



Gravity's Rainbow

Study Guide by Course Hero



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👁 Book Basics

AUTHOR

Thomas Pynchon

YEAR PUBLISHED

1973

GENRE

Comedy, Fiction

PERSPECTIVE AND NARRATOR

An omniscient narrator relates the events in *Gravity's Rainbow*. This narrative choice allows the author to provide a sprawling view of World War II (1939–45).

TENSE

Gravity's Rainbow is told in the present and past tense.

ABOUT THE TITLE

The title *Gravity's Rainbow* refers to the arc of the German V-2 rocket in flight. The Germans used the V-2 weapon during World War II. Fuel propels the V-2 rocket up and then gravity pulls it down, creating a curved path. The title compares the V-2 rocket's path made by the force of gravity to a rainbow.

🕒 In Context

World War II

World War II lasted from September 1939 to September 1945. *Gravity's Rainbow* is set during the latter years of the war; the first chapter starts in December 1944. World War II involved many nations of the world, and its battles were fought in Europe, Asia, and Africa. The two main sides were the Allied powers (or the Allies) and the Axis powers. The principal nations of the Allies were Great Britain, France, the Soviet Union, the United States, and to some extent China. The chief Axis powers were Germany, Italy, and Japan.

In large part, World War II resulted from the events of World War I (1914–18). The terms of peace were particularly harsh on Germany, which lost territory and was forced to pay reparations. During the difficult economic times after World War I, some Germans increasingly turned to fascism (form of authoritarianism where the government controls industry and forcibly suppresses opposition), which promised a renewed, strengthened, racially purified Germany. In 1933, Adolf Hitler became chancellor of Germany at the request of the ruling government.

On September 1, 1939, Hitler invaded Poland. Poland had alliance agreements in place with England and France, so on

September 3, 1939, England and France declared war on Germany. Hitler also conquered or annexed Austria, Belgium, and France. In 1941 Hitler instituted a program of imprisoning and killing Jews in Germany and in the countries under German military occupation, with an eventual goal of extermination of all Jews. Other minority populations, such as homosexuals and Roma people, were also confined in the concentration camps and executed.

In 1941 Hitler's armies invaded the Soviet Union. The German defeat in the Battle of Stalingrad on January 31, 1943, was the turning point in the Eastern Front of the war. On June 6, 1944, Allied forces landed on the beaches of Normandy, beginning the fight to take back Europe from Hitler's control. In September 1944 Germany launched its first V-2 rocket from the Netherlands, first aimed at Paris, and then at Great Britain. The V-2 was 47 feet long, held 1,600 pounds of explosives, and acted as a kind of self-propelled bomb. Finally, in April 1945, Berlin fell, Hitler committed suicide, and Germany surrendered. The war concluded with the dropping of atomic bombs on Nagasaki and Hiroshima, Japan, in August and Japan's surrender on September 2, 1945.

World War II in *Gravity's Rainbow*

In *Gravity's Rainbow*, in September 1944, the American soldier Tyrone Slothrop hears the explosions of the first V-2s to fall on London. Slothrop's journey carries him through many of the sites of the European war. Rather than just using World War II as a backdrop, *Gravity's Rainbow* reinterprets the war through paranoia. The war is not just a fight between aggressor nations and righteous defenders, although *Gravity's Rainbow* shows no sympathy for Nazis. Instead, the war is also an opportunity for shadowy powers on both sides to extend their reaches and increase their profits. The most shadowy of these powers are international cartels and corporations. Thus, *Gravity's Rainbow* emphasizes German corporations that survive the war, such as IG Farben.

Gravity's Rainbow also emphasizes the swift realignment of the conquered Germany as an ally of the United States against the communist Soviet Union. In the book, the war also sets up the postwar world, even as the war is still being fought. The cartels and corporations are again the beneficiaries.

The lack of battle scenes in *Gravity's Rainbow* does not mean the war is ignored. It is mainly a comic novel, so armed combat

is transposed into comic equivalents: a pie fight, a pillow fight, a tank that fires dud artillery at a party. But *Gravity's Rainbow* is not only comic; it also considers war from angles other than the battlefield. It tracks the machinations of power far above the battlefield, not only those of cartels but of angels. The novel also takes a wide view of the victims of war: not just the fallen soldiers, but the bombed civilians of London and Lübeck and the inmates of concentration camp Dora. By providing a sprawling view rather than merely focusing on battles, Pynchon is able to represent war more fully.

Protestantism and Preterition

Protestantism

In *Gravity's Rainbow* the narrator frequently refers to "the preterite" and "preterition," as well as "the elect." These are all concepts of Protestantism. The Protestant movement is an umbrella term and so there is not just one set of Protestant doctrines, but in general, Protestants wanted independence from the Catholic pope. They also wanted less focus on idols and relics. In place of Catholic hierarchy and ritual, Protestants wanted an experience of faith.

Catholics believe someone who confesses their sins can be absolved of (forgiven for) them by a priest. In the late medieval period, Catholics had a system of indulgences—similar to a "get out of jail free" card in the board game Monopoly. For example, in the early 11th century, a pope granted the knights of the First Crusade a plenary indulgence, which canceled all existing obligations in full. The indulgence system became corrupted because a wealthy person could pay for indulgences, buying the way to salvation. Protestants rejected this practice.

In Protestantism, "the elect" refers to those chosen by God to be saved and to enjoy everlasting life. The opposite of the elect are the preterite, those whom God has passed by. Their souls are damned. Some Protestants believed in predestination, which means God had decided, eternally long ago, whom to damn and who to save. The decision was made long before a person's birth.

Preterition in *Gravity's Rainbow*

Gravity's Rainbow is loaded with references to preterition. When some passengers fall off the ship *Anubis*, the narrator says, "The white *Anubis*, [has] gone on to salvation." But, he says, "back here, in her wake, are the preterite, swimming and drowning." In Protestant theology, the preterite are those denied salvation. In Part 3 Katje and Pirate attend a supernatural or dream ball, a kind of "dancing Preterition." However, *Gravity's Rainbow* is not about the history of doctrinal disputes within Christianity.

Colonialism

Beginning in the 16th century, the seafaring European powers began to explore and conquer large areas of the world, particularly in Africa and the Americas. They established settlements called colonies, hence the name colonialism for this political and economic system. Economically, the colony supplies the colonizing nation with extractable resources, cheap labor, and new markets. Politically, the colony becomes part of the colonizer's empire. *Gravity's Rainbow* is mainly concerned with European and American colonialism, particularly in the 19th and 20th centuries. Often through pairs of characters, such as Blicero and Enzian, *Gravity's Rainbow* uses the theme of colonialism to show what a dominating person or power gains from the dominated.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, European colonialism intensified. This period is sometimes called "the new imperialism," as new powers were also hoping to establish global empires. One such power was Germany, which had designs on parts of Africa. In the character of Weissmann/Blicero, *Gravity's Rainbow* shows the allure of the colonial venture. Blicero finds a Herero youth erotically compelling, though he also seeks to Europeanize him. *Gravity's Rainbow* is particularly attentive to the psychological dynamics of colonialism. In a discussion of Herero history, the narrator says German political theorist Karl Marx tries "to make believe [colonialism is] nothing but Cheap Labor and Overseas Markets." (Karl Marx was a 19th-century German philosopher and economist who developed the theory of communist economic development where the means of production are controlled by the government.) In contrast to these Marxist ideas, the narrator describes the psychological or cultural value of the colony: "Colonies are the outhouses of the

European soul, where a fellow can let his pants down and relax," the narrator says.

Colonization is also a process of destruction of the local culture. The colonized people are viewed as inferior to the colonizers. The only way for the colonized person to be "elevated," wrote the Martinican 20th-century anti-colonialist Frantz Fanon, is through "adoption of the mother country's cultural standards." In *Gravity's Rainbow*, this process is represented in Enzian, the Herero rocket engineer.

World War II destabilized European colonialism and began to bring about its end. *Gravity's Rainbow* is concerned with the way the Allied powers in World War II set the stage for the postwar order.

Hereros and German South West Africa

German South West Africa (Namibia) was a German colony from 1884 to 1919. From 1904 to 1907 the Nama and Herero peoples rebelled against German rule. Germany responded with a brutal genocidal campaign. As would happen later under the Nazis, the German army used concentration camps to confine the Hereros and Nama slated for genocide. By the end, about three-fourths of the Herero people had been executed (or had died trying to escape the camps by fleeing into the desert). The Nama likewise suffered, their entire population reduced by half by the end of the rebellion's suppression.

In *Gravity's Rainbow*, Enzian is a Herero from South West Africa, now living in Germany. Enzian leads a group of Hereros called the Schwarzkommando (German for "black commando group"). They work on their own V-2 rocket project even after the war in Europe ends. The gathering of the Schwarzkommando in Germany is a kind of reversal; the crimes committed by Germans in the colonies come back to haunt them in their own land.

Literary Movements

Modernism

Modernism was a late 19th- and early 20th-century artistic movement that included music, painting, sculpture, architecture, and literature. It began after the Industrial Revolution and especially flourished after World War I, predominantly in Europe and North America. Modernism rejected the styles and forms of the past and sought to invent new ones. Modern architecture rejected exterior ornament and the overstuffed interiors of the 19th century in favor of sleek, machined forms. Modern painting and sculpture turned away from traditional notions of representation, becoming increasingly abstract and self-reflexive. Modern dance rejected the schooled and rigid beauty of ballet for wilder and more expressive movements. Examples of modernist literature include the spare prose of American writer Ernest Hemingway's *In Our Time* (1924) and English writer Virginia Woolf's *Jacob's Room* (1922). In all this, there was an implicit rejection of what people were used to finding pleasurable.

Postmodernism

Like modernism, postmodernism is a movement in numerous arts, including architecture, visual art, theater, and literature. Postmodernism arose after World War II, and it turned away from modernism's insistence on entirely new art forms. Instead, postmodern art and architecture often quote elements of numerous traditional styles in one work. Characteristics of postmodernism include parody or pastiche, flattened emotions, complicated artifice, and self-reference or recursion. In American literature after World War II, postmodern novels by John Barth, Robert Coover, Kathy Acker, and Don DeLillo emphasized the construction of fiction and the possibly fictional nature of reality.

Gravity's Rainbow is also in this postmodern mode. It plays with parody and pastiche, inventing fictional war departments with absurd names like PISCES and ACHTUNG. It restages World War II as the invasion of a lone tank with a dud gun into a hash-addled party on the French Riviera. *Gravity's Rainbow* meticulously builds up the realism of its depictions with encyclopedic detail. However, it also swerves into ridiculous songs and surreal wanderings such as the story of Byron the Bulb, a preternaturally long-lasting light bulb. In Pynchon's hands, these elements are part of a shifting and unstable world in which paranoid theories of control might be accurate.

Cybernetics

Cybernetics is the study of communication and control processes in living organisms and technical systems. In particular, cybernetics studies how creatures and machines adjust in response to environmental input, or feedback. These machine cybernetics include guided missiles. Unlike bullets or cannonballs, these missiles have internal guidance systems capable of correcting the missile's course in flight. These missiles are the descendants of the German V-2 rocket.

The study of cybernetics began in 1948, when American mathematician Norbert Wiener published his book *Cybernetics; or, Control and Communication in the Animal and the Machine*. *Gravity's Rainbow* mainly takes place between 1944 and 1946, but Pynchon was thinking about cybernetics when he wrote it. The word *cybernetic* comes from a Greek word referring to steering. Further, cybernetics is also called control theory: the study of how a system's guidance mechanism monitors what is happening, compares it to what should be happening, and adjusts the system accordingly. *Gravity's Rainbow* is concerned with control, and especially with who or what controls the technological, economic, and political systems of contemporary society.

Pynchon thematizes cybernetics and control theory by having psychics at the White Visitation communicate with a "control" or otherworldly spirit, and by having these "controls" or spirits talk about control. One spirit, Roland Feldspath, proposes a paranoid theory: the disastrous German inflation of the 1930s was deliberately instigated, "to drive young enthusiasts of the Cybernetic Tradition into Control work." There is no "cybernetic tradition" in 1944, when Feldspath is speaking. But Pynchon planted this clue to emphasize the V-2 was the beginning of guided missiles and cybernetics.

In the 1960s and '70s, as Pynchon was writing *Gravity's Rainbow*, the Cold War (1947–91) was underway. The Cold War was an ideological war between the United States and the Soviet Union over the spread of communism and the proliferation of nuclear weapons. German American rocket scientists like Wernher von Braun contributed to the development of systems that could annihilate the earth. The paranoid theories of *Gravity's Rainbow* use the V-2 to ask questions about whether people can control the weapons that threaten global extinction.

Author Biography

Youth

Thomas Pynchon is an American novelist best known for his sprawling absurdist novels critiquing modern society. He was born Thomas Ruggles Pynchon Jr. on May 8, 1937, in Glen Cove, Long Island, New York. He graduated from high school at age 16 and went on to Cornell University, where he studied engineering. His studies were interrupted by his two-year stint in the navy, after which he returned to Cornell and obtained a degree in English in 1958.

After graduating from Cornell, Pynchon spent a year in New York, living in the bohemian, or unconventional, neighborhood of Greenwich Village and working on short stories and a novel. He then moved to Seattle, Washington, where he spent a few years working as a technical writer for the airplane manufacturer Boeing. In 1962 he quit Boeing and devoted himself to writing.

Literary Career

Pynchon's first short story, "The Small Rain," appeared in 1959 in the college literary magazine the *Cornell Writer*. His Greenwich Village and Boeing years saw the publication of several more short stories. In 1963, he published his first novel, the enigmatic *V*. One plotline of this complex novel concerns the search for a hidden meaning—perhaps a land, or a woman—behind the initial V. The Faulkner Foundation awarded *V*. its prize for best first novel.

V. was followed by another short story and several excerpts of a work in progress. Pynchon published that latter work in 1966 as the short novel *The Crying of Lot 49*. In this second novel, a woman wanders Southern California in an attempt to learn about a mysterious underground organization called Tristero. Often she and the reader cannot tell whether she has discovered something real or is entangled in a paranoid fantasy.

In 1973 Pynchon published *Gravity's Rainbow*, a sprawling novel set at the end of World War II (1939–45). *Gravity's Rainbow* expands themes and styles of the earlier two novels. Like the

heroine of *The Crying of Lot 49*, its protagonist teeters on a knife-edge between insight and paranoia, and he sometimes seems the pawn of vast, secretive organizations with malign motives. Against this backdrop Pynchon also brings into play his absurdist humor, interrupting the narrative with songs, dreams, and drug-induced visions.

Gravity's Rainbow was hailed as a success. It was one of two novels awarded the National Book Award for fiction in 1974. (It shared the honor with Polish Jewish writer Isaac Bashevis Singer's *A Crown of Feathers*.) The judges of the Pulitzer Prize selected *Gravity's Rainbow* for the prize in fiction. However, the judges were overruled by the outraged Pulitzer Prize advisory board, who called the novel "unreadable," "overwritten," and "obscene." In a stalemate, no Pulitzer Prize for Fiction was awarded that year.

Sixteen years passed between *Gravity's Rainbow* and Pynchon's next novel, *Vineland* (1990), set in marijuana-growing country in Northern California. *Vineland's* critical reception was not enthusiastic. It was followed by *Mason & Dixon* (1997), which mimics 18th-century styles as it tells the story of the two famous English surveyors Charles Mason and Jeremiah Dixon. *Against the Day* (2006) follows anarchist and rebellious characters at the turn of the 20th century. With *Inherent Vice* (2009) Pynchon depicts his version of a detective novel while returning to the Southern California settings of *The Crying of Lot 49*. In *Bleeding Edge* (2013), which is set just before the terrorist attacks on the United States of September 11, 2001, Pynchon explores the computer industry.

Reclusiveness

Pynchon has determinedly avoided media appearances. Only a handful of confirmed photographs exist, and he declines to give interviews. Nonetheless, there is no evidence he is a hermit or a misanthrope (someone who despises people). He seems only to avoid publicity, not people in general. He dedicated *Gravity's Rainbow* to his close friend Richard Fariña, a fellow American writer he first met while they both studied at Cornell. Later he was the best man at Fariña's wedding (to the sister of American folk singer Joan Baez). Pynchon's media avoidance is often playful rather than tormented. In 1974 he sent American comedian Irwin Corey in his place to accept the National Book Award. He has "appeared" on several episodes of the animated series *The Simpsons*, represented by a

character wearing a bag over his head. Away from publicity, Pynchon has been a family man. In the 1990s he married his literary agent, Melanie Jackson, and they had a son.

Legacy

Pynchon's best-known novels combine an encyclopedic range of historical and technical knowledge with comic antics and conspiracy plots. *V.*, *The Crying of Lot 49*, and *Gravity's Rainbow* all use paranoia as a lens through which to criticize contemporary society. Authors influenced by Pynchon's novels include Americans David Foster Wallace, Don DeLillo, and Richard Powers. *Gravity's Rainbow*, with its emphasis on cybernetics (study of communication and control theory), has been cited as an influence on cyberpunk (science fiction that addresses futuristic urban societies controlled by technology) and on science fiction novelists William Gibson, Neal Stephenson, and Bruce Sterling. Critic James Wood has been a dissenting voice, labeling Pynchon's work as "hysterical realism," a style Wood believes is too full of puns, absurdities, and lengthy prose. However, Pynchon's fiction continues to be admired.

Characters

Tyrone Slothrop

Slothrop is offended by injustice and smug characters. He has an anti-authoritarian streak and a liking for vulgar, flashy clothes, especially zoot suits and Hawaiian shirts. He romances numerous women, and he seems to fall in love with several of them. Slothrop has a peculiar sensitivity to the V-2 rockets falling on London. He appears to get erections related to the V-2 rockets. However, this happens days before the rocket falls on a particular site. This response is somehow related to experiments Laszlo Jamf conducted on him as an infant. Slothrop wants to find the truth about himself, the 00000 rocket, and Their machinations.

Captain Blicero

As Lieutenant Weissmann, Blicero served in the German Army in South West Africa during the brutal suppression of the Herero uprising. Later he took a Herero lover, young Enzian. Back in Germany, Blicero leads a rocket battery at Peenemünde. In classic Nazi villain style, he likes poetry, music, and sadistic games.

