr. of the American Red Cross Library, the kazoo

17 Of the 59 kazoo-related U.S. patents registered between 1877 and 2003, 31 carry a designation that combines the terms "music" and "toy" in some way. For a list of all patents, see *http://kazoologist.org/patents.html* (18 Oct 2014). The first mention of the kazoo that I have encountered in writing is in an article from 1884 in the *Shenandoah Herald*, on display at the Kazoo Museum in Beaufort, SC.

was introduced in significant quantities to Europe. Clemen believes that the kazoo was the most likely musical instrument to be sent and distributed for free to American soldiers and sailors in 1917 and 1918 "due to the higher cost of harmonicas and the difficulty of fitting anything much larger into Red Cross boxes" (8). Only after the war, in 1920, did the name "kazoo" first appear on a patent.

Pynchon's first mention of the kazoo is in *V.* when "[t]hree rambling musicians, guitar, violin and kazoo, stood on a corner [in Via Porta Rossa, Florence], playing sentimental airs" (*V.* 201). Later, at a party in Washington D.C., Profane and Pig Bodine meet

> an unemployed musicologist named Petard who had dedicated his life to finding the lost Vivaldi Kazoo Concerto, first brought to his attention by one Squasimodeo […] who had heard not only of its theft from a monastery by certain fascist music lovers but also about twenty bars from the slow movement, which Petard would from time to time wander round the party blowing on a plastic kazoo. (*V.* 419)

To choose Vivaldi as a composer, the violinist and priest from Venice who died in poverty in Vienna, is certainly fitting for a novel entitled *V.* Pynchon leaves no pointers as to a real Vivaldi concerto on which the Kazoo Concerto might be modeled. The possibilities are endless as Vivaldi was perhaps the most prolific composer of concertos. He also established the concerto form with three movements, fast–slow–fast. While some of his lost works have been unearthed later on in the course of history, around fifteen concertos or parts thereof are still considered lost.[18] Why the musicologist-kazooist is named Petard, French for joint, makes sense once we realize that the classical kazoo shape is the one most suitable for hash pipes (cf. *GR* 759–60).

Petard or someone else is successful in tracking down the lost Kazoo Concerto because in the beginning of *The Crying of Lot 49*,

18 These are RV (Ryom-Verzeichnis) 174, 193, 200, 255, 290, 304, 305, 316, 337, 351, 573, 751, 752, 784, and 805.

Oedipa Maas listens to the Muzak version of "the Fort Wayne Settecento Ensemble's variorum recording of the Vivaldi Kazoo Concerto" featuring Boyd Beaver as a soloist (*The Crying of Lot 49* 2, subsequently cited as *CoL*). It is fitting to mention Muzak, the epitome of industrialized, planned, and calculated music to increase the productivity of cows and humans, early on in a novel dealing, among other things, with entropy and the proliferation of potentially empty signifiers. "Muzak", as Philipp Schweighauser writes, "is the supreme expression of Oedipa's world. This world of undifferentiated sameness and cultural inertia corresponds to a thermodynamic state of maximum entropy at which the system has reached its final destination and come to a standstill" (159). Moozak, as R. Murray Schafer prefers to call it, "reduces music to ground," and unless one pays attention to it, it should not be discernible but act on a subliminal level; it "is not to be listened to" (98). Significantly for *The Crying of Lot 49* and for Pynchon's general interest in the overlap of the military-industrial complex and consumer culture, Muzak Holdings was founded by Major General George Owen Squier shortly before his death in 1934. Squier also developed a camera to measure the speed of projectiles as well as telephone carrier multiplexing, which allowed for transmitting multiple signals simultaneously over a single telephone line. Having served in the Spanish-American War, he was later promoted Chief Signal Officer in the California district.[19]

