



# **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 timeless whole, or are our experiences of change and duration the reality of time? Thomas Pynchon's writing has always been interested in the interplay of these two ways of thinking about time, but his recent fiction has also taken on the task of imaginatively responding to Einstein's Theory of Relativity, which in the early years of the twentieth century renewed this ancient debate. In this book, Simon de Bourcier looks in detail at Pynchon's 2006 novel *Against the Day*, which is set during the period in which Einstein published his world-changing theory, and 1997's *Mason & Dixon*, set in the eighteenth century when Isaac Newton's picture of a world governed by absolute space and time was unchallenged. By comparing these two novels, *Pynchon and Relativity* shows that Pynchon's tales of loss, haunting, and time travel are informed by a sophisticated awareness of the philosophical implications of Relativity. The book goes on to examine the consequences of this for our reading of Pynchon's other work.

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