Katje Borgesius

Katje lived in captivity with Gottfried, in thrall to the sadistic Blicero. When she freed herself from Blicero's hold, she sent a message to Pirate Prentice and was exfiltrated to London. Katje works with Pointsman and PISCES; she seduces Slothrop in a staged crisis, in which an octopus attacks her. Although she is outwardly cool, at unguarded times a look of grief and desolation comes over her. She is pained by the deaths she caused in her work with the Nazis, and she tries to compensate by joining the counterforce.

Enzian

Enzian is the son of a Herero woman and a Russian sailor. He is also the half-brother of the Soviet intelligence officer Tchitcherine. Enzian leads the Schwarzkommando, a German rocket battery consisting solely of Hereros. Enzian's mother took part in the Herero uprising of 1904 against German colonial rule. After a disastrous desert trek, Enzian's mother and all her kin perished. Enzian woke up alone, surrounded by dead people. This marked his fate as a survivor in an occupied land. He is determined to save his people.

Pointsman

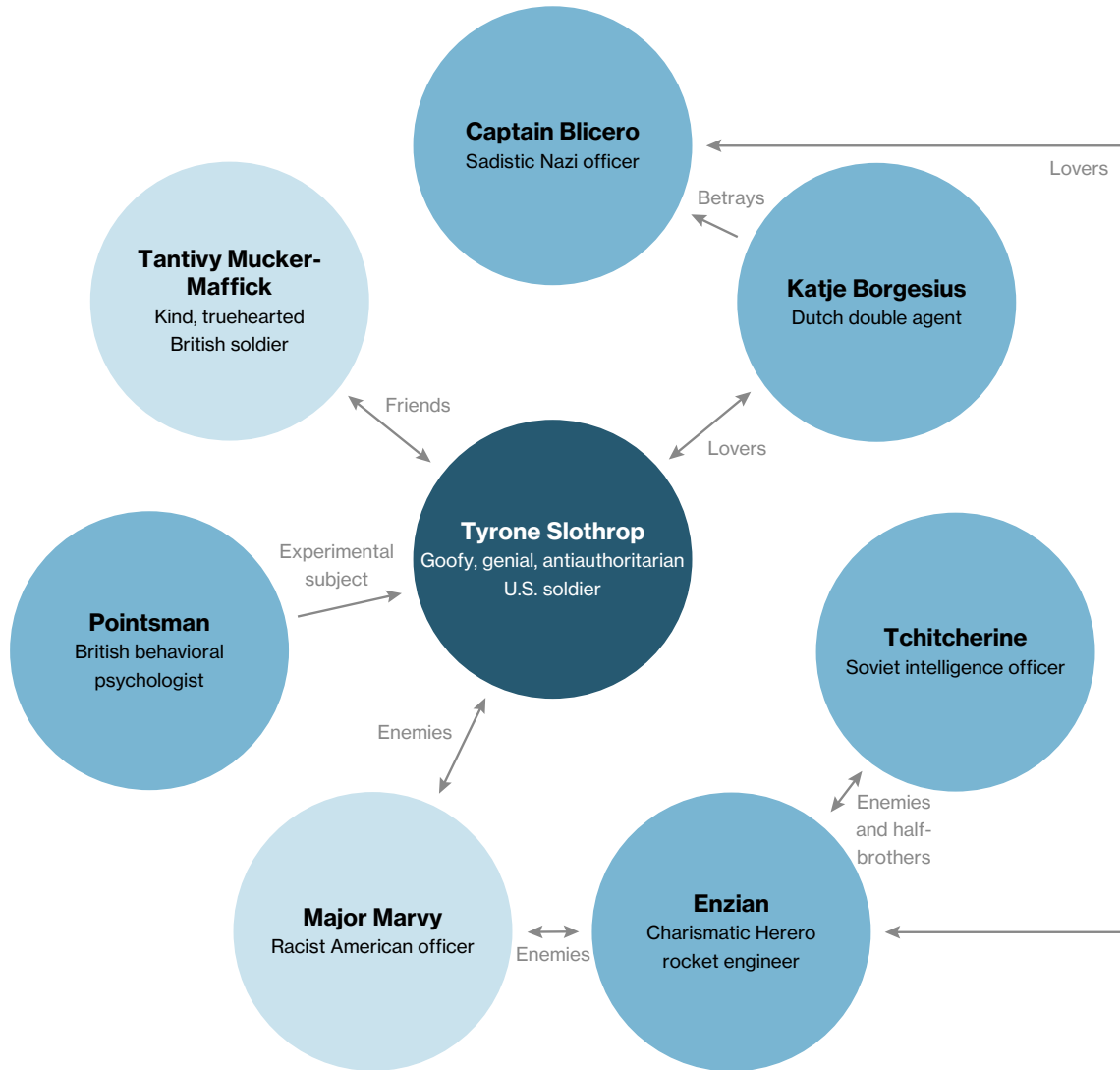
Pointsman makes himself out to be a man of science, but his devotion to Pavlovian behaviorism is almost mystical or religious. Pavlov's ideas came to him like a revelation, which he compares to a seduction by a Venus. Pointsman has a fashionable Harley Street address and his lab coats are tailored on Saville Row. Visions of winning a Nobel Prize beguile him. He is aware women find him "creepy," but he can't change that. He experiments on dogs but longs to experiment

on a human.

Tchitcherine

Tchitcherine spent a large portion of the 1930s in Central Asia as part of the alphabetization campaign, in which many of the far-flung tribal peoples of the Soviet Union were encouraged to adopt writing systems. Thus, he was part of Soviet modernization efforts, even though he was not an especially ardent communist. In Central Asia, Tchitcherine had a mystical experience with the Kirghiz Lights. He likes Slothrop, but he sides with Slothrop's enemy, Major Marvy.

Character Map



- Main Character
- Other Major Character
- Minor Character

Full Character List

Character	Description
Tyrone Slothrop	Lt. Tyrone Slothrop is in the American Army and is stationed in London during World War II. He works for Allied intelligence in an organization called ACHTUNG.
Captain Blicero	Captain Blicero's real name is Weissmann, but in the SS he gave himself the name Blicero, which is a name for death.
Katje Borgesius	Katje is from the Netherlands, and she collaborated with Dutch and German Nazis before crossing over to the Allied side.
Enzian	Oberst Enzian is a Herero from German South West Africa and the leader of the Schwarzkommando in Germany. His name was given to him by his German lover Blicero, after a Rilke poem mentioning gentian flowers ("Enzian" in German).
Pointsman	Edward W.A. "Ned" Pointsman is a behavioral psychologist who works at the White Visitation for the PISCES organization.
Tchitcherine	Vaslav Tchitcherine is a Soviet intelligence officer in Germany. He believes his half-brother Enzian wronged him, and he swears he will get revenge.
Horst Achtfaden	Achtfaden worked on the V-2 rocket. He betrays the rocket guidance engineer Klaus Närrisch.
Andreas	Andreas is a member of Enzian's Schwarzkommando.
Bianca	A pouty child performer, Bianca is the daughter of film actor Margherita Erdmann and perhaps Miklos Thanatz.

Lyle Bland	Bland, Slothrop's uncle, conspired with Slothrop's father to allow Jamf to experiment on him as an infant.
Teddy Bloat	Bloat is a conniving and false friend of Tantivy Mucker-Maffick's.
Seaman Bodine	Bodine is a friend of Slothrop's who gets into trouble with him throughout the novel. Slothrop infiltrated the makeshift White House in Potsdam to retrieve Bodine's hidden hashish.
Hilary Bounce	An officer in the British army, Captain Bounce answers some of Slothrop's questions about the V-2 rocket.
Säure Bummer	Berlin drug dealer Emil Bummer's nickname is "Säure," German for "acid." Taken together, his nickname and surname mean "acid bummer," which is slang for a bad experience on LSD.
Byron the Bulb	A freak of manufacturing, Byron is an immortal light bulb whose filament will never burn out.
Clayton "Bloody" Chiclitz	Chiclitz is a racist friend of Major Marvy's.
Christian	Christian is a member of Enzian's Schwarzkommando.
The colonel	The colonel is from Kenosha, Wisconsin, and he serves in the U.S. Army.
Darlene	Darlene is a nurse who lives in poverty-stricken East London with the aged Mrs. Quoad. She has a few romantic dalliances with Slothrop and is one of the stars on his map.
Sir Stephen Dodson-Truck	In the French Riviera, Dodson-Truck instructs Slothrop on rockets and monitors his reactions.

Margherita Erdmann	A star of silent movies, the masochistic "Greta" Erdmann is mentally unbalanced by the time Slothrop meets her. She once thought she was a goddess, and she seems to have sacrificed children in this delusion.
Carroll Eventyr	Eventyr is a medium at the White Visitation who contacts the spirits of the dead.
Osbie Feel	Osbie grows psychoactive mushrooms on Pirate's rooftop and joins the counterforce. His unusual name and his drug interests recall those of Owsley Stanley, the chemist who made LSD for the Grateful Dead and other 1960s musicians and celebrities.
Roland Feldspath	Once a V-2 rocket engineer, Feldspath is now a dead spirit contacted by Carroll Eventyr.
Professor Glimpf	Glimpf helps Slothrop escape Major Marvy in Mittelwerk.
Milton Gloaming	Gloaming works with the White Visitation and understands something about statistics. He later joins the counterforce.
Frau Gnab	Frau Gnab is a black market trader on the Oder River. She rescues Slothrop from the <i>Anubis</i> during a storm.
Gottfried	Gottfried is a young man Blicero sacrifices for his 00000 rocket. His pale good looks make him Blicero's favorite. He was Blicero's captive in a house in the woods.
Grigori	Grigori is an octopus trained by Pointsman to attack Katje Borgesius so that Slothrop can save her and fall in love with her.
Gustav	Gustav is a composer Slothrop meets in Berlin.

Thomas Gwenhidwy	Gwenhidwy is a Welsh doctor who works in East London alongside Kevin Spectro. Later he joins the counterforce.
Laszlo Jamf	Dr. Laszlo Jamf is a Swiss chemist, professor of chemistry, and inventor of the plastic polymer called Imipolex G. While a visiting professor at Harvard, he experimented on infant Tyrone Slothrop.
Jeremy	Jeremy, also called Beaver, is the stodgy British boyfriend of Roger Mexico's lover Jessica Swanlake. He is dull but reliable, and Jessica ultimately chooses him over Roger.
Albert Krypton	Krypton is a colleague of Seaman Bodine's who helps Slothrop escape in Cuxhaven.
Ludwig	Slothrop meets Ludwig, a boy who has lost his pet Lemming, in Germany. Later he tags along with Enzian and the Schwarzkommando.
Maria	Enzian and the Schwarzkommando unsuccessfully try to save Maria from the Empty Ones.
Major Marvy	Major Marvin Marvy is a fat, racist American officer. He colludes with General Electric in acquiring Nazi rocket technology, and he tries to destroy Slothrop.
Roger Mexico	Roger Mexico is a statistician who works at the White Visitation. He is in love with Jessica Swanlake.
Karl Mondaugen	Mondaugen is an old school friend of Franz Pökler's who gets him excited about rocket research.
Morituri	Ensign Morituri is from Hiroshima, Japan, where he returns after the war in Europe ends. He did some kamikaze training for the Japanese air force and then became a propagandist in Germany.

Clive Mossmoon	Clive is the husband of Scorpia Mossmoon; he works at a chemical company.
Scorpia Mossmoon	Scorpia is the wife of Clive Mossmoon; she had an affair with Pirate Prentice.
Tantivy Mucker-Maffick	An Englishman who works alongside Slothrop in ACHTUNG, Lt. Oliver "Tantivy" Mucker-Maffick is Slothrop's true friend.
Klaus Närrisch	Närrisch is a guidance expert on the 00000 rocket. He helps Slothrop rescue von Göll from Tchitcherine.
Josef Ombindi	Ombindi is a leader of the Herero group called the Empty Ones. They are in favor of racial suicide.
Lord Blatherard Osmo	Osmo works for the Foreign Office in England. Pirate has Osmo's fantasy about a giant adenoid, freeing Osmo to concentrate on government.
Otto	Otto is Frau Gnahn's son. He assists Slothrop and the others in the rescue of von Göll.
Pavel	Enzian and the Schwarzkommando unsuccessfully try to save Maria, Pavel's wife, from the Empty Ones.
Pfc. Eddie Pensiero	Eddie Pensiero is an "amphetamine enthusiast" in the U.S. Army who uses an odd technique to give his colonel a haircut.
Franz Pökler	Franz is a rocket scientist who works at Peenemünde. The Nazis keep his daughter captive to ensure he keeps working.
Ilse Pökler	Ilse is Franz and Leni's daughter. She (or her substitute) is allowed annual visits to see Franz.
Leni Pökler	Leni is Franz's wife and Ilse's mother. She was the lover of Peter Sachsa, and she is kept captive in Dora with Ilse.

Pirate Prentice	Captain Geoffrey "Pirate" Prentice has the ability to experience other people's fantasies, relieving them of the psychic labor of fantasizing. He has put this talent in the service of British intelligence.
Brigadier Pudding	Ernest Pudding is nominally in charge of the White Visitation. However, he has become a doddering fool by the time of the novel and is really controlled by Pointsman.
Džaqyp Qulan	Džaqyp Qulan is a Kazakh and Tchitcherine's faithful companion in Central Asia.
Mrs. Quoad	Mrs. Quoad is an old woman who lives with Darlene, a lover of Slothrop's in London. She loves wine jellies and other "disgusting English candy."
Walter Rathenau	Walter Rathenau is a dead foreign minister Peter Sachsa attempts to contact in a séance for a group of Nazis.
Red	Red shines shoes at the Roseland Ballroom. "Red" is a nickname, and his "true name is Malcolm"—Malcolm X.
Nicolai Ripov	In what may be a hallucination, Ripov interrogates Tchitcherine about Enzian.
Dr. Géza Rózsavölgyi	Dr. Géza Rózsavölgyi is a psychologist at the White Visitation. Later he joins the counterforce.
Peter Sachsa	A former medium in Weimar Germany, Sachsa is now dead. He is Carroll Eventyr's "control" or guide to the spirit world.
Sir Marcus Scammony	Scammony is a colleague and lover of Clive Mossmoon's. Together they discuss what should be done about Pointsman and Slothrop.
Schnorp	Schnorp, a pie smuggler, gives Slothrop a ride to Berlin in his balloon.

Mario Schweitar	Schweitar is an employee of the chemical company Sandoz. He informs Slothrop that Jamf is dead.
Semyavin	Semyavin, a Russian, is "the local Waxwing rep" in Zürich.
Sigmund	Sigmund is Margherita Erdmann's former husband. He tried to help her cure her mental illness.
Webley Silvernail	Silvernail works with animals in the lab for Ned Pointsman.
Broderick Slothrop	Tyrone Slothrop's father, Broderick, accepted money in return for allowing the infant Tyrone to be experimented on.
Nalline Slothrop	Nalline Tyrone's mother likes martinis and is on a first-name basis with Ambassador Joseph Kennedy.
William Slothrop	A Puritan ancestor of Tyrone's, William had heretical ideas about salvation. The novel ends with a hymn he wrote.
Kevin Spectro	Dr. Kevin A. Spectro is a neurologist who works at St. Veronica's Hospital in a ward for shell-shocked soldiers. Along with Pointsman and five others, he co-owns a rare copy of a book of Pavlov's lectures.
Squalidozzi	Franco Squalidozzi is an Argentine anarchist who hires Slothrop to deliver a message.
Basher St. Blaise	St. Blaise is a pilot in Lübeck who sees a huge angel from his plane.
Stefania	Slothrop meets Stefania onboard the <i>Anubis</i> . She lends him clothes and tells him Margherita is married to Thanatz.
Jessica Swanlake	Jessica is in the English military in London. She has a passionate affair with Roger Mexico, but ultimately she chooses her reliable boyfriend, Jeremy.

Tamara	Tamara is involved in a deal with Blodgett Waxwing; she drives a tank into a party.
Miklos Thanatz	Thanatz is the husband of the volatile actor Margherita Erdmann. He and Margherita were touring performers during the war, and they performed for Blicero's rocket battery.
Edwin Treacle	Edwin Treacle is a psychic researcher at the White Visitation.
Gavin Trefoil	Gavin Trefoil is a man at the White Visitation who can alter his skin color at will.
Geli Tripping	Geli is a self-described witch and the girlfriend of Tchitcherine.
Stefan Utgarthaloiki	Utgarthaloiki is the host of a party Roger attends. He was once a manager for the Krupp arms manufacturing company in Germany.
Frans van der Groov	Frans is an ancestor of Katje's who played a part in the extinction of the dodos in the Dutch colony of Mauritius. He had a religious vision in which dodos begged to be converted to Christianity.
Gerhard von Göll	Also known by the alias Der Springer, von Göll is a filmmaker who directed Margherita Erdmann in several quasi-pornographic horror movies. After the war, von Göll undertakes a project for the Argentinian anarchists, filming the national epic <i>Martin Fierro</i> .
Blodgett Waxwing	Waxwing is a black marketer who gives Slothrop a new identity.
Wimpe	Wimpe is a traveling German drug salesman specializing in opioids.
Major Zhdaev	Major Zhdaev is a Russian friend of von Göll's.
Richard M. Zhlubb	Zhlubb is the manager of the Orpheus Theatre in Los Angeles in the 1960s or 1970s.

Plot Summary

Part 1: Beyond the Zero

During World War II in September 1944, the German forces aim V-2 rockets at London, England. American soldier Tyrone Slothrop is stationed there. He has an unusual reaction to the rockets: they give him erections. But he has his erections days before the rockets fall, at trysts that later become bomb sites. Mysterious forces in British and American intelligence are aware of Slothrop's sensitivity, and they keep him under surveillance. The novel opens in December 1944, with the words, "A screaming comes across the sky." The scream is the flight of a V-2 rocket.

A former insane asylum near London nicknamed "the White Visitation" houses a group of psychics involved in psychological warfare. The psyops group is known by the acronym PISCES. The staff includes a statistician, Roger Mexico, and a behavioral psychologist, Edward "Ned" Pointsman. PISCES researchers put Slothrop on sodium amytal ("truth serum") and examine his racial anxieties. After being released from the hospital, Slothrop hooks up with a woman, Darlene. They make love and then moments later a V-2 rocket lands in Darlene's street.

Pointsman thinks Slothrop can "*feel them* [the rockets] *coming*." He wants to study how Slothrop does this. Instead, he is given an octopus named Grigori as a lab animal. At the White Visitation an operation called Operation Black Wing is underway. The idea is to exploit Germany's colonial past with made-up propaganda about Africans in Germany—a squadron of African rocket engineers. This is why they explored Slothrop's racial anxieties, for ideas about how to shape their propaganda.

