

ABSTRACT

The present work takes Thomas Pynchon's work as a whole (*oeuvre*) in an interpretive literary analysis, arguing that there is a unifying pattern of the *use of space* in the narratives. This pattern is attested to by the development of tropes, motifs, and themes vested in literary space, literary space as a world of the characters, and spatial discourses informing the characters' epistemology. The present work claims that there is a recognizable common denominator in Pynchon's use of space: the authorial message emphasizing the growing urgency with which the ethical aspect of human being in the world is constitutive to social reality.

The methodology of the present work combines interpretive reading based on reader's cooperation with the text and the use of terms from selected philosophical readings. The cooperation with the text is vested in restitutive (or open) interpretation that is delineated by what a text can and does support (Umberto Eco's concept of the text as a "lazy machine") and the concept of the "small world" of narrative (Lubomír Doležel). The philosophical inspiration relies on the tenet that human epistemology of being in the world is contingent on the physical existence in space (Maurice Merleau-Ponty). The work then negotiates Martin Heidegger's concept of Dasein that cares for its existence and for the world. The ramifications of Dasein's care are then explored on the level of living with others (Jean-Luc Nancy). Finally, the work continues the discussion on a societal level following the argumentation of space appropriation and mechanisms of control (Henri Lefebvre, Edward Soja, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari). The State as a type of societal organization is understood in terms of dynamic systems based on the principles of self-organization (Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela), with entropy as the principle determining mechanisms of self-perpetuation (Rudolf Arnheim, Geert Hofstede).

Throughout Pynchon's work, the reader witnesses a development of characters and literary space: the present work uses the concept of *visceral investment* in space to grasp this development. His characters gradually acquire a more particularized expression in the narrative, the dichotomy between spatial discourses is clarified, and his message on the topic of the other becomes more urgent. To emphasize the ethical aspect of human being in the world and to explore the opposition of the synchronic becoming-through-other and the diachronic being-toward-death, Pynchon modifies the space and its use in the narrative.

To achieve the paradigmatic shift from the diachronic to the synchronic, Pynchon explores the dichotomy between real and imagined space, and the discourses that are applied in human epistemology to "make sense" of the two concepts. In order to grasp how power affects these discourses, the present work employs the concepts of *striated space* (product of territorialization) and *smooth space* (preceding territorialization or produced by de-territorialization). The present work identifies the *oeuvre's* development of the *real sites or imagined concepts* produced by the systemic mechanisms of self-organization in striated space on the one hand, and *imagined locales* produced by resistance to control in smooth space on the other. It then proceeds with an analysis of the change in the characters' epistemology and the use of space in individual novels, concluding that the growing intensity in the use of the respective "types" of produced space parallels the increasing emphasis on the ethical aspect of individual being in the world, resulting in a call for ethical responsibility.

The present work thus suggests that to read and critique Thomas Pynchon's text(s), it is crucial to follow the observed development. Not only is it highly productive in terms of interpretation but it successfully avoids an imposition of meaning that would be particularized only on the basis of a single narrative, and contextualized with exterior aspects that may be read into the text but are not necessarily supported by it.