In this particular work and its recording, Pynchon condenses many contradictions and absurdities. The most obvious one is to attribute the designation "kazoo," which appears around 1884, to an Italian composer who died some 140 years earlier. To elevate—or denigrate—Vivaldi's Kazoo Concerto to Muzak not only links it to telecommunications, consumer culture, and the military but brings forth a number of contradictions. Although Vivaldi, especially *The Four Seasons,* is a favorite of Muzak and background music in

19 For a detailed biography, see the National Academy of Sciences' "Biographical Memoir of George Owen Squier" by Arthur E. Kennelly.

general[20] the kazoo's timbre is such that it would never go along with the smooth and carefully orchestrated arrangements that rely heavily on strings, woodwinds, and brass. Solos in Muzak are rare, and when they do occur, they are usually played by unobtrusive instruments such as the panpipes or a harp. What is more, Muzak is not recorded by orchestras that have a name. The recordings seem to pop out of nowhere and return to nowhere; they are not tracked back to a particular performer, orchestra, or arranger. While Muzak recordings are based on a canonized, familiar repertoire, they do not lend themselves to canonization. To imagine a variorum recording is difficult as it is, but to imagine a Muzak version of a variorum recording is simply nonsensical.[21] If the kazoo is a subversive instrument, here it is co-opted to serve the purpose of the nameless consumer industry unaware that by introducing the kazoo, the purpose of Muzak is undermined. Schafer claims that in order to defeat Muzak and bring it back from ground to figure, one must listen to it (98). Oedipa is intuitively on the right track with the Kazoo Concerto. She not only listens to the music, rather than simply hearing it; she is also able to pinpoint the composition, the recording, the orchestra, and the soloist, as well as noting that "she came through the bead-curtained entrance around bar 4" (*CoL* 2).

While *The Crying of Lot 49* contains Pynchon's perhaps best-known occurrence of the kazoo, it is in *Gravity's Rainbow* that we find the most elaborate descriptions. Toward the end, Pynchon presents us with another obscure and anachronistic kazoo composition. Roger Mexico and Seaman Bodine walk in on a concert by Gustav Schlabone (second violin/treble kazoo), André Omnopon (viola/alto kazoo) and an unnamed first violinist and cellist. This time it is

20 Music critic David Patrick Stearns writes: "If ever a composer was too amiable to be controversial, it was Antonio Vivaldi, or so it has seemed, given his current status as the prince of classical Muzak in elevators, dentist's offices and on FM radio."

21 The term "variorum" originates in literary criticism and is, as far as I know, not applied to music. It designates an edition of a text containing variants, earlier versions or notes by various editors and commentators.

Joseph Haydn's "suppressed" 'Kazoo' Quartet in G-Flat Minor (Op. 76) whose "Inner Voices are called to play kazoos instead of their usual instruments," that is, alto and treble kazoos, "creating problems of dynamics for cello and first violin that are unique in the literature" (*GR* 725). To this background music, a culinary gross-out contest unravels with alliterative favorites such as "scum soufflé [...] with a side of menstrual marmalade" (*GR* 729). Eventually, "Gustav and the rest of the quartet have abandoned Haydn and are all following Roger and Bodine out the door, kazoos and strings accompanying the Disgusting Duo [singing Acne à-la-mode]" (*GR* 731). David Cowart summarizes the performance as follows: "Performed at a dinner given by munitions magnates, the 'subversive' Haydn composition disrupts the unsavory proceedings, its mannered silences intimating knowledge suppressed by military-industrial entities busy changing their Nazi spots" (122). While this dinner party is given by exponents of the weapons industry in postwar Germany, the anarchic festivity is reminiscent of the frolicking and dancing in Cuxhaven and it is again a preterite instrument which brings disorder by speaking a language the elect cannot parse.