At the White Visitation, researchers discuss Slothrop's past, a past unknown to him. When he was an infant, a visiting behavioral psychologist at Harvard, Laszlo Jamf, experimented on him. Jamf conditioned Slothrop to get erections, but Jamf's research notes do not say what the stimulus was. People at the White Visitation believe Jamf left Slothrop with a conditioned reflex, although the usual practice is to "extinguish" the reflex at the end of the experiment. Slothrop's mysterious reflex is now being stimulated by the V-2 rocket, the researchers believe.

Part 2: Un Perm' au Casino Hermann Goering

Slothrop, Tantivy, and Teddy Bloat are sent to the French Riviera, where they stay at a resort. On their first day there, they picnic on the beach with some women. Another woman, a stranger, is attacked by an octopus. Slothrop tries to bash the octopus's head with a bottle. Bloat produces a too-convenient crab, telling Slothrop to lure the octopus away with food. Slothrop suspects a ploy of some kind. He is right. The octopus is Pointsman's Grigori. The attack was staged to get Slothrop together with the Dutch woman, Katje Borgesius, a former Nazi collaborator and now a PISCES operative.

Slothrop, Katje, and a man named Sir Stephen Dodson-Truck settle into a routine. In the mornings, Slothrop studies V-2 rocket specs by Sir Stephen. Aroused, but not seeing the connection to the rocket, he spends his afternoons with Katje. Only three things mar his happiness: the attack, the disappearance of Tantivy, and the theft of Slothrop's clothes and identity papers. Slothrop gets Sir Stephen drunk and questions him. In reaction to the drunken truth telling, Sir Stephen disappears and so does Katje.

Slothrop remains on the Riviera, continuing to study the rocket. He learns of a special rocket with the serial number 00000, a mysterious rocket part called the "S-Gerät" or S-device, and a polymer called Imipolex G. He also becomes suspicious of the multinational corporations with ties to the rocket, on both sides of the war. He reads in the newspaper his friend Tantivy Mucker-Maffick has died in battle. Here too he sees the machinations of a mysterious "They" working some kind of conspiracy. At a wild party he meets a man named Blodgett Waxwing who tells him he will need a friend and gives him an address in Nice, France. Slothrop abandons his mission on the Riviera and goes AWOL (military lingo for "absent without leave") to Nice, and then to Switzerland.

In Switzerland, Slothrop further investigates the mysterious Rocket 00000 and the "S-Gerät." He flies from Zürich to Geneva and back. In a complicated three-way deal, he acquires a dossier on Laszlo Jamf, the inventor of Imipolex G.

Part 3: In the Zone

It is May 1945 and Slothrop is in Germany, still looking for answers about Rocket 00000. The war in Europe is over now, with the Allies victorious. Slothrop reads the dossier about Jamf. He learns his father allowed Jamf to experiment on him in exchange for money to send Slothrop to Harvard.

Slothrop travels to Nordhausen, Germany, where the V-2 rockets were built. On the way he meets Enzian, a Herero from the former German colony of South West Africa, and Major Marvy, a racist American officer. Enzian and Marvy are also interested in V-2 rockets.

In Nordhausen, Slothrop spends a night with the self-described witch Geli Tripping. Her lover, the Russian Tchitcherine, is also after the rocket. Tchitcherine is Enzian's half-brother. The next day Slothrop goes to Mittelwerke, where the rockets were constructed in an underground factory, a former salt mine. Slave labor from the Dora concentration camp built the factory and the rocket. Major Marvy chases Slothrop out of Mittelwerke.

Soon after, Slothrop hitches a ride to Berlin in a hot-air balloon with a pie smuggler. Major Marvy chases him in an airplane, but thanks to a well-aimed pie Slothrop escapes. In war-torn Berlin things are grim; Slothrop is reduced to eating scraps and drinking out of a pond.

Slothrop's fortunes turn when he meets a man named Säure Bummer. Säure's friends give Slothrop some odd cast-off clothes. He calls his new look "Rocketman." Then Säure offers Slothrop one million counterfeit German marks. All Slothrop has to do is retrieve some hashish hidden in Potsdam, Germany. Slothrop agrees and returns with the hashish.

Slothrop falls into the clutches of someone who drugs him. Released, he meets silent film star Margherita Erdmann. She and her husband Thanatz once performed for the crew at rocket launch sites. Slothrop travels by boat aboard the *Anubis* with Margherita on the Oder River in Germany. While on board he has an affair with Margherita's underage daughter, Bianca. During a storm Slothrop falls overboard.

A barge rescues Slothrop. He travels with the barge's operators, Frau Gnahn and her son Otto. They arrive at the rocket launch site Peenemünde. There Slothrop, Otto, and another man rescue Margherita's film director, von Göll, who

was being held captive. During the rescue mission, Slothrop exchanges his Rocketman costume for a Russian officer's uniform, giving him a new identity. At the behest of a smuggler, Slothrop returns to the *Anubis* to retrieve some hashish. There he finds Bianca dead, he thinks.

Back in England, Katje receives a coded message persuading her to leave the White Visitation, the lunatic asylum temporarily turned psyops center. She joins up with Pirate Prentice and another man to create a "counterforce," something to foil the plots of the mysterious "Them."

Slothrop parts with the barge and begins to walk across the part of Germany he calls "the Zone," the areas where V-2 rockets were built and launched. He runs into Major Marvy again, who does not recognize him because he is still in Russian uniform. Slothrop learns information he is able to pass on to Enzian's Hereros, rescuing them from a raid by Marvy's men.

In a small German town, Slothrop dons a pig costume to join in a local festival. Someone steals his Russian uniform and so Slothrop spends some time as "Plechazunga, the Pig-Hero." He visits Leni Pökler at a brothel. Marvy is also there, though they do not meet. The brothel is raided by military police looking for Slothrop. In the confusion, Marvy puts on the pig costume, hoping to escape. He is arrested as Slothrop and driven away in an ambulance. In the ambulance two doctors castrate Marvy, thinking he is Slothrop.

Part 4: The Counterforce

A counterforce assembles, trying to thwart "Their" plots. It includes Pirate Prentice, Katje, Roger Mexico, Obie Feel, Blodgett Waxwing, and others. Roger Mexico believes Pointsman plotted against him, even causing Jessica to be reassigned to Cuxhaven, far from Roger. In the counterforce's initial foray, Roger Mexico urinates on the conference table at a meeting attended by Pointsman.

In the mountains of Germany, Slothrop is reunited with his harmonica. He gives up on his search for the meaning of Jamf's actions. From a newspaper, Slothrop learns of the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima. He has a vision of a phallic rainbow penetrating the earth; the experience is emotionally devastating. He becomes "scattered," and he can't really be grasped as a whole person, an "integral creature,"

anymore. Many "gave up long ago trying to hold him together, even as a concept." But aspects of Slothrop appear in other people.

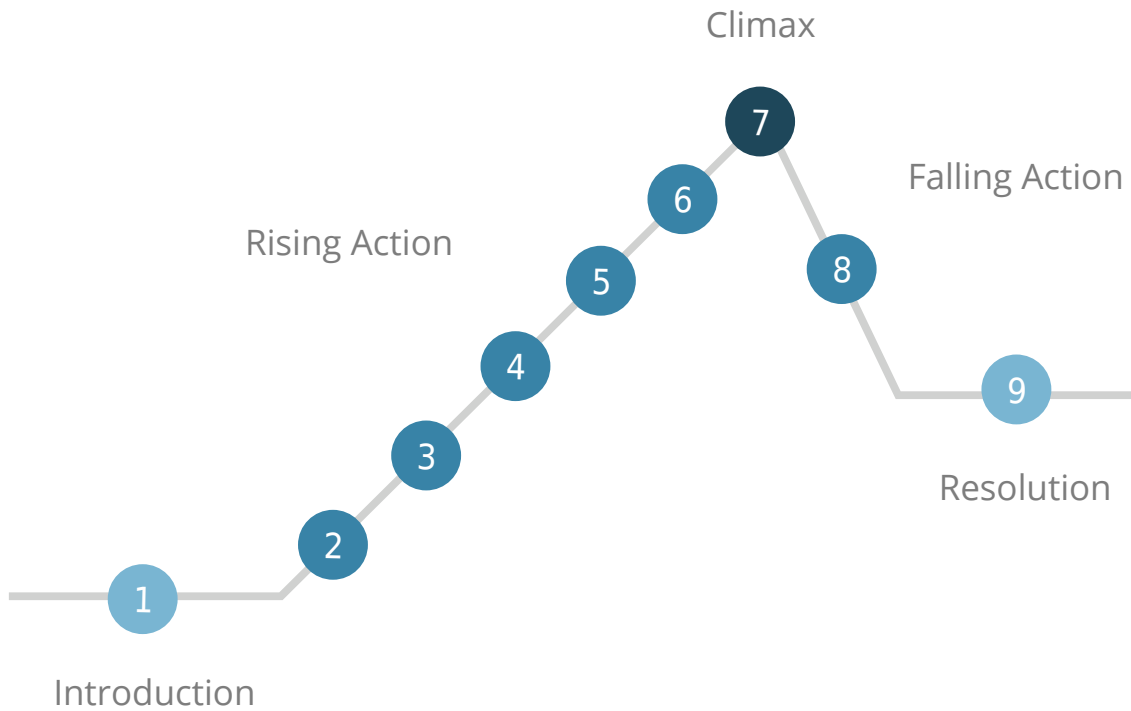
In Part 4, episodes become increasingly disconnected from Slothrop's story and from the other main characters. There are brief tales of an immortal lightbulb (Byron the Bulb), a pair of kamikaze pilots, an amphetamine-crazed barber, and a futuristic Rocket City, among others.

Enzian and other Hereros ship the separate parts of their scavenged rocket to Lüneberg Heath, where it will be reassembled as the 00001 rocket. Enzian intends to be the rocket's payload. He is not exactly a passenger since he won't survive the flight. He hopes his sacrifice will save his people.

Roger Mexico, Ensign Morituri, Carroll Eventyr, and Thomas Gwenhidwy figure out Blicero fired his 00000 rocket in the direction of true north (toward the North Pole). Eventually the rest of Blicero's plot is revealed. Gottfried was the payload inside the 00000. The Schwarzgerät or "black device" was a special housing made of Imipolex G, which cradled Gottfried. The 00000 required guidance modifications and other adjustments because it carried Gottfried. A radio system enabled Blicero to talk to Gottfried in the rocket, but no transmitter carried Gottfried's voice back to Blicero. The rocket was fired, killing Gottfried.

The novel concludes by describing the flight of the 00000, its ascent, and its descent. As it descends, a crowd has gathered in the Orpheus Theatre in Los Angeles; the time appears to be the late 1960s or early 1970s. As the novel closes, a rocket is poised above the movie theater in Los Angeles, about to fall on it. The novel ends with a hymn by William Slothrop, Tyrone Slothrop's ancestor.

Plot Diagram



Introduction

1. "They" suspect Slothrop's erections predict V-rockets.

Rising Action

2. Slothrop goes AWOL, looking for the truth.
3. Slothrop becomes Rocketman.
4. Slothrop stops looking for the truth about Jamf.
5. The Hereros bring the 00001 rocket to Lüneberg Heath.
6. Slothrop's personality is fully scattered.

Climax

7. Blicero fires the 00000 rocket with Gottfried inside.

Falling Action

8. The 00000 rocket begins its descent.

Resolution

9. A rocket hangs poised above a movie theater in Los Angeles.

Timeline of Events

Perhaps early 1920s

Laszlo Jamf experiments on Tyrone Slothrop.

December 1944

"They" notice Slothrop's trysts match V-2 bomb sites.

December 1944

Slothrop goes AWOL, leaving the Riviera.

May 1945

Slothrop arrives in Nordhausen to investigate the 00000 rocket.

July 1945

Rocketman retrieves some hashish from Potsdam.

July 1945

Slothrop's personality begins to scatter.

Perhaps early 1920s

Broderick Slothrop and Lyle Bland sell Slothrop to Jamf.

September 1944

The first V-2 rockets land in London.

December 1944

On the Riviera, They put Slothrop in Katje's path.

Spring 1945

Blicero fires the 00000 rocket with Gottfried inside.

July 1945

In Berlin Slothrop becomes Rocketman.

July 1945

Slothrop rescues Der Springer from the Russians.

Early August 1945

Slothrop learns of the bombing of Hiroshima.

Autumn 1945

Roger Mexico, Pirate Prentice, and others form a counterforce.

Autumn 1945

Tchitcherine and Enzian meet at last.

Sometime in the 1970s

A rocket hangs poised above a movie theater in Los Angeles.

Early August 1945

Doctors castrate Marvy, thinking he is Slothrop.

August 1945

Slothrop stops looking for the truth about Jamf.

Autumn 1945

Enzian and the Hereros bring the 00001 rocket to Lüneberg Heath.

Autumn 1945

Slothrop is fully scattered.

🔍 Part Summaries

Part 1, Episodes 1–2

Summary

Part 1, Episode 1

The epigraph, or introductory quotation, to Part 1 is attributed to World War II German rocket scientist Wernher von Braun. He explains he believes in "spiritual existence after death" because "nature does not know extinction; all it knows is transformation."

The beginning of Part 1, Episode 1 is enigmatic: "A screaming comes across the sky." The rest of the episode describes the journey of a particular train during an evacuation of London, in wintertime, during the World War II. The journey is described close to the perspective of an unnamed "he." The evacuation seems to be a sham; the narrator says it is "all theater." The character notices "this is not a disentanglement from, but a progressive *knotting into*." The character wonders, "When it comes, will it come in darkness, or will it bring its own light?"

Then it is morning and the character who has been thinking or dreaming of evacuation is Captain Geoffrey Prentice, known as Pirate. It is dawn. Pirate is in an old maisonette, or small house, in London. Above him his friend Teddy Bloat, drunk and asleep, is about to topple from a balcony. Pirate notices in time and kicks his cot over to break Bloat's fall. Bloat goes back to sleep.

Pirate grows bananas in a greenhouse on the maisonette's rooftop. He has become famous for his "banana breakfasts," which other military men attend. A young man named Osbie Feel also uses the rooftop greenhouses to grow "pharmaceutical plants." Looking out the bathroom window, Pirate notices a vapor trail in the sky. It is not like any he has seen before. He realizes it must be from "the new, and still Most Secret, German rocket bomb."

Part 1, Episode 2

Pirate starts making the banana breakfast. Bloat enters the kitchen, "slips on a banana peel and falls on his ass." Pirate and Bloat discuss the V-2 rocket Pirate saw from the rooftop. Pirate calls it by its other name, A4.

The narrator describes at length all the banana dishes. There are "banana omelets, banana sandwiches, banana casseroles" and a "banana blancmange," a dessert with a saying spelled out on top in French: "It is magnificent, but it is not war." The saying is attributed to an observer of the failed Charge of the Light Brigade, which occurred during a battle between British and Russian troops during the Crimean War (1853–56).

Pirate gets a phone call from his "employer," a military man Pirate has met only once before, at a briefing long ago. The man says a message for him "came over in a rather delightful way" and landed in Greenwich, England. The message is inside the V-2 rocket. A driver takes Pirate to the bomb site.

The narration swerves into an unfamiliar perspective. Someone is saying he knows those who pretend to be "narodnik" (a Russian word for an early kind of socialist) are actually loyal to Codreanu, a Romanian fascist leader. The narrator explains, "Heh, heh, here comes Pirate's Condition creeping over him again." Pirate has the ability to experience other people's fantasies, and this ability has been put to military use. Pirate "take[s] over the running of [the] exhausting little daydreams" of important people, leaving them free to concentrate on the war. A song about this condition interrupts the narration.

Pirate initially had this condition while he dreamed. In 1935, he had someone else's fantasy while he was awake, a sexual fantasy not his own. "The Firm" then became interested in Pirate. (The Firm is what Pirate calls the Special Operations Executive [S.O.E.], an actual British spy agency in charge of resistance activities in Europe in World War II.) Pirate had a fantasy belonging to Lord Blatherard Osmo, who was in the Foreign Office. Osmo fantasized about a "giant Adenoid" (a gland found in the roof of the mouth). It terrorized London and needed to be pacified with huge amounts of cocaine.

Analysis

The epigraph attributed to Wernher von Braun, the chief scientist in the development of the Nazis' V-2 rocket,

foreshadows themes and events of the novel. Von Braun mentions "extinction." Here he means death, but later in the novel "extinction" is revealed as a technical term in behavioral psychology. Extinction refers to the process of eliminating a conditioned reflex created by psychologists. For example, a dog is conditioned to salivate when it hears a bell ring. At the end of the experiment, the habit of salivating in response to the bell is "extinguished," so the dog will no longer have the behavior. As we will later discover, the novel's protagonist, Tyrone Slothrop, was experimented on as an infant. His conditioned reflex is to have erections in the presence of some unknown stimulus. (It is unknown because the scientists kept it a secret.) It appears Slothrop's response was never extinguished. Thus Slothrop's experiment also "does not know extinction."

The "screaming" that comes across the sky in Part 1, Episode 1 is the path of the V-2 rocket. The descriptions in this episode are detailed and somewhat distant and technical. The emotional tenor is a bit paranoid: unnamed masses cower before scornful authorities. The complexity and density of this opening passage establish the book's tone, gravity, and authority. Readers do not initially know whose fantasy, dream, or memory they are reading. When the focus switches to Pirate, it remains unclear who has been thinking or dreaming about this "screaming" rocket. Pirate can have other people's fantasies.

The progress of the evacuation of London in Part 1, Episode 1 mirrors Slothrop's progress in the novel. The evacuation is "not a disentanglement from, but a progressive *knottin*g into." Slothrop leaves London and then goes AWOL (Absent Without Official Leave; absent without permission) in France. But as he moves through Europe, he does not escape. Instead he becomes further entangled in "Their" machinations.

Pirate's talent and his breakfast illustrate two ideas about entropy. Entropy is a term from physics. In a closed, thermodynamic system, entropy represents the quantity of thermal energy unavailable for conversion into work. The larger that quantity, the more disorganized the system. Entropy also has a more general meaning: the descent of a system into increasing disorder. The government uses Pirate's special talent to make the government more efficient. If the government is considered as a closed system, by analogy, the official distracted with fantasies about a giant adenoid is an entropic quantity. The envoy to Novi Pazar (a city in Serbia) wastes energy that could go into governing. So Pirate's talent

makes the system—the government—less entropic and more efficient.

