

Pynchon and Relativity: Narrative Time in Thomas Pynchon's Later Novels (Continuum Literary Studies)

Simon de Bourcier

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Is time an illusion? Do past, present, and future co-exist in a timelesswhole, or are our experiences of change and duration the reality of time? Thomas Pynchon's writing has always been interested in the interplay of thesetwo ways of thinking about time, but his recent fiction has also taken onthe task of imaginatively responding to Einstein's Theory of Relativity, whichin the early years of the twentieth century renewed this ancient debate. In this book, Simon deBourcier looks in detail at Pynchon's 2006 novel Against the Day, which is set during the period in which Einstein published hisworld-changing theory, and 1997's Mason & Dixon, set in theeighteenth century when Isaac Newton's picture of a world governed by absolutespace and time was unchallenged. By comparing these two novels, Pynchon and Relativity shows that Pynchon's tales of loss, haunting, and time travelare informed by a sophisticated awareness of the philosophical implications ofRelativity. The book goes on to examine the consequences of this for ourreading of Pynchon's other work.



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