Haydn's Op. 76 consists of six string quartets with four movements each. Pynchon indicates that his kazoo quartet refers to the second movement of the fifth string quartet, that is, the "Largo, cantabile e mesto" in F-sharp major. Pynchon's own G-flat minor as a key signature is as absurd as a Haydn kazoo quartet as it would have as many as nine flats and cannot be said to have a real existence in music theory. Nevertheless, the kazoo might be the only musical instrument for whose performers G-flat minor poses no serious problem, as kazoos are hummed into and its players are therefore much less hung up on musical notation. Because the pitch of kazoo music is dependent on the range of the performer's voice and not on the length of the instrument's body, it makes no sense to introduce alto and treble kazoos as instruments but only as voices. Finally, giving these inner voices to two men would require them to sing falsetto—that is, in a false voice.

Another reason for Pynchon's choosing G-flat minor may very well be his well-documented love for blue notes, especially the flatted fifth (which only appears as a blue note in bebop), to which he dedicates ample space in *Mason & Dixon* and *Gravity's Rainbow.* G-flat, as the flatted fifth of C major, is, after all, the first note that comes to mind when thinking of flatted fifths, and blue notes are themselves something like preterites, that is, microtones that are always outside not only of the established Western scales but also outside of standard musical notation.

One reason for the suppression of the Kazoo Quartet is the

> subversive use of sudden fff quieting to ppp. It's the touch of the wandering sound-shadow, the Brennschluss of the Sun. They don't want you listening to too much of that stuff—at least not the way Haydn presents it (a strange lapse in the revered composer's behavior): cello, violin, alto and treble kazoos all rollicking along in a tune sounds like a song from the movie *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde,* 'You Should See Me Dance the Polka,' when suddenly in the middle of an odd bar the kazoos *just stop completely*, and the Outer Voices fall to plucking a non-melody that tradition sez represents two 18th-century Village Idiots vibrating their lower lips. At each other. It goes on for 20, 40 bars, this feeb's pizzicato, middle-line Kruppsters creak in the bowlegged velvet chairs, bibuhbuhbibuhbuh this does not sound like *Haydn*, Mutti! (*GR* 726)

The slow movement of the actual Op. 76 No. 5, has many piano-to-forte crescendos, but also a number of diminuendos from sforzato to piano. There is one diminuendo going all the way down to pianissimo, from bar 29 to 32. At the end of the quartet, there is a sforzato to piano descrescendo in bar 86. From then on it stays in piano until the last two-and-a-half bars, which are in pianissimo. It appears a little exaggerated to talk about "ppp-to-fff blasts" or vice versa in this softly played quartet, and it is not unambiguous which diminuendo is "the one, the notorious One" (*GR* 726). Since Pynchon—in analogy to the V-2—refers to the *Brennschluss* of the Sun, that is, the moment when

the fuel is burned out and the rocket (or the sun) is left to external forces, it is likely that he is talking about the diminuendo in bar 86, shortly before the end.[22]

The rest of the description of the Kazoo Quartet bears no recognizable likeness to the "Largo, cantabile e mesto." It may be that Pynchon inserts another Haydn quartet, such as the Quartet in E-flat major, Op. 33 No. 2, subtitled "Joke," which bears some faint resemblance with "You Should See Me Dance the Polka," the tune Dr. Jekyll hums before turning into Mr. Hyde in the 1941 movie directed by Victor Fleming. In the entire Op. 76 there is no instance where the outer voices would fall into plucking a non-melody, which, among other things, accounts for not sounding like Haydn, as the Krupp employees complain.

Bodine does not say who suppressed the quartet, "meant to express a type of unearthly radiance" (Weisenburger 360). The most likely candidates would be the Authorities or the musicologists of the present or the past. The unspecified "They" (or "they"; the pronoun is at the beginning of the sentence) would point toward the former, broadly understood as the elect. Why exactly they—or They—do not want you to listen to too much of that stuff is not evident to me. It could be that they do not want the preterite to be reminded of the end of the parabola (in the case of the V-2) or the end of life on earth (in the case of the sun) for fear that the masses would break into doomsday mayhem and get out of control. It could be that They Themselves in their power fantasies do not want to be reminded of the apocalypse and their mortality. It could be that they deem it inappropriate to make fun of such serious matters.