The description of Pirate's talent also demonstrates the stability of many systems and their resistance to entropy. Pirate has had other people's fantasies about atypical sexual interests (such as young girls) and illegal drugs (the Adenoid's cocaine use). Just as "the Firm" finds a use for Pirate—converting his talent into work—so too does the culture absorb the counterculture.

Pynchon's novel injects tremendous entropy into the closed aesthetic system called a novel. It does this in the form of far-reaching, seemingly extraneous cultural information. To a story set in World War II, Pynchon adds a 1960s-style drug enthusiast (Osbie Feel), banana dishes of every description, comic songs, and the Charge of the Light Brigade. Later episodes add a host of behaviorists, anarchists, performers, and psychics (among others). The impressive part is that he was able to create a novel out of this.

Part 1, Episodes 3–5

Summary

Part 1, Episode 3

On his lunch break, Teddy Bloat goes to "a gray stone town house" near Grosvenor Square in London. Bloat goes to Lt. Tyrone Slothrop's desk in ACHTUNG, a fictional organization: "Allied Clearing House, Technical Units, Northern Germany."

In the cubicle Slothrop shares with Lt. Oliver "Tantivy" Mucker-Maffick, Bloat photographs Slothrop's desk and a map of London next to it. The map is marked with tiny colored stars. The stars are labeled with women's names, including Gladys, Katherine, Alice, Delores, Shirley, and "a couple of Sallys."

Part 1, Episode 4

It is afternoon of the same day, growing dark already. Slothrop is at the site where the V-2 fell. The rocket contained "a graphite cylinder, about six inches long," and "there seem to be papers stashed inside." All at the site are "waiting around for a

Captain Prentice."

This morning Slothrop received orders to report to a hospital in the East End of London "as part of the P.W.E. Testing Programme." "P.W.E." stands for Political Warfare Executive. Slothrop does not know why he is being sent there.

Slothrop remembers the previous September, when the V-2 rockets first hit London. Slothrop remembers telling Tantivy he was frightened by the V-2 rockets. "You can't hear them when they come in," he explains to Tantivy. The rockets travel faster than the speed of sound. His friend Tantivy does not understand why Slothrop keeps the map of his women. "It cannot be put down to the usual loud-mouthed American ass-banditry," he thinks.

Slothrop remembers a Friday evening the previous September. In the street he heard a loud explosion. This was followed by a second explosion. It was not a "buzzbomb," also known as a V-1. It was a V-2. The time was "6:43:16 British Double Summer Time" (which is similar to American Daylight Saving Time). Slothrop heard the explosions and then noticed he had "a sneaky *hardon* stirring." He wonders if it is related to his "peculiar sensitivity to what is revealed in the sky."

He considers his ancestors back in Mingeborough, Massachusetts. For a while the family had money in timberland in the Berkshire Mountains in Massachusetts. The trees were gradually turned into paper: "toilet paper, banknote stock, newsprint," or "shit, money, and the Word, the three American truths." The family's fortunes gradually dwindled and then vanished during the Great Depression of the 1930s.

Slothrop recalls watching the Northern Lights when he was a boy, on a spring night in 1931. Now he wonders, in London, "What Lights were these? What ghosts in command?" The narration has returned to the moment of the fateful encounter with the rocket: "6:43:16 BDST." Some transcendent I, perhaps Slothrop, thinks, "[T]his is how it does happen—yes the great bright hand reaching out of the cloud."

Part 1, Episode 5

It is evening of the same day. A séance to summon spirits is underway at the White Visitation. A medium, Carrol Eventyr, has been taken over by a "control" or guiding spirit. The spirit is a dead German, Peter Sachsa. He brings information of another dead German, Roland Feldspath. In life Feldspath was

an expert on rocket control systems, although that is not clear at this stage of the novel. Through Sachsa and Eventyr, Feldspath talks mysteriously about "control." He says, "For the first time [control] was *inside*."

A young woman, Jessica Swanlake, is also in attendance. Pirate Prentice and Roger Mexico, who is romantically involved with Jessica, are secluded in another room. They discuss Eventyr and "the White Visitation," a collection of spiritualists, "bookish sods and rationalized freaks." Prentice is involved with a Firm operation called Operation Black Wing.

Jessica enters the room and smiles at Mexico. Prentice recalls his own great love, a married woman named Scorpia Mossmoon. Prentice sees Mexico "going through much the same thing with Jessica," who has a steady boyfriend, Jeremy (Beaver).

Analysis

In Part 1, Episode 2, Teddy Bloat was a figure of fun. He fell from the banister and slipped on a banana peel. Now, on a mysterious spying mission in Slothrop's office, he is "unsmiling." He has no time for sex ("slap-and-tickle") and no real feelings of friendship for Tantivy, his former schoolmate. Just as the Firm "will use anyone, traitors, murderers, perverts," Bloat is willing to use every human relationship in the service of his mission. He is a company man.

Bloat's spy mission is the reader's first introduction to Slothrop. He does not appear yet, but readers learn a bit about him through his messy office. He is a "Yank" and his mother, Nalline, is back in Massachusetts. The spying scene also gives readers the first glimpse of Slothrop's peculiar talent, his sexual sensitivity to V-2 rockets. Bloat takes an interest in the map with its "Carolines, Marias, Annes, Susans, Elizabeths." The map is brought into connection to the V-2 by a remark from Slothrop's friend and coworker, Tantivy Mucker-Maffick. But Tantivy cannot figure it out either. He can only see it is not just "American ass-banditry." The full connection is not yet plain to Bloat, or to readers. Bloat's spy mission also points to the difference between himself and Tantivy. Bloat is a false friend, pumping Tantivy for information. Tantivy will turn out to be a true friend to Slothrop, though he is vulnerable to Bloat's machinations.

As Slothrop talks to Tantivy, the novel's theme of paranoia is

introduced. Slothrop "has become obsessed with the idea of a rocket with his name written on it." This is an echo of a wartime saying: the bullet that kills you has your name written on it—meaning it was destined to kill you. Slothrop goes so far as to imagine "They" have painted his name on every rocket. ("Doesn't cost them a thing to paint his name *on every one, right?*") This shadowy "They" is not just the German enemy. It "embrac[es] possibilities far far beyond Nazi Germany." Tantivy makes light of Slothrop's idea, saying it might be "useful" to "pretend something like that" in a kind of "operational paranoia." Slothrop retorts, "Who's pretending?" As the saying goes, just because you're paranoid doesn't mean they're not out to get you. Even though Slothrop, in paranoid fashion, scans the environment for clues to a plot against him, there does seem to be a plot against him. From his earliest infancy to his wartime service, he is on a collision course with the V-2 rocket.

Paranoia also becomes an ordering principle for *Gravity's Rainbow*. With the characters' need to suss out each other's motives, the welter of otherwise extraneous detail is made potentially significant. Historical details in the first episodes include factions of "Lublin [Polish] Communists," "Varsovian [from Warsaw] shadow-ministers," "ELAS Greeks" (a communist resistance group), and "royalists" (those loyal to the Greek king). With Slothrop's paranoia, the range of references and the stakes both intensify. Anything might point him to the "hand reaching out of the cloud"—a German silent film star or Argentinian anarchists. And the stakes are high because the hand emerges from the sky in the form of a rocket with his name on it. As Tantivy says, "Think of it as a very large bullet."

The novel gives some of Slothrop's backstory. His ancestors were Protestants with a belief in predestination. Predestination is the Christian notion people are saved or damned by God at the outset of life. No one can change their predestined lot, their salvation or damnation. The rocket emerging from the clouds to menace Slothrop is like the hand of God emerging from the clouds on the tombstone of one of his ancestors. This extension of Slothrop's "sensitivity" into the past also suggests Slothrop has been destined to meet the rocket for a long time. There is a parade of ancestral epitaphs, on down to Tyrone Slothrop's grandfather. This listing of gravestone inscriptions points to Slothrop's end, and also makes this end seem foreordained.

The hand reaching from the sky on the tombstone is succeeded by a memory of the Northern Lights. Slothrop then

wonders concerning the rocket, "But what Lights were these? What ghosts in command?" Thus there is a progression in the Slothrop family line, or a descent: from a meeting with the divine (the hand of fate or God), to a meeting with sublime nature (the Northern Lights), to the technical, military phenomenon of the rocket. Slothrop seems to have a premonition of a rocket heading toward him. It is described as being just as sublime as the scene on the tombstone or under the night sky of his childhood: "Everything about to rush away and he to lose himself." But Slothrop does not yet know how to classify such an entity in the sky, or to say who is behind "the great bright hand reaching out of the cloud" toward him.

Part 1, Episodes 6–8

Summary

Part 1, Episode 6

It is midnight the same night. Roger Mexico and Jessica Swanlake are driving to a "rendezvous with a certain high-class vivisectionist." (Vivisection is the dissection of or operation on living animals.) The man they will rendezvous with is Ned Pointsman, a behavioral psychologist who does psychology experiments on animals. Jessica wonders why Pointsman himself "pinches" or captures his experimental dogs at night.

Both Mexico and Jessica are in difficult moods. Mexico remembers first meeting Jessica: "It was what Hollywood likes to call a 'cute meet.'" Jessica was struggling with "a busted bicycle" and Mexico drove up in a Jaguar. Jessica asked if his mother knew he was out there, and Mexico replied, "My mother is the war." He is a statistician who works in the White Visitation alongside the spiritualists. He does not feel at home there.

They drive past soldiers putting out a fire in a London building. Mexico and Jessica do not stop to help with the fire. They are veterans of the Battle of Britain, the German bombing raids over Britain in 1940 and 1941. Mexico recalls telling Jessica that after "one has pulled one's nth victim free," crises stop being so "personal."

As a result of being tired of the war, Jessica and Mexico are at "the beginnings of gentle withdrawal" from the state of war.

When they can, they spend time together in a deserted house "in the stay-away zone ... south of London," an evacuated area, where "there's never much talk but touches and looks." The episode began with Jessica and Mexico nearly fighting. It ends on the note: "They are in love. Fuck the war."

Part 1, Episode 7

Late at night, toward dawn, Jessica, Mexico, and Pointsman have met at the rendezvous point. In bombed-out ruins, Pointsman is trying to capture a dog for his psychological experiments. Pointsman will give the dog a Russian name, like Ilya or Sergei, in honor of the Russian behaviorist psychologist Ivan Petrovich Pavlov. Pointsman steps into an empty toilet from a bombed house. He stomps around with his foot stuck in the toilet.

Jessica remarks to Mexico she ought to be at home on this rainy night, "cuddling someplace with Beaver," her boyfriend. Mexico is furious with jealousy. He then turns his focus to Pointsman. They attempt to trap the dog, but it flees. Also, Pointsman is hampered by the toilet stuck on his foot. Mexico is himself hampered by having inhaled some of the ether meant to anesthetize the dog. Pointsman gives up. He wonders if he ought to start "branching out," perhaps with other test subjects. Mexico sometime thinks Pointsman "wants *him*. As one wants a fine specimen of dog" to experiment on.

Mexico and Jessica drive Pointsman to "the Hospital of St. Veronica of the True Image for Colonic and Respiratory Diseases." Pointsman goes there to talk "Dr. Kevin Spectro, neurologist and casual Pavlovian."

Part 1, Episode 8

It is just moments after Part 1, Episode 7, still late at night. In St. Veronica's Hospital, Kevin Spectro and Pointsman sit near the war-neurosis ward. Spectro's task that night is to sedate patients who wake in the night and cry out. He refers to them all as Fox, "his generic term for any patient."

Pointsman complains to Spectro about his boss, Brigadier Pudding. They also talk about Slothrop. They wonder how he is reacting to the bomb sites before the bombs hit. "Imagine a missile one hears approaching only *after* it explodes," Pointsman thinks, but somehow Slothrop can "*feel them coming*." He does not think the phenomenon is supernatural.

Spectro treats traumatized patients. When they abreact (a psychoanalytic term meaning to release emotions, especially those repressed or tied to a particular memory), they are liberated for a moment: "Out of each catharsis rise new children, painless, egoless for one pulse of the Between." Pointsman "lusts after them, pretty children."

Instead of a person for his experiments, Pointsman will get an octopus he names Grigori. Spectro talks him into accepting the octopus. They respond well to visual stimuli, he says. Pointsman says an octopus is useless precisely because it's visually oriented. Slothrop must be responding to the rocket's sound, not the sight of it. In frustration, Pointsman says he needs "not a dog, not an octopus, but one of your fine Foxes ... One, little, *Fox!*"

Analysis

The scenes with Jessica and Mexico alone raise the question of to what extent private domestic life can escape the war effort. Jessica and Mexico are not unpatriotic. She is an ATS private (the women's branch of the British Army), and he is a statistician working for the military. But they are both weary "alumni of the Battle of Britain," too burned out to pitch in with the firemen who attempt to rescue inhabitants of a burning building. Mexico, being a statistician, describes their exhaustion in mathematical lingo: "One has pulled one's nth victim ... free of the nth pile of rubble." They seek a part-time escape, a "gentle withdrawal." They are not seeking withdrawal from Britain so much as defection from a newer, more abstract nation called "the war's state."

One element blocking their escape from the war is the way home life becomes part of the war effort, at least on the level of propaganda. The novel analyzes the "Home Front" as "something of a fiction and lie." The "home front" refers to civilian efforts to support the military. It is metaphorically represented as another, equally important, battlefield ("front"). Jessica and Mexico feel the lie of the home front is "designed ... to draw them apart" and to "subvert love in favor of work, abstraction, required pain, bitter death." Thus Jessica and Mexico's hideaway home is also a node of entropy, a place where their energy is unavailable to the work of the war. This note of principled rebellion gives the young lovers' "us against the world" stance an unusual depth.

But Mexico also styles himself as intimately related to the war:

"The war is my mother," he tells Jessica. In a striking image, the narrator compares Mexico to a tombstone (his "grave-marker self") and the war to a kind of scouring, vampiric tide that has "leached at all the soft, the vulnerable inclusions of hope and praise." Nonetheless, he joins Jessica in the effort at a "gentle withdrawal."

Mexico and Jessica's escape or "gentle withdrawal" from the war foreshadows Slothrop's escape. Like Slothrop, they withdraw by going further into the war zone. Slothrop enters "the Zone" of the rockets' production, and Mexico and Jessica enter the bombed out "stay-away zone." Slothrop will later utter "the only spell he knows" to protect himself from the war, which is "Fuck you." Mexico and Jessica share a similar sentiment: "They are in love. Fuck the war."

Part 1, Episodes 9–11

Summary

Part 1, Episode 9

Jessica dreams about something "stalking through the city of Smoke—gathering up slender girls ... by the handful." A bomb blast wakes her from her dream. Mexico briefly wakes and goes back to sleep. They are in their hideaway house in the bombed-out "stay-away zone."

Jessica gets up for a cigarette. She wonders how dangerous their hideaway is. Roger has tried to explain to Jessica the statistical probabilities of being hit by a V-2. There are two views. There is an "angel's-eye" view of the distribution of strikes, and "their own chances, as seen from down here." The statistical equation shows the picture from the angel's-eye view. Jessica wants to know if an equation can tell them where it's safe. Roger says no.

The memory ends and the narrator remarks the V-2 rockets are falling on London in a Poisson distribution. The Poisson distribution is a mathematical function that gives the probability for independent events happening in a certain interval of time. Thus Roger's work shows the rockets fall according to chance. Those at the White Visitation view Roger as a prophet, but only because they don't understand statistics.

"Both [Pointsman and Mexico] know how strange their liaison must look," the narrator comments. Mexico is "the anti-pointsman." Pointsman, "like his master I.P. Pavlov," thinks minds work in a binary way. Little clusters of cells are excited or they are not, on or off. While "Pointsman can only possess the zero and the one," Mexico is comfortable "in the domain *between* the zero and the one," the area of probability.

The narrative returns to Jessica standing at a window awake while Mexico sleeps. Suddenly a rocket lands "quite close beyond the village." The narrator remarks, "Death has come in the pantry door ... with a look that says *try to tickle me*."

Part 1, Episode 10

The episode begins with a letter from Slothrop. Its return address is the Abreaction Ward in St. Veronica's Hospital. The letter is numbered 1 and is the first of several variations on the phrase "You never did the Kenosha Kid."

A song with the refrain "Snap to, Slothrop" marks Slothrop's return to at least semiconsciousness. He is in the Abreaction Ward and there is a "needle in [his] vein," as the preceding song says. He has apparently been fantasizing the Kenosha Kid variations. The PISCES group is using drugs on Slothrop, in what the reader will later learn is an effort to probe the racial anxieties of white Americans. PISCES stands for Psychological Intelligence Schemes for Expediting Surrender. It is a psychological warfare organization and part of the White Visitation.

The PISCES representative suggests they talk "some more about Boston today" and "the Negroes, in Roxbury." Slothrop describes a scene at the Roseland Ballroom in Boston in 1938 or 1939. The Roseland was a popular venue for jazz performance and swing dancing in the 1930s and 40s. As Slothrop slips into the drugged state he finds himself in the men's room above the ballroom. His harmonica falls into the toilet and he decides to follow it.

Before diving in, Slothrop considers diving headfirst will leave him vulnerable, "his ass up in the air helpless." He imagines "brown fingers, strong and sure, all at once undoing his belt ... holding his legs apart." Also on the scene is "Red," a shoeshine at the Roseland. (As a young man, the African-American leader Malcolm X [1925–65] shined shoes at the Roseland, where his nickname was Red.)

Slothrop wriggles down the toilet. He can still faintly hear "sounds of 'Cherokee' [a jazz song] still pulsing very dimly above." He sees "traces of shit" he can identify as "belonging definitely to this or that Harvard fellow of his acquaintances." Later Slothrop advances further, into a populated underworld.

The scene shifts to one about "Crutchfield or Crouchfield, the westwardman." The narrator clarifies Crutchfield is "not 'archetypical' westwardman,' but *the only*." There follows a meandering catalog of solitary things: the "one Indian" who fought Crutchfield, one of various other ethnic minorities, one rattlesnake, one buffalo, "and on, and on, one of each of everything." Crouchfield's "little pard of the moment is Whappo, a Norwegian mulatto lad."

The scene shifts to a battlefield in the Ardennes in France, and then back to a winter night in Boston, on Beacon Street. Finally, there is a return to the wordplay of the Kenosha Kid.

