

INTERFACES, TRANSITIONS, AND MOIRES

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The Style of Connectedness: Gravity's Rainbow and Thomas Pynchon. By Thomas Moore. Columbia: U of Missouri P, 1987. 312 pp. \$30.

We can classify new studies of Gravity's Rainbow by their quotations: do they focus on the juicy set pieces--the colonies as the outhouses of European souls, the vampirish lament of Technologies for their funding, the stout rainbow cock--or do they regale us with felicities we had passed over? Both approaches have virtues, but the latter is decidedly more refreshing, and to this group belongs The Style of Connectedness. Thomas Moore by no means ignores major issues, but his focus on connectedness directs attention to the interfaces, transitions, and "moirés" formed by the superimposition of systems and patterns. Being reminded of forgotten details is one of the pleasures this book offers the reader.

Connectedness is both the theme and the substance of this study. Moore moves associatively from one topic to another in apparent defiance of normal analytic framing. This can be disconcerting, and makes it difficult to remember where in his chapters (centered on film, character, Weber and capitalism, science, and "the Gods") any one subject comes up. The chapter on Max Weber and Capitalism is the most circumscribed in subject, yet Moore deals with charisma by discussing Christ, Hitler, Enzian, Slothrop, comic book heroes, Gottfried, Malcolm X and John Kennedy, Yardbird Parker, Roger Mexico and Seaman Bodine. He then moves to Puritans and quotes some important Calvinist texts. Then he mentions The Crying of Lot 49, Katje's ancestor Frans van der Groov, Slothrop's ancestor William, the ins and outs of election and preterition, Tyrone Slothrop as running parody of Bunyanesque Christian, grace, William Pynchon and his heretical tract, William Slothrop and his, and America's fork in the road. Moore then moves to the Capitalist World, discussing details of the structure and patents of the IG Farben cartel, the transnational dealings of the big companies despite the war, the Brocken, the Phoebus cartel, the eerie light of naked lightbulbs which he associates with charismatic figures such as articulate dodoes, Messiah-pigs, and the immortal Bulb. The chapter ends with Marshall McLuhan.

Moore's study has two major strengths. One is the wealth of new background detail, such as the material on IG Farben and the suggestion that John Hawkes' [sic] western Red River provides a model for Crutchfield and Whappo (John Wayne and Montgomery Clift). Moore also points us to possible sources for ideas: C. Wright Mills' The Power Elite, passages from William James, C. G. Jung, and Martin Buber. The other strength is Moore's

focus on Pynchon's morality and mysticism. Although I found the morality being posited a bit bourgeois, the mysticism is important, and has only recently received any detailed attention. Moore's Pynchon keeps cool but cares, feels horror at much of what he describes (including sexual perversion), and embraces One rather than Zero, both/and rather than either/or. Moore associates One with a mystic something and Zero with nothing.

The study's chief weakness is Moore's failure to take much previous criticism into account. I could find no reference to the many articles in Pynchon Notes, and none to important and highly relevant articles such as those by Brian McHale on the mapping of characters onto each other, Joel D. Black or Peter Brier on Pynchon's romanticism, Bertram Lippman on movies, Speer Morgan and Robert L. Nadeau (both of whom touch on several of Moore's major concerns), John M. Muste on mandalas and mysticism, and Linda A. Westervelt on connectedness. These are only a few prominent omissions, and none is a recent work. Responsibility to predecessors and courtesy to readers demand that one locate one's enterprise within the ongoing discourse. The value of Moore's new factual material is unaffected by this failure, but the discussion of morality would have seemed less arbitrarily assertive had alternative readings been discussed more directly.

For obscure reasons, the University of Missouri Press decided to Americanize "moiré" by dropping the acute accent, stripping the mark even from within quotations. The word is one of Moore's key terms, and had the preface not retained one sole example with the accent, I would have found the text puzzling for quite some time. Aside from that quibble, I must say that Missouri has done a handsome job with The Style of Connectedness. From the heavy silvered dustjacket with an appropriate Georg Grosz painting to the crisp type and thick paper, the book makes a pleasingly substantial appearance. Readers will enjoy rooting about for newly identified Rilke influences and for information about the historical Phoebus cartel.

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