But the *fff*-to-*ppp* reversed blast is only one reason for the suppression of the work. There could be any number of other reasons. One would be the supposedly subversive nature of the instrument, especially in Nazi Germany, where an instrument, invented by an

22 The *Brennschluss* of the Sun contrasts with the previous quartet, Opus 76, No. 4, which is nicknamed "Sunrise."

African-American, produced in America, popular in American musics and distributed to American troops will not be esteemed. Other reasons could be that its sound is offensive to classically trained ears or that here, Haydn becomes a prankster, which does not conform to the publicly held image of the revered composer. But perhaps Pynchon simply wants to stage the instrument as subversive and suppressed, irrespective of historical evidence, because this allows him to attribute the small and cheap noise-maker to the preterite.

But why attribute this kazoo quartet to Haydn and not another composer of renown? Arnold Werner-Jensen writes that "the string quartet owes its unique status in chamber music to Haydn and through him became the benchmark and challenge for all subsequent composers and musicians" (186, my translation). Thus, while Pynchon attributes the Kazoo Concerto to Vivaldi, the master and trailblazer of the concerto, he attributes the Kazoo Quartet to the master of the quartet. As opposed to Mozart and Beethoven who were both born into families of privileged musicians employed at the court of a count, Haydn was the son of a wagonmaker and Vivaldi the son of a barber who later became a violinist. From an emancipatory or democratic viewpoint, the inclusion of kazoos—an instrument for anyone and everyone—in this hypothetical quartet would also be in line with the 1790 publication, allegedly by Haydn, of a *Gioco Filarmonico,* subtitled "an easy method of composing an endless number of minuets and trios, *even for those unlearned in counterpoint"* (Maconie 393, my emphasis).[23] This could be considered a subversive move by trained composers employed at the courts, as, with the help of this method, even the unlearned would be able to break into their profession and undermine the separation between the elect and the preterite.

23 At the time, there were a number of similar initiatives for aleatory compositions within established musical forms. Cf. Maconie 392–95. Maconie assesses these inventions as "already a good fit with an eighteenth-century aristocracy obsessed with mechanical automata and devoted to the Cartesian doctrine of human beings as machines" (395).

In *The Complete How To Kazoo,* Stewart names extra-musical uses for the kazoo, such as "splints for small animals with injured legs" (44), lightning rods (without kazooist) (71), or to punch pasta (171). What eludes her or was deemed inappropriate but could not be missed by someone like Pynchon or any number of potheads, was its use as a hash pipe. Harking back to Petard, the unemployed musicologist of *V.* who is named after the French slang word for a marijuana cigarette, Pynchon explicates this particular use with great gusto:

> Gustav and André, back from Cuxhaven, have unscrewed the reed-holder and reed from André's kazoo and replaced them with tinfoil—punched holes in the tinfoil, and are now smoking hashish out of the kazoo, finger-valving the small end pa-pa-pah to carburete the smoke—turns out sly Säure has had ex-Peenemünde engineers, propulsion-group people, working on a long-term study of optimum hashpipe design, and guess what—in terms of flow rate, heat-transfer, control of air-to-smoke ratio, the perfect shape turns out to be that of the classical *kazoo!* (*GR* 759)

It is not reported if the hippies in *Vineland* or *Inherent Vice* were aware of this use, but it would certainly lend the kazoo an extra aura of subversion in the eyes of the elect. Needless to say that this use would not only require the classical kazoo shape but also the classical kazoo material, that is, metal and not plastic. Although Cowart says that "[d]rugs, at once destructive and subversive, correlate to powerlessness" (99), he also concedes that "taking drugs (as opposed, perhaps, to dealing them) remains a powerful metaphor for the idea of an alternative to the rapacious capitalism and consumerism that afflict American society" (120). By smoking hashish (as well as taking the many other intoxicants of their choice), Gustav and André turn on, tune in, and drop out. The kazoo is complicit with their becoming unavailable for the dominant discourses and the grand narratives of progress and protestant work ethics.