Part 1, Episode 11

The episode begins by quoting the technical specifications of an invisible ink called Kryptosam. A message written in Kryptosam is revealed by contact with semen. The specifications were written by Dr. Laszlo Jamf of the Agfa Corporation in Berlin.

Pirate has been provided with a Kryptosam message to make visible. To stimulate his fantasies the piece of paper also contains a pen-and-ink drawing of his former lover, Scorpia Mossmoon. She is wearing "the dark stockings and shoes he daydreamed about often enough but never—." His sentence is unfinished; he wonders how "They" know so much about his fantasies.

Pirate's semen reveals a coded message "in a simple Nihilist transposition." He decodes the message, which the narrator summarizes: "There is a time given, a place, a request for help." He burns the message, which fell "on him from higher than Earth's atmosphere." The message was in the V-2 rocket. "There is more to this than he can see," and he will have to immediately go to the place mentioned in the message.

Analysis

Part 1, Episode 9 contrasts the statistician's "angel's-eye view" with the more personal, limited perspective of Roger Mexico

and Jessica. Pynchon could have called this a bird's-eye view, but a bird could not comprehend the human drama of the bombing of London. An angel might see it as a human does. It is also more common to attribute such an overview to God, rather than to angels. But angels did not arrange history, whereas God might have (depending on one's religious beliefs). Thus the angel's-eye view is the view of a being who perhaps sympathizes with but does not intervene in human affairs.

The contrast between the angel's-eye view and the personal one is repeated in Jessica's and Mexico's discussion of Pirate Prentice's remarks. Prentice had spoken of paying dues in the war. Mexico scoffs at dues-paying as "Calvinism" (a form of Protestantism named for John Calvin, 16th-century Protestant reformer of Christianity). In contrast to the distance of the noninterfering angel, the more personal, "Calvinist" view of the 1944 bombing of London centers on the guilt or innocence of the victims. For Mexico the statistician, there are no contrasting columns of dues-payers and dues-shirkers. "Everyone's equal. Same chances of getting hit. Equal in the eyes of the rocket."

The contrast between the angel's view and Jessica and Mexico's down-to-earth view also maps onto the contrast between Mexico's statistical view and Pointsman's psychological one. Pointsman is not necessarily a Calvinist. But Pointsman believes in cause and effect, and in binary states: brain cells are excited or not, on or off (just as a Calvinist is saved or damned). It is not immediately obvious why statistics should be contrasted with cause and effect. Mexico, after all, is "devoted to number and to method, not table-rapping or wishful thinking" like his colleagues at the White Visitation. Mexico's Poisson distribution of bombs records the eminently cause-and-effect occurrence of bombs being sent up in Holland and falling down on London. But Pointsman sees in statistics a loss of history. For the statistician, each square of the London map has the same chances of being hit each time. The history of that small area is irrelevant to its chances. Horrified, Pointsman wonders, "Will Postwar be nothing but 'events' ...? No links? Is it the end of history?"

Part 1, Episode 10 also shifts between an angel's-eye view and a personal, psychological one. The setting is the Abreaction Ward of St. Victoria's—the domain of psychology. But Slothrop's drug-induced fantasies are oddly impersonal. They do not yield much of Slothrop's own backstory. Instead, they are representative fantasies. The Roseland toilet sequence yields up the representative racial and sexual fantasies of an

average white male college student in New England in the 1930s and 40s. Slothrop, to judge by the content of this dream or fantasy, associates African-American men with sexual aggression. He associates blackness in general with feces and with death. Even the PISCES scientists examining Slothrop are interested in his racial fantasies as representative, not for what they reveal about Slothrop in particular. They will use this data for their Operation Black Wing, a psychological warfare operation. This is revealed in the next episode (Part 1, Episode 12), where it is said Slothrop is "willing to go under light narcosis to help illuminate *racial* problems in his own country."

The "Crutchfield or Crouchfield" material seems very idiosyncratic in contrast to the rest of Slothrop's dream sequence, but even here the content is somewhat impersonal. The fantasy's motif of a white imperial wanderer and his indigenous lover/companion is taken up in the rest of the novel, with Blicero the German and Enzian the Herero tribesman in South-West Africa. Rather than open up Slothrop's personal psyche, the drug experiments in the Abreaction Ward seem to open up the psyche of the novel itself.

Part 1, Episode 11 reveals the way individual psychological quirks can be taken up and used by the war or by the mysterious "Them." The message Pirate is meant to decode with the help of "Kryptosam" and his own semen arrives with a conveniently personalized erotic drawing. Pirate wonders if "They (They?) somehow have managed to monitor everything he saw and read since puberty." Slothrop is not the only paranoid character. Paranoia is the privileged or primary mode of thinking in the novel.

Part 1, Episodes 12–14

Summary

Part 1, Episode 12

In Germany in December 1944, the approach of winter is marked by propaganda posters: "WAS TUST DU FÜR DIE FRONT, FÜR DEN SIEG?" (What are you doing for the front, for victory?) In England, the White Visitation endures the onset of winter. The narrator recalls the White Visitation's transformation from insane asylum to psychic research station.

The focus moves back in time to the beginning of Operation Black Wing, a psychological warfare operation housed at the White Visitation. Pirate found out there were "in Germany real Africans, Hereros, ex-colonials from South-West Africa, somehow active in the secret-weapons program." (German South-West Africa was a German colony from 1884 to 1919. Along with the Nama people, the Hereros rebelled against German rule in 1904. The rebellion was quashed in a years-long genocidal campaign in which tens of thousands of Herero and Nama people were killed.) Pynchon imagines a psychological warfare plot trading on German anxiety about Africans. (Although there had long been Afro-Germans in Germany, they were subject to detention and execution in Nazi Germany.) Pynchon imagines a scenario in which Hereros work on the V-2 rocket. Operation Black Wing builds a fantasy to exploit the racial anxieties of Germans. The narrator explains Slothrop's drug experience in Part 1, Episode 10 was research into racial anxiety, for the benefit of Operation Black Wing.

At the White Visitation, Pointsman is depressed by the imminent Allied victory. Peace will mean the end of his wartime research funding. He badgers the head of the White Visitation, Brigadier Pudding, for more money. Pudding is a World War I veteran who is nearing age 80. He is confused by the many bureaucracies and organizations of "the War-state." He delivers weekly briefings: "senile observations, office paranoia, gossip about the War ... [and] reminiscences of Flanders [a World War I battlefield]."

Pointsmen and Dr. Géza Rózsavölgyi argue about how best to examine Slothrop's mysterious connection to the V-2 rocket. Rózsavölgyi favors a personality test. Pointsmen says the behaviorists "want to expose Slothrop to the German rocket" to see how he reacts. The episode concludes with a description of the elaborate architecture of the White Visitation house.

Part 1, Episode 13

The discussion concerning how to explore Slothrop's sensitivity to the rocket continues. Pointsmen wants to do behaviorist experiments on Slothrop. He adds "the Americans" have already experimented on Slothrop. Pudding is appalled: "We can't, Pointsmen, it's beastly." The episode switches focus to the past, summarizing Laszlo Jamf's experiments on "Infant Tyrone [Slothrop]." At Harvard University, the visiting German psychologist Jamf conditioned Slothrop to respond to a certain

stimulus with an erection. Jamf considered an erection a "binary, elegant" piece of data "that's either there, or it isn't." Additionally, it is possible Jamf did not undo Slothrop's conditioning, a process known as "extinguishing" the reflex.

The map of Slothrop's conquests and the map of V-2 rocket strikes are perfectly aligned. Various White Visitation denizens have their opinions. Some believe Slothrop has "precognition," an ability to predict where the rockets will fall. Some believe Slothrop uses telekinesis to cause the rockets to fall on the sites of his seductions, out of unconscious guilt or anger. Mexico thinks it is a "statistical oddity," but its oddness causes him to question "the foundations of that discipline." Pointsman believes some remnant of Jamf's surviving reflex is operating in Slothrop.

The puzzle is Slothrop visits the women before the rocket strikes. This puts stimulus and response in reverse order. Perhaps there is nothing statistically random about the girl-map or the rocket strikes. Likewise, cause and effect are reversed: the location of the rocket's ground-zero impact point seems to exist before the flight of the rocket. Proving this would prove "the stone determinacy of everything, of every soul." The narrator adds, "You can see how important a discovery like that would be."

The episode shifts focus to Pointsman's rapturous, long-ago encounter with the ideas of behaviorist psychology. His belief in behaviorism is described as a seduction by a "Venus." Powerful forces, perhaps a "Syndicate," will demand payment for the pleasures Pointsman has enjoyed with this Venus. Then Pointsman and Mexico have a discussion or argument about methods. Mexico takes the side of investigators Pointsman calls mystical, dismissing a certain style of thinking as "yang-yin rubbish." Mexico points out analysis might also be limited.

Pointsman is interested in Slothrop's paranoia, as revealed in his personality tests. He describes paranoia in physiological terms. One area of the paranoid brain is highly stimulated: "One bright, burning point, surrounded by darkness." Pointsman feels he is on the verge of completing the work Pavlov left unfinished at his death.

The narration shifts focus to other events around the White Visitation. Two men from Operation Black Wing watch a third, a "black man," skating on the frozen pond.

Part 1, Episode 14

Back at Pirate's house, a young Dutch woman is being filmed. At the same time, Osbie Feel is scraping out the caps of *Amanita muscaria* mushrooms and preparing something. He opens the oven door and the Dutch woman has a subtle emotional reaction to the sight of the open oven. Osbie closes the door, "but for Katje it will never close."

Katje recalls a Captain Blicero in Holland. He held Katje and a young man named Gottfried in thrall or in captivity. The three of them passed their time in intricate sexual arrangements, in which Blicero dominated. He threatens to cut Katje's hair to make her look like Gottfried, and he dresses Gottfried in Katje's silk stockings. They play at being brother and sister. Gottfried is kept in a cage. Katje is the "maidservant" and Gottfried is "the fattening goose." The situation is like the fairy tale of Hansel and Gretel.

They are at a rocket-launching site in Holland, and they are in danger. Rockets misfire and there are English bombing raids on the site. Danger "adds an overtone to the game." Blicero also wonders if Katje is a British spy. In the Hansel and Gretel metaphor, Katje is Gretel, the one who "must push the Witch into the oven intended for Gottfried."

Blicero reminisces about the works of 20th-century German poet Rainer Maria Rilke. He also thinks about his military service in German South-West Africa (Südwest). There he participated in "crush[ing] the great Herero Rising." He had a lover there, a "Herero boy." The Herero boy had already been "corrupted" by missionaries. The boy refers to their lovemaking with the name of the Herero god Ndjambi Karuna. Now, in 1944, the Herero "boy" is a man and is "halfway across Germany, deep in the Harz [Mountains]."

Back in Africa, Blicero had given his Herero boy the name Enzian, the German word for "gentian," a flower. Blicero named him for a poem by Rilke. He now thinks Gottfried is Enzian's double, though one is a white Dutchman and the other a black African.

Katje quits the "game," leaving Gottfried and Blicero behind and defecting to the English side. In response, Blicero moves the rocket site, named Schußstelle 3. The house where they played their game is abandoned. Katje has been exfiltrated by Pirate Prentice. She has already outlived her usefulness to the British. All she had to offer was Schußstelle 3, and it has

moved. She has nowhere to go, so Pirate suggests she go to the White Visitation.

Katje wants to be of service, to make up for the Jewish families she caused to be deported while she worked with the Dutch Nazis. She acts as if there is "a real conversion factor between information and lives." The narrator says there is: "Don't forget the real business of the War is buying and selling."

The narrative shifts focus to Katje's Dutch ancestors, in particular one named Frans. He played a part in Dutch imperialism and in the extinction of the dodoes (flightless birds) in the Dutch colony of Mauritius in the Indian Ocean.

At the White Visitation, Osbie's films of Katje are shown to Grigori, Pointsman's octopus.

Analysis

Ordinarily it seems the point of a war is to win, but these episodes show people and organizations that want the war to last and last. They have other aims besides winning. Pointsman wants his funding to last, so he can go on researching, following in the footsteps of Pavlov. The narrator explains, "The real business of the War is buying and selling." From this perspective, the battles and campaigns are just a distracting spectacle: "The murdering and the violence are self-policing, and can be entrusted to non-professionals." The fighting more or less runs itself. This view also demotes heroism and patriotism to "non-professional," unimportant status. The professionals tend to the real war, the acquisition and consolidation of capital and/or power.

Paranoid views of shadowy profiteers manipulating a war have been floated before. In World War I, an anti-Semitic rumor common in Germany held that Jews were "war profiteers" and "hoarders," secretly and parasitically benefiting from the efforts of German soldiers. The Jewish profiteers, according to this view, lived in luxury while non-Jewish Germans suffered the poverty and privations of the wartime economy. What prevents the mysterious "They" in *Gravity's Rainbow* from being the Jewish caricatures of the anti-Semitic imagination?

There are two main ways Pynchon prevents his paranoid version of World War II from resembling anti-Semitism. First, the novel criticizes the morality of American-German postwar collaboration in the areas of rocket science and international corporations. Such collaborations necessarily involved working

with former Nazis, or with corporations that had done business with Nazis, such as IG Farben. Second, the novel is critical about paranoia. An anti-Semitic work like the publication *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* or the 1940 Nazi propaganda film *Jud Süß* never questions its own conclusions. Pynchon's representations of paranoia include paranoia collapsing back into itself, devolving into meaninglessness. Pointsman explains the consistency of the paranoid worldview. Neurologically, the paranoid brain contains only a small cluster of active cells: "One bright, burning point, surrounded by darkness." Thus *Gravity's Rainbow* does not entirely buy into the paranoid theories it presents, unlike a work of anti-Semitic propaganda.

Slothrop's contribution to Operation Black Wing reveals part of the novel's larger design. Under the influence of drugs, Slothrop "help[s] illuminate racial problems in his own country." Operation Black Wing will sift through his testimony for ideas about how to manipulate German racial anxieties about German black people. Likewise, although much of *Gravity's Rainbow* is set in London in World War II, it is about the concerns of Pynchon's own place and time: the United States in the 1960s and 70s. Those years in the United States saw the rise of the civil rights movement for African-American enfranchisement, as well as the "black power" movement and the Black Panther Party, both aimed at the further liberation of African-Americans. In those same years, the United States' involvement in Vietnam, where it engaged in the oppression of nonwhite people, also revealed the United States as an imperial power. *Gravity's Rainbow* uses the collapse of the Nazi German empire to explore the difficulties and contradictions of American society.

Mexico is described as the "anti-pointsman" in Part 1, Episode 9. However, the two of them do not just subscribe to different schools of scientific and mathematical thought. Pointsman is so convinced of the truth of behaviorism that he seems to have had a religious conversion experience. His introduction to behaviorist psychology is described as his seduction by a cruel Venus who will someday exact a price. Mexico, while he is an expert statistician, is not as fervently committed as Pointsman. Mexico suspects Slothrop's oddity might shake "the foundations" of the discipline of statistics. Pointsman, by contrast, thinks the Slothrop phenomenon is within the reach of behaviorism, not outside it. Pointsman wants to show his connection to rockets is a conditioned reflex created by Jamf.

The escapades of Blicero, Katje, and Gottfried are styled as a fairy tale, with Katje and Gottfried like Hansel and Gretel.

Children's worlds and games are thematically important in *Gravity's Rainbow*. A fairy tale is a fitting lens for Germany. Stories like the Brothers Grimm's "Hansel and Gretel" are quintessentially German, and they are also often cruel. Even the happy ending of "Hansel and Gretel" involves an act of violence, "push[ing] the Witch into the Oven." In Blicero and Katje's version of the fairy tale, both the happy ending and the captivity leave the "brother" and "sister" feeling morally and emotionally devastated. The enactment of Blicero's complicated sexual scenarios is voraciously pursued and ultimately disappointing, opening onto an experience of emptiness. The use of fairy tale elements to decorate sexual captivity points to the contrast between innocent childhood stories and depraved adult ones.

Part 1, Episodes 15–17

Summary

Part 1, Episode 15

Slothrop is released from St. Veronica's Hospital, where he had been undergoing examination while on sodium amytal. Over the course of several days he has a paranoid feeling: "He could almost swear he's being followed, or watched anyway."

Slothrop hangs around the East End of London, "seeking places the followers might not follow." There he runs into a woman he has dated before, a nurse named Darlene. She brings him home to the apartment she shares with an old widow, Mrs. Quoad. She devotes herself to teas and peculiar-tasting English candies in "grease-hazy jars." She offers Slothrop some "wine jellies," a gelatin candy flavored with wine and "just a touch of menthol." Mrs. Quoad and Darlene enjoy the candies. Slothrop soldiers on, gamely eating candies tasting of "mayonnaise and orange peels" and "pure nitric acid." They wash it down with a "ghastly-bitter" tea. The flavors overwhelm Slothrop: "Benzoin vapors seep into his brain. His head floats in a halo of ice."

Later Slothrop and Darlene lie in bed after lovemaking. Slothrop is "hunting across the zero between waking and sleep," his body still entwined with Darlene's. A V-2 rocket explodes nearby, and in an instant "the room is full of noon ...

rattling the building to its poor bones." The sound arrives after the blast. Slothrop reacts to the V-2 in his customary way and soon he and Darlene are making love again. The episode concludes by asking, "Who's that, through the crack in the orange shade ... watching?"

Part 1, Episode 16

The episode begins with a series of memories of the early days of Jessica and Mexico's relationship. Then Mexico wonders, jealously, about Jessica's relationship with her boyfriend, Beaver, "or Jeremy, as he is known to his mother." Mexico wonders if Jessica is "Doing The Same Things with Jeremy."

At the White Visitation one morning, Mexico wakes up with an erection and one of Jessica's hairs in his mouth. However, "he hadn't seen her" for some time. He has paranoid feelings about his colleagues at the White Visitation. He wonders, can they read his mind?

Meanwhile, at her dormitory, Jessica tries to sort out her feelings for Jeremy and Mexico. "When she's with Roger it's all love," but when they're apart, "he depresses and even frightens her." Jeremy is "safer."

In the episode's final scene, Jessica and Mexico attend a church service. It is Advent, the period before Christmas, and a vespers (evening prayer) service. The music moves them. The choir is all male, apparently soldiers, and includes "one black face, the counter-tenor, a Jamaican." The episode shifts to a lengthy consideration of the war and of the birth of Christ. These meditations are all related back to the vespers service in Kent: "This is the War's evensong, the War's canonical hour, and the night is real."

