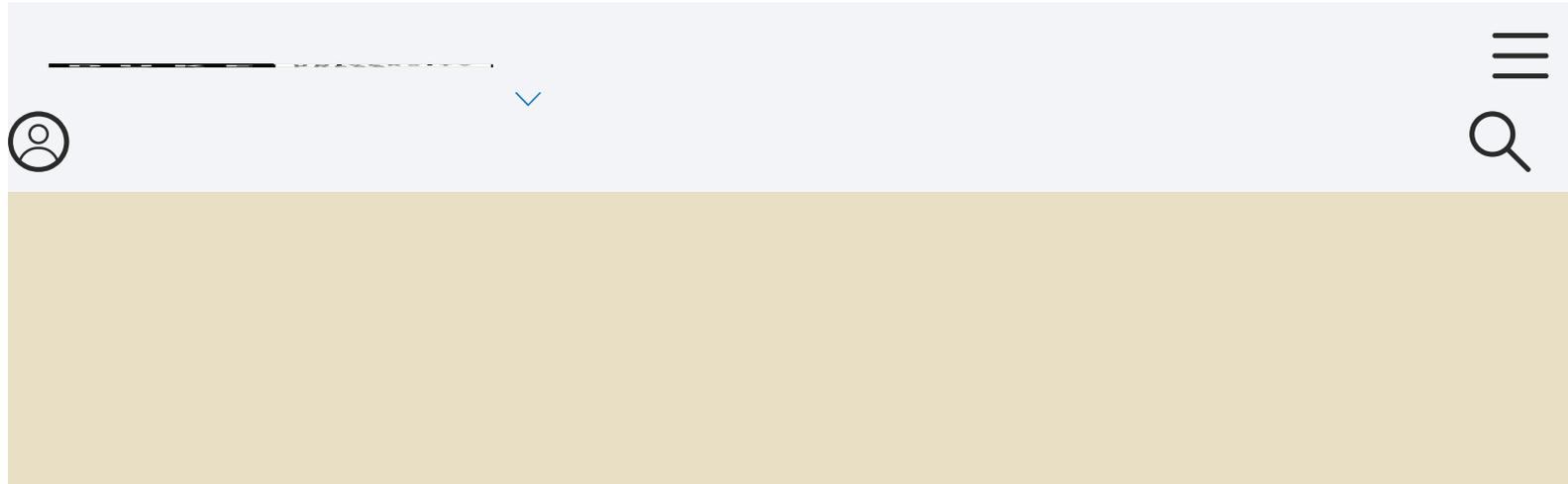


A City of the Future: Gravity's Rainbow and the 1962 Seattle World's Fair.

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"A City of the Future": Gravity's Rainbow and the 1962 Seattle World's Fair

Jeffrey Savers



volume 62
number 3
september 2016

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Drawing on archival sources, I argue that the 1962 Seattle World's Fair (also known as Century 21) was an important source for Thomas Pynchon's surreal depictions of the Raketten-Stadt in *Gravity's Rainbow*. Accounts of the influence of Seattle on Pynchon have been limited to his work as a Boeing technical writer, and Century 21 goes unmentioned in work on the novel's allusions by Steven Weisenburger and others. Pynchon responds throughout *Gravity's Rainbow* to Century 21, particularly its Cold War views of space-age futurism and nuclear weapons. I draw new connections between the angel of Lübeck and John Glenn's World's Fair appearance; aspects of the Raketten-Stadt and the fair's US Science Pavilion; and Pynchon's many towers and elevators and that signature feature of Century 21, the Space Needle. The conclusion attends to the fair's traces in *Against the Day and Bleeding Edge*, demonstrating Pynchon's nearly career-long fascination with the event.

Keywords: [Thomas Pynchon](#), [Cold War](#), [postmodern novel](#), [nuclear war](#)

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Online ISSN 2325-8101

Print ISSN 0041-462X

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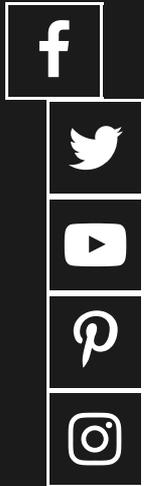
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