As always with Pynchon, looking closely at his novels reveals a multiplicity of connections both between his works as well as to military, social, and economic history and the musical tradition. Like Oedipa Maas's continued quest for clues, it is difficult to determine where something was placed for the reader to discover and where those links and references are coincidental. What is evident, however, is that Pynchon has intimate knowledge of the subject matter he writes about. Even in *Vineland*, where the harmonica mainly appears as a prop, he places it in a history of struggle between the preterite and the elect, between music-making and war. He portrays the harmonica and the kazoo as American instruments. While he stages them as subversive and played by the preterite—with the exception of the ambiguity of the Harmonica Marching Band Academy—he makes it clear that the instrument per se is innocent but its history is not. In it, we can find the struggles between de- and reterritorialization, appropriation and reappropriation, a continuous game of who has the upper hand. In all of this, however, Pynchon stays true to his belief that music offers respite and that making art—popular, lowbrow, participative art in particular—may be the only way to put up resistance to top-down hierarchies of power, be they economic or otherwise political. The greatest power of "subversive" music-making then comes from refusing to speak the language of the elect and choosing a means of expression which, as some believe, cannot lie. At the same time, Pynchon shows that this resistance can only be temporary—at least with a view to history—and this is perhaps why it is so important. While music can be appropriated by political and economic forces, a living, continuously changing music based on practice among like-minded cannot turn fascist but will remain dialogic, to use Vilém Flusser's distinction between broadcast and network media (cf. 172–74). If we are to escape becoming bogged down in power struggles whose conditions we are unable to shape, perhaps the only thing to do is to pick up an instrument and strum, hum, blow, or sing along.

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Music occupies a peculiar role in the field of American Studies. It is undoubtedly recognized as an important form of cultural production, yet the field continues to privilege textual and visual forms of art as its objects of examination. The essays collected in this volume seek to adjust this imbalance by placing music center stage while still acknowledging its connections to the fields of literary and visual studies that engage with the specifically American cultural landscape. In doing so, they proffer the concept of the 'musical unconscious' as an analytical tool of understanding the complexities of the musical production of meanings in various social, political, and technological contexts, in reference to country, queer punk, jazz, pop, black metal, film music, blues, carnival music, Muzak, hip-hop, experimental electronic music, protest and campaign songs, minimal music, and of course the kazoo.

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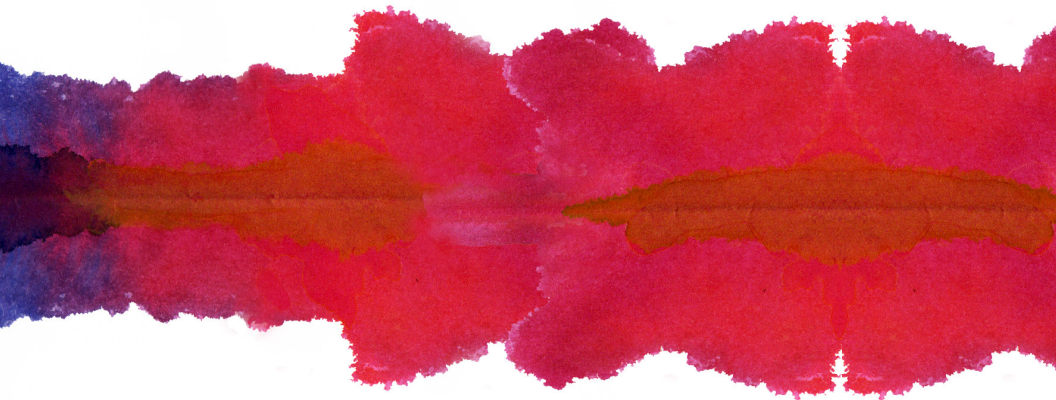

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