Part 1, Episode 17

The episode starts in the second person, addressing a "you." The thoughts are Pointsman's. He observes in himself the "paradoxical phase," a Pavlovian term. During the paradoxical phase, "weak stimuli get strong responses": a faint bell makes the experimental dog salivate strongly, for example. Thomas Gwenhidwy knocks faintly on Pointsman's door, awakening him immediately, though Pointsman slept through the sounds of British airplanes, "Mosquitoes and Lancasters tonight en route to Germany." Pointsman has been dreaming of "a round white light" and a landscape of home, and of a woman he assumes is

his wife.

Gwenhidwy has come to report "the news about poor Spectro." St. Veronica's Hospital was hit by a V-2 shortly after Slothrop was released. Kevin Spectro is among the dead.

Pointsman considers now Spectro is nothing but a pinpoint on a map of V-2 bomb sites. And someday the map will be taken down and the pins removed. Five of the seven original owners of "the Book," a rare translation of Pavlov's lectures, are now dead. Only Pointsman and Gwenhidwy are left.

Pointsman's Nobel victory thoughts turn mythological. He used to imagine himself finding "a Minotaur waiting for him." (The Minotaur was a creature of Greek mythology, partly human, with the head of a bull. He dwelled inside a labyrinth, waiting to attack anyone who entered.)

Pointsman wonders if Slothrop can renew his Nobel hopes. He thinks, "Slothrop ought to be on the Riviera by now, warm, fed." Pointsman considers this coincidence: "Spectro is dead, and Slothrop (*sentiments d'emprise*) ... was with his Darlene" just blocks from the hospital two days previously. "Sentiments d'emprise" is a French term of Pavlov's, meaning "feelings of external influence." Pointsman wonders how Slothrop could have influenced the rocket.

Analysis

The "Disgusting English Candy Drill" in Part 1, Episode 15 is one of Pynchon's set pieces in *Gravity's Rainbow*. (A set piece in a novel or other work of art is a self-contained passage that has been elaborately structured or patterned for maximum effect.) In a bravura performance, Pynchon holds the reader's attention throughout a lengthy and intense description of disgusting sensations, the horrible tastes of Mrs. Quoad's English candies. (The level of gustatory disgust will soon be surpassed, in the scene between Brigadier Pudding and Katje.)

This scene is not just about Pynchon showing off his powers of observing sensory detail. It is also a depiction of the war. The candy eating is a "drill," which is how soldiers practice (or play at) fighting a war. This is a war scene, transposed into a key of childhood sweetness. Darlene is compared to an "ingenuer," an innocent young female character in a book or play. Slothrop too comes off as the male equivalent of an ingenuer, writing home about the wine jellies, "That's their idea of *candy*, Mom!" If they could figure out how to feed this candy to Hitler, he says

with boyish innocence, "I betcha the war'd be over *tomorrow!*" Even some of the candy is military: "a .455 Webley cartridge of ... taffy, a six-ton earthquake bomb ... and a licorice bazooka." For a novel set in wartime, *Gravity's Rainbow* is striking for having no scenes set on a battlefield. Instead, events like the candy drill—and later the pillow fight with Katje and the pie fight with Marvy—suggest the war is everywhere. It has even infiltrated innocent games.

The last time Slothrop was with Darlene was September 1944—when the first V-2 rockets fell on London, and when he first had his peculiar reaction to them. Now on this night the erection and the bomb explosion are closer together than ever, as a bomb falls while he and Darlene doze. Pointsman thinks, like Jamf, an erection is a "binary, elegant" piece of data "that's either there, or it isn't." But Part 1, Episode 15 shows Slothrop experiences it otherwise: lying next to Darlene, his penis is "halfway limp."

In Part 1, Episode 16 the theme of childhood innocence returns, but in a menacing mood. In the midst of a long meditation on wartime England, an "88" (a German 88-mm shell) falls on London and the narrator snaps, "What do you think, it was a children's story? There aren't any." But the episode *is* a "children's story." Jessica and Mexico are in church during Advent, the time leading to Christmas, the celebration of the birth of Christ. The multilingual carol sung at the service celebrates the Feast of Nativity. The scene in the church can be called a meditation on wartime England because it is not anchored to a particular character. The scenes are English, but the narrator's perspective is larger than Jessica's or Mexico's. This matters because the experience of the evensong's beauty and the hopefulness of the birth are dispersed, shared out among all the characters in the church, all in wartime England, and even with the readers.

Part 1, Episodes 18–21

Summary

Part 1, Episode 18

The episode starts with a reference to how the medium Carrol Eventyr is feeling "these days." But the episode soon travels

back and forth in time, first to the 1930s in Berlin and then to a British bombing run over Lübeck in 1942.

Eventyr feels like "a victim of his freak talent" for communicating with the dead. He cannot remember his sessions of contact with the dead. "His only gift" is "this surrender," his receptivity to spirits of the dead.

Recently, "new varieties of freak have been showing up at 'The White Visitation.'" Gavin Trefoil can somehow alter his skin pigmentation, "from most ghastly albino ... to very deep, purplish black." There is a fanciful dramatization of everyday life inside Trefoil, at the cellular level. "Everything that comes from CNS [the central nervous system] we have to file here," says a skin cell, complaining about the bureaucracy of the body. The skin cells speculate about what happens in "the Outer Radiance," on the surface of the body and beyond.

The episode shifts focus to Lübeck in 1942 and Captain Basher St. Blaise's experiences there on a bombing run on Palm Sunday. From the airplane, St. Blaise saw "an angel ... rising over Lübeck." The radio went silent, then St. Blaise radioed his wingman: "Freakshow Two, *did you see that, over.*" The wingman responded, "Affirmative." No one else saw the angel, and St. Blaise did not report it.

The episode shifts focus to Eventyr's "control," the dead spirit who communicates with him. The control is Peter Sachsa, who was killed in Berlin in 1930. He was struck on the head by a policeman's baton during a riot. Sachsa apparently held séances back then, when he was alive. He recalls one attended by a "Lieutenant Weissmann, recently back from South-West Africa, and the Herero aide he'd brought with him." Weissmann is Blicero of the rocket squadron (he changes his name) and the "Herero aide" is Enzian.

Back at the White Visitation, the psychic researcher Edwin Treacle and the statistician Mexico discuss the spirit world. Treacle says they ought to consider themselves part of the same community as the dead. The "Hereros ... carry on business every day with their ancestors," Treacle points out. However, Eventyr has no memory of his "transactions" with the dead.

The transcripts of Eventyr's sessions tell the story of Sachsa's life. He loved a woman named Leni Pökler. He "was active with" the Communist Party in Germany ("the K.P.D.," the *Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands*). Leni's husband Franz worked on rockets for Army Ordnance.

Part 1, Episode 19

The episode continues in Berlin during the era of the Weimar Republic, the German government from 1919 to 1933. Leni Pökler has left her husband, Franz, the rocket scientist. She and her daughter Ilse are staying in a cramped, messy student dorm.

The activists discuss "street tactics" for protests. Leni enjoys protest actions, but Franz was always nervous about them. Leni remembers trying to use a concept from calculus to explain her gradually diminishing fear during street fights. Franz says she misunderstands the meaning of delta-t in calculus. He has "this way of removing all the excitement from things with a few words."

Franz and Leni were poor. Franz worked for a paint factory until it burned down. Franz believed the owner, a "Jewish wolf," burned it down for insurance money. Cold and unemployed, Franz was wandering Berlin when he stumbled on a rocket test. He saw an old school friend there, Karl Mondaugen. After college, Mondaugen had spent time in South-West Africa. Franz and Mondaugen had a reunion that night. They went to a beer hall, and Franz became excited about rocket research.

The episode shifts back to the now-separated Leni in the dorm. She is cold and has nothing to feed Ilse. A woman with whom she slept offers her a crust of bread for Ilse. Leni accepts and decides to go to Sachsa's and ask for milk.

At Sachsa's a séance is underway: "The objective tonight is to get in touch with the late foreign minister Walter Rathenau." Rathenau was a statesman, writer, and philosopher who organized Germany's economy during World War I. At the séance are "the elite ... from the corporate Nazi crowd." Leni meets Peter's gaze at the séance and tells him, "I've left him."

The narrator asks why the Nazis want to talk to Rathenau, the dead Jewish statesman. The narrator gives the paranoid reason, without endorsing it: "A collaboration here, between both sides of the Wall, matter and spirit." Rathenau speaks of strange things: the invention of mauve chemical dyes; the invention of the drug Oneirine; the "coal tars" as mediation between coal and steel. Then he asks the séance attendees two questions: "What is the real nature of synthesis?" and "What is the real nature of control?" A Nazi asks Rathenau a question, as a joke: "Is God really Jewish?"

Part 1, Episode 20

It is Christmas Eve, "this holiest of nights." Pointsman has his own "Xmas present." It is Slothrop, "his own miracle and human child, grown to manhood." The grown Slothrop's brain—"the Slothropian cortex"—contains somewhere on it the result of Jamf's experiment. Thus Slothrop's brain contains "a bit of Psychology's own childhood ... a piece of the late Dr. Jamf himself."

Pointman is hopeful about his experiments, but he has no one to tell. Perhaps as a correlation with his hope about the experiments, he is also sexually excited. All day long, on Christmas Eve, Pointsman "discovers himself with an erect penis" at various times.

The episode shifts focus to Gwenhidwy, the other remaining owner of the Book. He is Welsh and he likes to drink and sing. He works in an East End hospital, in the company of the visiting Pointsman. Gwenhidwy attends to poor residents of London's East End, a poor neighborhood of "blacks, Indians, Ashkenazic Jews [Jews from Eastern Europe] ... bombed out, frozen, starved." Pointsman's West End and "Harley Street" patients have more "genteel signs and symptoms, headborn [mental] anorexias and constipations." (Harley Street is a fashionable London address for doctors.)

At the hospital, the tireless and talkative Gwenhidwy spins several theories for Pointsman. He then outlines for Pointsman "something really paranoid." He says the V-2 rockets are hitting the East End more than anywhere else in London. Gwenhidwy thinks this is a long-standing plan. The poor have been concentrated in the East End and south of the river Thames because military threats to England come from the east and the south. "The people out here *were meant to go down first*. We're expendable," says Gwenhidwy. Pointsman says, "That is very paranoid," to which Gwenhidwy responds, "It's true."

The episode shifts focus to "water bugs" (cockroaches) crawling over Gwenhidwy's papers that night, on Christmas. The narrator calls them "Christmas bugs." They turn papers, lentils, beans, and other hard things into cockroach feces, so they are "agents of unification." The episode's conceit is these bugs "were deep in the straw of the manger at Bethlehem." They lived "among a golden lattice of straw that must have seemed to extend miles upward and downward."

Part 1, Episode 21

It is the evening of "Boxing Day," the day after Christmas. Roger and Jessica are with Jessica's family. Earlier that day, Mexico took the children to watch a pantomime, *Hansel and Gretel*. ("Pantomime" is lighthearted theatrical entertainment in Britain, traditionally performed at Christmas. It is not silent, as the term might imply.) During the performance, "the Germans dropped a rocket just down the street from the theatre." Gretel responded by breaking character and singing a song that began, "Oh, don't let it get to you." The song concludes on a gloomy or eerie note: "And those voices you hear ... / Are of children who are learning to die."

Mexico is feeling sad in anticipation of losing Jessica. He senses at times "nothing really holds her but his skinny, 20-pushup arms." Jessica unglamorously blows her nose and "the sound is as familiar to [Mexico] as a bird's song." She says she is catching a cold. "You're catching the War," Mexico thinks. "Oh, Jess. Jessica. Don't leave me."

Analysis

Part 1, Episode 18 flickers with significant details. They do not add up in the same way as the clues in a detective novel. There is no "solution" to *Gravity's Rainbow*, as in there is in a murder mystery. But part of the pleasure of reading a novel is in its suggestion of pattern. Names and figures are repeated: the angel over the German city of Lübeck is echoed by the "watchmen" on the horizon of the French Riviera (in Part 2, Episode 3); Captain Blicero and Enzian crop up again in this episode; Jamf's name is basically everywhere. Even characters devolve into repetitions, as if they were parts in a musical fugue: "Spectro" dies and returns as "Spectro_E," an even more spectral version of himself. This is perhaps true of all novels, that they achieve beauty and give the impression of significance through pattern and repetition. The pattern isn't meant to be decoded, any more than a symphony is. But in *Gravity's Rainbow*, the reader's habit of noticing patterns and repetitions is thematized as paranoid knowledge, suggesting maybe there *is* an answer. The approaching and receding of this answer—the nearing and fading possibility of grasping the entire vast conspiracy—is the pleasure of reading.

The episode shifts back and forth in time, providing backstory on the rocket. Readers get a glimpse of the rocket squad's Blicero in his youth, and the episode also returns to the

rocket's spiritual or emotional origin in the British bombing of the German city of Lübeck. The British attack on a largely civilian city enraged Hitler, who responded with threats of *Vergeltung*—retribution or payback. Hence the name *Vergeltungswaffen*, or vengeance weapons (V-2). Part 1, Episodes 19 and 20 also shift back in time, giving the backstory of the control Peter Sachsa's girlfriend, Leni Pökler. Leni is married to the rocket engineer Franz, who will work at Peenemünde. Again, there is a sense of whirling, kaleidoscopic pattern as elements recur and resonate.

In addition to shifting in time, these episodes also shift in scale, from the immense to the microscopic. The angel over Lübeck is immense: "The fiery leagues of face, the eyes, which went towering for miles." But the novel also carries with tiny pigmentation cells, grumblingly laboring under the dictates of "C.N.S," the central nervous system, and with the "Christmas bugs" in Part 1, Episode 20. The pigmentation cells are like humans, laboring in darkness and wondering what happens at "the Great Radiance and beyond" on the body's surface, just as humans wonder what happens after death. The cockroaches are not human analogues, worrying their way through a paranoid or mystic structure. The bugs seem unaware of Christ, in whose manger they live, but they are contented.

With both the anxious pigment cells and the beatific roaches, Pynchon the novelist has extended his vision of pattern into a micro level. The pigment cells echo pattern by being little paranoids. The scene with the bugs is patterned in time, as the light shifts from "gold to antique-gold to shadows, and back again." And it is spatially patterned—the bugs live in "a golden lattice of straw that must have seemed to extend miles up and downward." A *lattice* is a structure, like a trellis ivy grows on, and it is also a term in physics, an arrangement of molecules in a metal or crystalline solid. Pynchon uses *lattice* in this second sense pages later, in Part 1, Episode 21. Mexico finds himself betrayed on a molecular level and "Quisling [traitor] molecules have shifted in latticelike ways to freeze him." Again, Pynchon evokes an elusive sense of pattern, both beautiful and menacing, by repeating resonances on a vast and a miniature scale.

Part 2, Episodes 1–3

Summary

Part 2, Episode 1

The epigraph to Part 2 is from Merian C. Cooper, director of the 1933 film *King Kong*. Cooper tells the film's leading lady, Fay Wray, her leading man will be "the tallest, darkest leading man in Hollywood." The title of Part 2 means "A Furlough at the Hermann Goering Casino."

It is still the Christmas season, 1944. Part 2, Episode 1 begins in Monaco, a sovereign city-state on the French Riviera on the southeastern coast of France. It is an area famed as a vacation spot for the wealthy. The episode begins in a seaside hotel above the Casino Hermann Goering. This French resort was renamed to please the occupying Nazi forces (Goering was a leader of the Nazi party). The Allied liberators have arrived, but the casino manager has not had time to change the casino's name back.

Slothrop is staying in his own room, facing the sea. Down the hall, Teddy Bloat and Tantivy Mucker-Maffick share a room. Tantivy and Bloat tease Slothrop about his skill in seducing women. The two of them sing a song, "The Englishman's Very Shy." From the balcony of Slothrop's room, Tantivy calls down to some French women on the beach, dancers at the casino. They invite the men to picnic with them on the beach. To Tantivy's horror Slothrop wears a Hawaiian shirt.

Bloat notices an attractive blonde woman on the beach and directs Slothrop's attention to her. "I say Slothrop," he asks, "is she a friend of yours too?" Just then "the biggest ... octopus Slothrop has ever seen outside of the movies" rises out of the sea and heads toward the mysterious blonde woman. The octopus "wraps one long sucker-studded tentacle around her neck" and one "around her waist and begins to drag her, struggling, back under the sea." Slothrop tries to beat the octopus into submission with a champagne bottle. Bloat produces a crab with which to lure the octopus away from the woman. "*Don't kill it, Slothrop,*" says Bloat. Slothrop uses the crab as Bloat suggests.

The overcome woman lies on the beach. She is Dutch, and her ID bracelet tells Slothrop her name: Katje Borgesius. As she recovers, Slothrop puts together an interpretation of the rescue. "It's a Puritan reflex of seeking other orders behind the visible, also known as paranoia," the narrator says of Slothrop's

interpretation. Slothrop suspects nothing that happened was accidental. "Oh, that was no 'found' crab, Ace—no random octopus or girl, uh-uh."

Now Slothrop looks at his traveling companions with new eyes. Tantivy is "a messenger from Slothrop's innocent, pre-octopus past." Bloat, by contrast, seems to be part of the plot, and probably Katje as well.

Part 2, Episode 2

It is evening of the same day. The episode begins "out at sea," aboard a ship. The octopus Grigori has performed its part in the plot against Slothrop. Now Grigori and a doctor wait aboard the ship.

In a large dining room in the casino Slothrop finds himself seated next to Katje. To get a chance to speak to her, Slothrop leads the others in a song, "The Ballad of Tantivy Mucker-Maffick." During the chorus Katje whispers, "Meet me in my room. 306, after midnight."

After dinner, Slothrop arranges to talk with Tantivy alone, to compare notes on the events at the beach that day.

"Something funny is going on, right?" Slothrop asks Tantivy. Tantivy reluctantly agrees, even though there is "an element of Slothropian paranoia to contend with." Tantivy's parting words are, "And if you need help [in the days to come], well, I'll help you."

In Katje's room Slothrop croons a song, "Too Soon to Know." Katje undresses and the two of them make love. As he falls asleep he begins to snore. Katje hits him with a pillow, and soon they are having a pillow fight.

