

ABSTRACT

I attempt in this thesis, to graft together a close critical, and predominantly thematic, reading of Thomas Pynchon's novels with selected issues treated in the work of Jacques Derrida on philosophy and textuality, illustrating how this work demands the revision and interrogation of several major critical issues, concepts, dualisms and presuppositions. The thesis consists of an Introduction which sets forth a brief rationale for the graft described above, followed by a short and unavoidably inadequate synopsis of Derrida's work with a brief review and explication of those of his 'concepts' which play an important role in my reading of Pynchon's texts. The Introduction is succeeded by three lengthy chapters in which I discuss, more or less separately, each of Pynchon's three novels to date. These are V. (1963), The Crying of Lot 49, (1966) and Gravity's Rainbow (1973), and I discuss them in the order of their appearance, devoting a chapter to each.

I attempt to treat different but related issues, preoccupations, themes and tropes in each of the novels to avoid repeating myself, engaging the apparatuses derived from Derrida's writing where deemed strategic and instructive. I suggest moreover, that several of the issues examined apropos the novel under consideration in any one chapter apply mutandis mutandi to the other novels. Each chapter therefore to some extent conducts a reading of the novels which it does not treat directly.

Finally, supervising these separate chapters is a sustained focus on the epistemology of binarism and digitalism, and the conceptual dualisms which structure and inform major portions of the thematic and rhetorical dimensions

of the novels. This focus is conjoined with a periodic attention to certain semantic devices and effects which register the limitations and inadequacy of the extensive dualistic framework of the texts and which motivate the questions of polysemy and semantic indeterminacy.

The thesis concludes with a Bibliography and a summary Epilogue which seeks to assess briefly the 'achievement' of Pynchon's writing.

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