

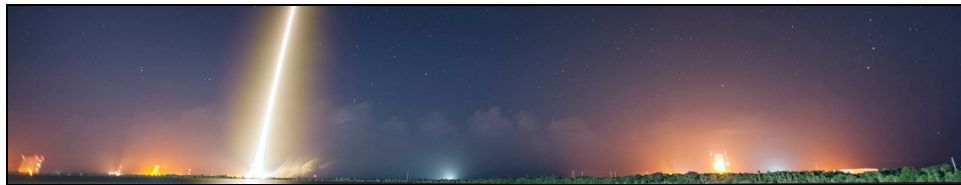
Thomas Pynchon, from S-Gerät to Y-Gerät

Martin Paul Eve

Professor of Literature, Technology and Publishing

Birkbeck, University of London

19 August 2021 (last updated 6 September 2026)



Cite as: Martin Paul Eve, "Thomas Pynchon, from S-Gerät to Y-Gerät", *eve.gd: Martin Paul Eve*, August 19, 2021,
<https://doi.org/10.59348/tk334-0th06>.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.59348/tk334-0th06>

Available at: <https://eve.gd/2021/08/19/thomas-pynchon-from-s-ger%C3%A4t-to-y-ger%C3%A4t/>

One of the core plot devices (in so far as there is a plot) in Thomas Pynchon's 1973 novel, *Gravity's Rainbow*, is the S-Gerät: the Schwarzgerät or "black device", made from the plastic Imipolex G.

While working on another project (on the history of television), I found a curious set of projects from the war, designated Y-Gerät and X-Gerät, which are part of the so-called Battle of the Beams but that, to my knowledge, haven't been explored in Pynchon scholarship.

"The German air force was operating a directional beam system called "Y-Gerät" aimed at the London area. It sent out two separate transmissions to fix the aircraft's bearing and range from the beacon." – Abramson, Albert, *The History of Television, 1880 to 1941* (Jefferson N.C.: McFarland & Co., 1987), pp. 268-9.

I don't know what influence these had on Pynchon, if any. However, it's always fun to note an unspotted(?) real-world connection to this novel.

References

This reference list has been generated, in many cases, through an automated process and may therefore contain errors or incomplete metadata. It is provided purely as assistance for finding the items mentioned within this post.

projects, Contributors to Wikimedia, 'Battle of the Beams', *Wikipedia*, 6 March 2003

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_the_Beams>