The next morning, still dozing, Slothrop hears someone stealing his American uniform. He runs after the thief but fails to catch him or her. On returning to his own room, Slothrop finds everything has been stolen: "Leave papers, ID, everything, taken." Bloat helps Slothrop out, loaning him a British uniform. Bloat pretends Tantivy is "off with his girl."

Slothrop walks outside again, into the rain, where "he thinks he might begin to cry." His "friends old and new," his clothes, and "every last bit of paper and clothing connecting him to what he's been" are all gone. Near midnight he returns to the hotel and to Katje's "deep room."

Part 2, Episode 3

In this episode, Slothrop gets a new handler, Sir Stephen Dodson-Truck. Stephen guides Slothrop in study sessions on the V-2 rocket. At the same time, Slothrop settles into domestic life in the hotel room with Katje, even though he has his suspicions of her: "Seductress-and-patsy [fool], all right, that's not so bad a game."

Slothrop comes upon Katje in the casino one afternoon and finds her remote and uncanny. She reminds him they were once at the two ends of the rocket's parabola, its curved flight pattern. She was in Peenemünde, where the rockets took off, and he was in London, where they fell. She says, "Between the two points, in the five minutes, *it* [the rocket] lives an entire life."

Slothrop's two handlers, the rocket science tutor and the seductress, seem arranged to work in tandem. The rocket study sessions leave Slothrop with an erection, so then he meets with Katje. He does not realize it, but Stephen is reporting on the timing of Slothrop's arousal, "consulting a stopwatch and taking notes."

Slothrop invites Stephen to play a drinking game called Prince. When he and Stephen are good and drunk, he draws Stephen away for a private conversation. As they walk on the beach, Slothrop is aware of divine beings on the horizon: "These visitors standing ... these robed figures." They are "the watchmen of world's edge."

Stephen confesses he is sexually impotent, and that "They" make use of this fact. The impotent Stephen is the perfect watcher for Slothrop and Katje: he "can observe without passion."

The episode shifts focus to the White Visitation. The medium Carrol Eventyr is learning that a mysterious They controls him. They edit the transcripts of his séances before he reads them, for example.

The episode shifts focus again, to Peter Sachsa's death in Berlin. At a riot, a policeman struck Peter on the head with his club. At the moment of death Peter seems to have an incommunicable epiphany: "Oh—*how—How beautiful!*"

The morning after the drunken escapade, Stephen is gone and Katje is furious: "You've sabotaged the whole thing, with your clever little collegiate drinking game." They have a comical fight

that turns into lovemaking. Then Katje drills him on rocket specs.

The next day they speak about the uncanny experience in the casino, when he saw her with a faraway look in her eyes. She gives a kind of prophecy, saying maybe one day he'll "find out": "Maybe in one of their bombed-out cities ... it will come to you." Slothrop has a sense of another reality, an "identical-looking Other World." He also realizes Katje plans to leave. They spend one more night together, and when he wakes she is gone.

Analysis

When a woman whispers to Slothrop on the beach, calling him "Little Tyrone," she echoes Laszlo Jamf's name for him. In Jamf's experimental literature, Slothrop was anonymized as "Infant Tyrone." On the beach, too, Slothrop is being experimented with or manipulated. Stimuli are set out for him to react to, namely a woman and a menacing beast. Part 2 begins with an epigraph about the movie *King Kong*, in which the actress Fay Wray plays a woman menaced by a gorilla. In Part 1, Jessica does her Fay Wray impression, pretending to be a woman in distress. Katje is also acting, and Slothrop is wise to it. That knowledge doesn't stop him from getting together with Katje, however.

Slothrop displays a good deal of cunning in these episodes. He manages to get a private word with Katje. Then he arranges to compare notes about the octopus attack with Tantivy. Finally Slothrop arranges a bout of drinking, the better to get the truth out of Sir Stephen. However, Slothrop's freedom is put in doubt later, in Part 2, Episode 8, when it is hinted Pointsman and PISCES *allowed* Slothrop to upend their plans: "Let Slothrop escape [from the Riviera] ... and then rely on Secret Service to keep him under surveillance." Just as when Slothrop sings the Tantivy song to have a word with Katje, his cunning may ultimately be in the employ of Their schemes.

Presumably, PISCES could have requisitioned any number of buildings for their one-pupil rocket school in which to train Slothrop. Pynchon chooses a casino, "where the House always does, of course, keep turning a profit." Like a gambler at a casino, Slothrop is being manipulated for someone else's profit. Expanding on the casino motif, the narrator uses dark rhetorical questions: "When They chose numbers [as on a roulette wheel] ... what did They mean by it? What Wheel did They set in motion?" And "what game do They deal?" By not

answering the questions, Pynchon keeps readers in the same position as Slothrop—sensing another world, but unable to completely know it.

The idea of a second world also plays out in one of this section's many songs: "Oh, THE WORLD OVER THERE, it's / So hard to explain!" Slothrop has just been on the verge of articulating a thought about "two orders of being, looking identical ... but, but." The tone of *Gravity's Rainbow* often switches from ominous to comical, as here. This shift is repeated when the alluring Katje, "an employee of the House," gets in a pillow-and-seltzer fight with Slothrop. Even as they goof around, Slothrop wonders at how planned it all seems: "What other interesting props have They thought to plant ...? Where's those *banana cream pies*, eh?" (The pies will turn up later, in the fight with Major Marvy.)

The tonal shift is also evident in the drunken conversation with Sir Stephen. The champagne hijinks veer into sadness as Stephen unfolds his unhappy life. In addition, their drunken rambling is watched over by "monumental beings" on the sea's horizon, "the watchmen of world's edge." The narrator wonders at the discrepancy: "What is there grandiose enough to witness? Only Slothrop here." By having a supernatural register in the novel, Pynchon creates other uncertainties. Are there conspiracies older than the war's, since there are clearly beings even more powerful than Slothrop's shadowy "They"? At times it is suggested the supernatural and natural orders are conspiring together. In Part 1, Episode 19, when the Nazis try to contact deceased statesman Walter Rathenau, the narrator suggests "a collaboration here, between both sides of the Wall, matter and spirit."

Slothrop is here to learn more about the rocket, but readers learn it too has a supernatural or symbolic side. When Slothrop comes up to Katje alone in the casino, she gives him an impression of sorrow and unknowable depth. Her depths seem connected to things she has glimpsed, beyond the "the visible or trackable" data of the rocket's "flight profile." The two of them were joined by the rocket's flight, Katje in the Netherlands, where V-2 rockets were fired, and Slothrop in London, where they fell. Slothrop too, or the narrator, has a glimpse of the "so much more" that lies beyond the rocket data. In another paranoid structure, "everything, always, collectively, [has] been moving toward that purified shape latent in the sky." There is no answer here, but the heightened, intensified importance of the parabola overshadows how little is said about it.

Katje intimates the rocket is a kind of being: "Between the two points ... *it* lives an entire life." Perhaps she is speaking metaphorically. However, both Blicero's rocket squad and Enzian will realize this metaphor, by plotting to put someone inside a rocket and then launch it. Such a person would not become a pilot or astronaut—"the control is inside," as Sachsa says at the séance. Gottfried, Blicero's rocket payload, is not a pilot, but a bomb or a sacrifice.

Part 2, Episodes 4–6

Summary

Part 2, Episode 4

At the White Visitation, members of PISCES panic about how Slothrop is spoiling their plans: "Slothrop's knocked out Dodson-Truck and the girl in one day!" They fear Brigadier Pudding will end their funding. But Pointsman is serene. Lately he wears tailored lab coats, with "suppressed waist, flaring vents, finer material, rather rakishly notched lapels." He says, "There's no danger." About Brigadier Pudding he says, "We have made arrangements with him."

In a lab at the ARF facility, Webley Silvernail has a hallucination about talking mice. He realizes the lab is also a kind of maze. When the hallucination ends, Silvernail thinks, "It's back to the cages and the rationalized forms of death."

That night Brigadier Pudding makes his way to D Wing, "where the madmen of the '30s persist." He has been coming here nightly for two weeks now. He enters a certain cell in a long corridor. A woman waits for him. He kneels and addresses her as "Domina Nocturna" and calls himself "your servant Ernest Pudding, reporting as ordered." He kisses her ring and then undresses.

The woman has been dressed and made up to Pointsman's specifications. She tells him, "Time for pain now, Brigadier." She beats him with a cane. Pudding finds the pain to be "the clearest poetry."

Then Pudding kneels beneath the woman's lifted cape and the woman urinates and defecates into his mouth. He thinks of the battlefield at Passchendaele, with its "mud, and the

putrefaction of corpses." (Passchendaele, a Belgian village, was near the site of a horrific, months-long battle in World War I in 1917.) He then masturbates at her command, and then he is sent away.

Part 2, Episode 5

Spring is on its way, "the great cusp—green equinox and turning." The first of the novel's "Proverbs for Paranoids" is stated: "You may never get to touch the Master, but you can tickle his creatures."

Slothrop continues to study the rocket, though Stephen Dodson-Truck and Katje are gone. He talks to an Englishman, Captain Hilary Bounce, about the links he finds between corporations on both sides of the war.

Slothrop finds several unusual things in the rocket specs: an "insulation device" that doesn't seem to belong there; a secret "Document SG-1"; and a material for the insulation, something called "Imipolex G." Slothrop plans to sneak into Bounce's hotel room, where there is a teletype machine. He will use the machine secretly to ask London questions about Imipolex G. He enlists a friend to help. She will take Bounce to a party on the Cap d'Antibes, leaving his room free for Slothrop. The telexed answer comes to Slothrop, and he too departs for the party. As he leaves the hotel in a cab, he is followed by "a wiry civilian, disguised as the Secret Service's notion of an Apache." (In this context, "Apache" means a French gangster or ruffian.)

Part 2, Episode 6

Slothrop arrives at the party, which is thrown by the heir to a fireworks fortune. "Some merrymaker ... put a hundred grams of hashish in the Hollandaise [sauce]," and the guests found out and deliberately gorged themselves on it. Now the party is chaotic.

Slothrop sees a man in a white zoot suit. (Zoot suits were popular with minority, working-class men in the United States in the 1940s. The suit featured a long, broad-shouldered jacket and trousers that ballooned at the thighs.) The zoot-suited man—named Blodgett Waxwing—demands Slothrop hold some money for him, to give to a woman named Tamara. Slothrop asks for a zoot suit in return, and Waxwing agrees. The task is part of a complicated deal involving Tamara, Waxwing, and two other men. The goods traded include opium and a Sherman

tank. Tamara then arrives, driving the tank through the garden and into the house. She fires the tank's gun. The projectile is "a dud," damaging the house but not killing anyone.

Slothrop opens the tank and extracts Tamara. Waxwing compliments him for saving the day. Slothrop responds he once "saved a dame from an octopus." Waxwing seems to know of the incident, saying, "This really happened tonight. But that octopus didn't." He gives Slothrop the card of someone he says can help him. "You'll be needing a friend," he advises. The card gives the address of a man in Nice, France. Waxwing also gives Slothrop the promised zoot suit. It turns out to have been seized in the Zoot Suit Riots of 1943, a street fight between white U.S. servicemen and Mexican-American "zoot-suiters" in Los Angeles. Servicemen were beating up Mexican-Americans for being "unpatriotic," as signaled by their elaborate civilian clothes. Slothrop's suit belonged to a zoot-suiter who then enlisted in the army.

Analysis

Brigadier Pudding is supposedly in charge of the White Visitation, but now Pointsman is running Pudding, manipulating him and distracting him. Thus Pointsman is not worried about funding for PISCES because he has "made arrangements" with him. Katje is the dominatrix, and her involvement shows the scenario is a behaviorist experiment on Pointsman's part. Just as Grigori the octopus was conditioned to respond to Katje, something in Pudding's past has implanted a conditioned reflex, a response to certain fetishized rituals and clothing. What planted these reflexes in Brigadier Pudding? In part it seems to be a response to his encounter with death on the battlefields of WWI. Terrified and overcome by the spectacle of death at Passchendaele, Pudding now willingly submits to death in the person of "Domina Nocturna," queen of the night. With these responses, Pudding is as manipulable as a lab animal.

There are two kinds of death in Part 2, Episode 4: the "rationalized" and the ecstatic. The ecstatic form is the worship of death personified as Domina. Brigadier Pudding recalls "Franco's Legion" (soldiers) worshipped her, or rather, celebrated her as their bride. Thus Pynchon underlines the worship of death as being fascist. As her name implies, the scene with Domina is as much about power and authority as it is about sex. Domina represents the type of authority German sociologist Max Weber (1864–1920) called "charismatic."

Weber wrote the charismatic person is "set apart ... endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities." These exceptional qualities can be negative. Weber's idea of charismatic leadership has been used to analyze Hitler's form of rule.

The rationalized form of death is shown in the lab mice scene. When Webley Silvernail's fantasy of singing, dancing, rebellious lab mice ends, Silvernail thinks, "It's back to the cages and the rationalized forms of death." In this instance, rationalized means something like "done according to plan." Thus the lab mice are an echo of the war's rationalized forms of death: the orderly arrangement of troops and materiel; the technologically sophisticated missiles that bring death to civilians; and the concentration camps, in which executions are systematic.

The mice's momentary bid for freedom parallels Slothrop's. He has broken free of PISCES's control, signified by his change of clothes. He shucks the British Army uniform for a "green French suit of wicked cut with a subtle purple check in it," a floral tie, and "brown and white wingtip shoes." At the party he acquires a white zoot suit, and in the coming episodes he will break out completely, leaving the Riviera.

Slothrop has made investigating the rocket his own mission. In addition to studying the rocket with the last of his official handlers, Hilary Bounce, he secretly investigates the rocket's materials on his own. His investigation leads him to contemplate vast, international corporations. He talks to Hilary about Shell, the aptly named oil corporation. A shell is hollow and it can hide something in a rigged game of chance. Slothrop points out Shell buildings in Holland were used to target London, where rockets threatened, among other buildings, Shell's holdings in Britain. Thus Pynchon emphasizes corporations have supranational interests: "Who'd know better than an outfit like Shell, with no real country, no side in any war?" Shell can benefit no matter which side is winning. The setting is the 1940s but this insight is very 1970s. Hilary Bounce is English but he wears a military-like medal from a German corporation: "a gold benzene ring ... the IG Farben Award for Meritorious Contributions to Synthetics Research." Bounce's medal designates him a citizen (or soldier) of a supranational order.

Part 2, Episodes 7–8

Summary

Part 2, Episode 7

The episode begins with some background on the plastic material Imipolex G, which was invented by Laszlo Jamf. Through Jamf, the narrator traces the interconnections of several pharmaceutical and chemical corporations.

In an imaginary sequence, Slothrop and Blodgett Waxwing, under the name "the Zoot-suit Zanies," stage a raid on Shell Mex House. (Shell Mex House was the London headquarters of the oil companies Shell-Mex and British Petroleum.) Slothrop and Waxwing are "savagely looting files, throwing Molotov cocktails" in their search for the corporate secrets about Imipolex G. They burst into the most secret "sanctum" of the building, but there they find "only a rather dull room," with "business machines ... calmly blinking, files of cards pierced frail as sugar faces."

Back in reality, at the Casino Hermann Goering, Slothrop looks at the parts list for the rocket. He notices a part number for a special part: "S-Gerät 11/00000." (*Gerät* is German for "thing" or "device.") The second number is perhaps "the serial number for a rocket," but he has never before seen a rocket serial number with five zeroes in a row.

Slothrop takes a walk to think things over, and on the way he glances at a newspaper listing Tantivy Mucker-Maffick among the "Fallen Officers." Tantivy's obituary is written, hypocritically, by Teddy Bloat, now a major. "They did it," Slothrop thinks; the shadowy They "took his friend out to some deathtrap." Slothrop flees, driving to Nice, France, in a stolen car. There he intends to look up the address on the card Waxwing gave him.

The address on the card is a hotel in the Rue Rossini. All night Slothrop hears voices in the hall—drunk people and "revenants" (ghosts) calling out.

The next day, on "his first day Outside," a young woman gives Slothrop his new identity: "He is now an English war correspondent named Ian Scuffling." She also gives Slothrop "the address of one of our people in Zürich" and says Waxwing wishes him luck.

A week later Slothrop arrives in Zürich. There he finds no clear nationalities or sides, "only the War, a single damaged landscape." The war has remade "time and space into its own image. The track runs in different networks now." Slothrop checks into a hotel and looks up "the local Waxwing rep," a Russian named Semyavin. To Semyavin's dismay, everybody is interested in "information" these days. "Someday it'll all be done by machine," Semyavin says of espionage. "Information machines. You are the wave of the future."

In a café, a smuggler named Mario Schweitar offers Slothrop LSD; he says he is from Sandoz, a chemical company. Slothrop declines the LSD but expresses his interest in Sandoz, Jamf, and Imipolex G. Schweitar scoffs, saying Imipolex G is useless, "the company albatross." He claims there are "vice-presidents whose only job is ... going out every Sunday to spit on old Jamf's grave." Slothrop is shocked to learn Jamf is dead.

Slothrop pawns his zoot suit so he can wear something subtler. He meets an Argentine anarchist named Franco Squalidozzi. The Argentine represents a group of anarchists who have hijacked an old German submarine. Slothrop agrees to take a message from Squalidozzi to Geneva for money.

In Geneva, Slothrop makes contact and exchanges messages for Squalidozzi, and then he heads back to Zürich. He can't find Squalidozzi. Finally a messenger arrives. Slothrop gives him a fee, using the money from Squalidozzi to pay Schweitar back for the loan advanced him in Nice. In return, the messenger hands over data about Jamf's Imipolex G.

Part 2, Episode 8

It is May 20, 1945, and it is Whitsunday, a Christian holiday more commonly called Pentecost in the United States. (Pentecost occurs on the seventh Sunday after Easter and celebrates the Holy Spirit appearing before Jesus's apostles.) Pointsman, Jessica, Mexico, Katje, and a representative of Shell Mex House are at a seaside resort in England. Pointsman knew all about Slothrop fleeing the Riviera. He approved of it in advance, as a cost-saving measure for PISCES: "Let Slothrop escape [from the Riviera] ... and then rely on Secret Service to keep him under surveillance." But now military intelligence has lost track of Slothrop.

Pointsman is upset about another blunder. He authorized two Americans to investigate the map of Slothrop's erotic encounters in London, "the erotic Poisson [distribution]." The

Poisson distribution suggests the probability that a set number of events will occur in a defined interval of time or space with a constant rate and independent of the time of the last event. But they cannot verify a single one of the women: "No Jenny. No Sally W. No Cybele. No Angela."

The narration shifts focus rapidly: *King Kong*; Murphy's Law; the "S-Gerät"; and the possible connections between the Schwarzkommando (the German Herero rocket troops) and "Operation Black Wing" (the British psyops [psychological operations] squadron of fake black German rocket troops).

Analysis

Slothrop's identity changes are Pynchon's experiment in what a novel's protagonist can be. Some novels explore what Ned Pointsman might call a protagonist's conditioned reflexes, the causes that led to certain psychological and emotional destinies. Although *Gravity's Rainbow's* plot is about Slothrop's mysterious rocket reflex (especially in Parts 1 and 2), it is also about what Mexico might call possibility. Far from demonstrating what determines a character's attributes, Pynchon explores character as an array of possibilities. But this state of shifting and dissolving identities is not without its costs, at least for Slothrop. At the end of the novel he is painfully isolated.

In Part 2, Episode 8, Pynchon briefly explores what it means when a story's villain dissolves. In a fantasy sequence, Slothrop and Blodgett Waxwing, under the name "the Zoot-suit Zanies," stage a raid on Shell Mex House, the London headquarters of the oil companies Shell-Mex and British Petroleum. They want to find corporate secrets and learn something about Imipolex G. But they find "only a rather dull room," with "business machines ... calmly blinking." ("Business machine" is a mid-20th-century term for a computer.) These are the old IBM-style business machines, with punch cards. As the black marketer Semyavin says, "Information machines. You are the wave of the future."

However, Pynchon could have planted references to any late 20th-century technology into this World War II setting. The significance of the Shell Mex fantasy is not to name-check IBM or information machines. It is significant as an exploration of what it means to fight a conspiracy. If the enemy is power distributed in complex ways all over the globe, where is the battlefield? This explains the two poles of combat in *Gravity's*

Rainbow: clownish and ghostly. In the clownish mode are pie fights, seltzer bottle hijinks, and miniature steam-train chases. In the ghostly mode, Slothrop futilely battles a vast system, one so distributed its weak points cannot be found.

Part 3, Episodes 1–3

Summary

Part 3, Episode 1

It is May, and Slothrop is in Germany. The war in Germany ended in April. Now masses of DPs (displaced persons, or war refugees) are on the road and so is Slothrop. He is heading to Nordhausen, in the Harz Mountains, in search of the S-Gerät and Rocket 00000. In Nordhausen is Mittelwerke, an underground German rocket factory.

Slothrop boards a train of DPs, where he reads the information he picked up in Zürich (Part 2, Episode 7). It is a dossier about Laszlo Jamf, chemist and scientist.

Slothrop learns shocking things in the Jamf dossier. His father agreed to let Jamf experiment on him, and in return IG Farben paid for his Harvard education. The code name for young Tyrone Slothrop was "Schwarzknabe," or black baby (as in black ops). The code name for his father was "Schwartzvater," black father. Slothrop recalls "a smell, a forbidden room" where "something was done to him ... while he lay helpless." He is sure the remembered smell will turn out to be "the smell of Imipolex G," the plastic Jamf invented.

Overcome by what he has read, Slothrop exits the train's boxcar and climbs up the roof. There he meets Major Duane Marvy. Marvy is ranting about black Afro-Germans in the next train car, using racial slurs to describe them. One of the Africans appears just then and throws Marvy from the roof. He introduces himself to Slothrop: Oberst (Colonel) Enzian.

In Nordhausen. Slothrop meets with a woman named Geli Tripping. She considers herself a witch. Slothrop spends the night with her. Their enjoyment is troubled by her pet owl Wernher and the threatened reappearance of her boyfriend, "a Soviet intelligence officer named Tchitcherine." Even more troubling, Geli knows about the 00000 rocket. She tells

Slothrop the S in S-Gerät stands for *schwarz*—black.

Part 3, Episode 2

The next morning Slothrop leaves Geli's place. Geli has given him the boots of her lover Tchitcherine because Slothrop's shoes were stolen. Slothrop is still in disguise as Ian Scuffling, British war correspondent. He hitches a ride to Mittelwerke, the underground rocket factory, from an American lieutenant (a "rail," in Army slang).

The former salt mine Mittelwerke is carved into a mountain, a series of S-shaped tunnels. Now in peacetime it is like a tourist attraction, though all the tourists are military or government people who are trying to get their hands on rocket technology. A man is giving tours of Mittelwerke that include "the secret doors to rock passages that lead through to Dora," the concentration camp providing slave labor to the rocket factory. The tour also includes futuristic space-themed exhibits about a future Raketen-Stadt (Rocket City). Also on the tour is the place where "Enzian had his Illumination," some kind of epiphany, during an erotic dream in which "he coupled with a slender white rocket." One of the tourists has a thought about the polymer Impipolex G, and someone monitoring thoughts realizes it.

The focus of the narrative shifts back to the lieutenant and Slothrop. The lieutenant parks his car at the mouth of the tunnel to Mittelwerke. Mittelwerke's architectural style has "the Albert Speer Touch"; Speer was Hitler's chief architect, known for grandiose buildings. Mittelwerke was designed by a protégé of Speer's, who gave the entrance a parabolic shape. The factory consists of two long curving tunnels and numerous cross-tunnels—like the rails and crossties of a curving railroad track. "Or picture a ladder with a slight S-shaped ripple in it, lying flat," the narrator describes. The cross-tunnels are called Stollen, and they are numbered zero to 44. The narrative shifts to a lengthy consideration of the symbolic meanings of the double-S shape of the two main tunnels. The meanings include "the double lightning-stroke ... the SS symbol" and "a double integral sign" from calculus.

As Slothrop proceeds along the numbered Stollen or cross-tunnels into the higher numbers, he "retrace[s] the Rocket's becoming," the places it was assembled. Americans in the tunnels sing lewd songs, in limerick form, about men copulating with rockets: "There was a young fellow named Crockett /

Who had an affair with a rocket." At Stollen 41, Slothrop is told the only way in is by zip line. He "clutches on to the cable as 50 feet of twilit space appears underneath him," and then "suddenly the motor cuts off and he's falling like a rock." He lets go of the cable and falls, but then he is carried by the heel, hanging upside down, through a raucous party in Stollen 41.

The party is a going-away celebration for Major Marvy, the racist officer Enzian threw off the train in Part 3, Episode 1. Marvy recognizes Slothrop: "There he is ... by God the limey sonofabitch go *git* him, boys!" Major Marvy and his subordinates ("Marvy's Mothers") chase Slothrop through the tunnels. The madcap chase involves a rebar booby-trap, a miniature train, a blackout, and a rocket warhead. Slothrop and a companion, Professor Glimpf, escape from Marvy and flee Mittelwerk in a stolen Mercedes. They drive up into the Harz Mountains to see a friend of Glimpf's, a "Nazi [rocket] guidance expert." A song ends the episode, this one about American-German postwar collaboration: "Gearin' up fer thim Rooskies / And Go-round Number Three."

Part 3, Episode 3

The episode is set in the Harz Mountains, and the focus shifts to Enzian and other Hereros: "In the mountains around Nordhausen and Bleicheröde, down in abandoned mine shafts, live the Schwarzkommando." As a joke the Hereros call their underground homes "Erdschweinhöhle," aardvark holes. The aardvark has a connection to the myths of the Herero people. The episode recounts many of these mythic elements.

One faction of the Hereros in Germany promotes sterility and the death of the Hereros: "The program is racial suicide." They call themselves Otukungurua and also the Empty Ones. Enzian, leader of the Schwarzkommando, has a different project, not fully explained. He seems to be building a V-2 rocket, but "what Enzian wants to create will have no history."

The episode shifts to Enzian's backstory. His mother had him out of wedlock. His father was a Russian sailor. When he was an infant, his mother took him along on "Samuel Maherero's great trek across the Kalahari." Maherero led the Herero uprising of 1904. In response, the Germans issued an extermination order. In turn, Maherero led his people through the desert, where they were aided by "Khama, king of the Bechuanas," who gave them oxen, food, and water. The thirsting Hereros drank too much water and died. Enzian woke

up alone, among the dead adults. Thus Enzian "grew up into a white-occupied world."

Enzian says he will go to Hamburg. Another Herero, Andreas, warns him it might be a Russian trap. Enzian tells Andreas, "Stop worrying about Tchitcherine." Tchitcherine is Enzian's half-brother, fathered by the same Russian sailor.

Analysis

Part 3, Episode 1 partly explains the sinister plot involving Jamf, young Tyrone Slothrop, and Impolex G. The episode also introduces Major Marvy, the closest thing to a villain in *Gravity's Rainbow*. Nazis are seldom seen in the novel, and now, halfway through, the war in Germany is over. While Marvy seems like comic relief, it's significant Slothrop encounters him while still reeling at his discovery he had "been sold to IG Farben like a side of beef." His first reaction to the discovery is to leave the train car and climb up to the roof for some air, and there is Marvy. Jamf is dead; Impolex G is inert material; "They" are shadowy and invisible. Marvy is a tangible, concrete enemy.

In a way Major Marvy is mistaken about Slothrop; he calls him a "limey [English] sonofabitch." So their enmity is based on a misunderstanding, but in other ways their enmity is real. Slothrop, for all the racial anxieties he displays when drugged, is repelled by Major Marvy's racism. More importantly, Major Marvy is a rival seeking to possess the V-2 rocket. He tells Slothrop he "needs to coordinate with some Project Hermes people from General Electric." Project Hermes is not one of Pynchon's fictional inventions (though Marvy is). Under the name Project Hermes, General Electric and the U.S. Army smuggled dismantled rockets out of Germany. They were reassembled and tested in White Sands, New Mexico, as part of arming for the Cold War.

The comic scenes in the tunnel show men becoming rockets, metaphorically. The limericks about sexual intercourse with rockets make Slothrop's peculiar condition into a general one: in the limericks every man is aroused by V-2 rockets. Slothrop himself mimics the flight of a V-2 when he enters Stollen 41 on a zip line: "Suddenly the motor cuts off and he's falling like a rock." This is *Brennschluss*, the moment the V-2 rocket stops burning fuel and becomes a ballistic missile. Thus Slothrop is not only "falling like a rock"; he is falling like a *rocket*. Later he will become "Raketemensch," Rocketman. But already here he is reborn, perhaps as a rocket; after his fall he is carried around

by the heel, like a newborn. Symbolically, the soldiers copulate with rockets and create a rocket-child, Slothrop.

The scenes in the tunnels contain some of the novel's most evocative passages about the rocket. They're partly rocket science, and they're also rocket poetry. The shape of the tunnels resembles, among other things, the "double integral sign" from calculus, \iint . Calculating the rocket's flight requires a double integration, a calculus operation. A derivative in calculus measures the slope of a curve or the rate of change (time), for example, the rate of change as the rocket travels along its curved path, its parabola. An integral measures not time, but space. In the case of the rocket, the space measured is the distance traveled. The double integration involved in the rocket's flight is, first, from acceleration (meters per second per second) to speed (meters per second). Then the second integration goes from speed to distance (meters). In the narrator's words, "'Meters per second' [speed] will integrate to meters [distance]." That covers the rocket science; here is the rocket poetry: as a result of this double integration, "the moving vehicle is frozen, in space, to become architecture, and timeless." (Timeless because the integral concerns space and not time.) Pynchon adds the fanciful idea that the rocket "was never launched. It will never fall." Katje had said the rocket "lives an entire life" in the few minutes of its flight. Here that life has become timeless, somewhat like the motionless painted figures in 19th-century English poet John Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn."

However, it is not possible to look at the rocket only from the point of view of this double integration. Even the frozen, "timeless" rocket is an intimation of death. The significance of *Brennschluss* is revealed here. The rocket's horizontal velocity is known. Combined with its fall, that velocity creates "gravity's rainbow," the parabola. But *Brennschluss* is involved in the calculation of targeting. Given a particular point in space at which *Brennschluss* occurs, the rocket's landing site can be calculated with precision: "Brennschluss exactly here would make the Rocket go on to hit 1000 yards east of Waterloo Station." This is the rocket's "stone determinacy."

The Schwarzkommando Hereros are also reckoning with the temptation to become rockets. Concerning the Empty Ones, the narrator remarks they are fleeing "a force, which appears to be the Rocket: some immachination" that can "gather violent political opposites together in the Erdschweinhöhle." These violent opposites are gathered the way the rocket "gathers fuel and oxidizer in its thrust chamber: metered, helmsmanlike, for

the sake of its scheduled parabola." Pynchon appears to have invented the word "immachination"; it is a "nonce word," existing only in this novel ("nonce" meaning here "once"). Just as immiseration is the process of becoming miserable, "immachination" in *Gravity's Rainbow* is the process of becoming a machine. The conflict between the Empty Ones and the other Schwarzkommando Hereros is set to explode. Later, Enzian will reveal his ambition to become the V-2 rocket's payload.

Part 3, Episodes 4–7

Summary

Part 3, Episode 4

It is shortly after May Day (May 1), and Slothrop and Geli Tripping are on top of a mountain peak, "the Brocken," in the Harz Mountains. The site is famed for gatherings of witches on May Day. Geli shows Slothrop how the early morning sun on the Brocken casts their giant shadows on the clouds below. "God-shadows," Slothrop thinks.

Slothrop recalls running into "a Schwarzkommando picket" outside the entrance to Mittelwerke. The Hereros questioned him. Slothrop thinks there is something "between Tchitcherine and the Africans." Geli says what's between them is "hate ... old-time, pure, personal hate."

Coming down the mountains, they run into Russian and American troops. Marvy has been gunning for Slothrop, "gnashing about the Harz." Geli advises Slothrop to fly to Berlin in a balloon with a friend of hers, Schnorp. "You want to go where Marvy isn't," she says.

Once in the air, Schnorp and Slothrop find their balloon pursued by Major Marvy in an airplane. Schnorp is bringing custard pies to Berlin to sell, but he sacrifices them for use as ammunition against Major Marvy. Slothrop hits Marvy in the face with a pie. Schnorp tells him to aim for the plane's engine. A cloud bank gives them cover, but Major Marvy pursues them into the cloud. Marvy cut his plane's motor, gliding or "volplaning" silently, the better to hunt Slothrop. The plane appears; Schnorp drops a ballast bag on it, damaging the engine. The plane drops with a "muffled scream." Schnorp and

Slothrop watch the sunset from their balloon.

Part 3, Episode 5

It is "full summer" in the Zone. Tchitcherine is in the Zone, on a "private, obsessive" mission involving the Rocket. He also feels "a compulsive need ... to annihilate the Schwarzkommando and his mythical half-brother, Enzian."

The focus shifts back in time to the Soviet Union during Stalin's reign. Tchitcherine is posted to remote Kyrgyzstan.

Tchitcherine and two colleagues work "with the local Likbez center." (Likbez is short for liquidation of illiteracy.)

Tchitcherine is part of the alphabetization campaign, a Soviet effort to make sure all its diverse peoples had a written language. His other companions are a Chinese laborer and a "traveling 'native' schoolteacher," Džaқып Qulan. ("Native" is in quotation marks because Džaқып is a Kazakh, an ethnic minority in Kyrgyzstan.)

Rumors connect Tchitcherine to a "Soviet courtesan" in Moscow, perhaps for whose sake he was exiled to Central Asia. Other rumors connect him to "the legendary Wimpe," a traveling German drug salesman specializing in opioids. Tchitcherine himself thinks he was sent east "because of Enzian, it's got to be damned Enzian."

The narrative shifts focus to Tchitcherine's father, who was a gunner in the Russian navy. He was on board a Russian ship in 1904 when it sailed to a South West African port, en route to the Pacific in the Russo-Japanese War (1904-05). There the Russian sailor fathered Enzian, and he then sailed away: "His future was with the Baltic fleet."

The episode shifts focus to the alphabetization campaign, and then to a Kirghiz singing duel between two young lovers. Tchitcherine realizes soon some traveling specialist will write down these songs "in the New Turkic Alphabet he helped frame ... and this is how they will be lost." Tchitcherine goes into the desert, searching for "the Kirghiz Light," a phenomenon like the Northern Lights. He has a mystic experience. The episode concludes with a shift to postwar Germany, where "in the Zone, hidden inside the summer Zone, the Rocket is waiting."

Part 3, Episode 6

Slothrop has been in Berlin at least a week. He fell ill from "drink[ing] out of an ornamental pond in the Tiergarten [a park in Berlin]." He crawled to a cellar to wait out the illness.

Slothrop is unsure, but "it seems a while back" he ran into Enzian and the Schwarzkommando again. They wore a symbol with the letters K, E, Z, V, H. These letters stand for "the five positions of the launching switch in the A4 control car." (As mentioned early in the novel, A4 is another name for the V-2 rocket.) Slothrop and Enzian conversed about the Schwarzkommando, the Hereros, and the fragility of the inner workings of the rocket. Just like Slothrop, the Schwarzkommando are looking for "der Fünffachnullpunkt ... the quintuple zero." Tchitcherine is in league with Major Marvy against Enzian.

Slothrop meets a German selling "reefer," a man named Emil "Säure" (acid) Bummer. Säure and his friends have been "looting a stash of Wagnerian opera costumes." In addition to getting him high, they give Slothrop a "pointed helmet with horns, a full cape of green velvet, a pair of buckskin trousers." He puts them on, after removing the horns from the helmet, and becomes "Raketemensch," or Rocketman.

Slothrop, Säure, and the two girls with Säure stumble, high, through Berlin. In a bar they meet Seaman Bodine of the U.S. Navy. Bodine has hidden "six kilos! of pure, top-grade Nepalese hashish!" in Potsdam, Germany. He can't get the hashish because world leaders have converged on Potsdam for the peace negotiations. Slothrop proposes "Rocketman" can get the hashish out of Potsdam. In return, Säure offers a million counterfeit German marks. Slothrop agrees.

Part 3, Episode 7

The next morning Slothrop wakes up at Säure's place in Berlin. He prepares for his trip to Potsdam to retrieve the hash. It is "stashed under an ornamental bush outside a villa at 2 Kaiserstrasse, in Neubabelsberg." Neubabelsberg is a neighborhood of villas in Potsdam; it is "the old movie capital of Germany," its former Hollywood. Säure tells Slothrop he should enter by way of a canal. The roads will have checkpoints. Then Säure and Slothrop walk through the American sector of Berlin. They come upon posters of the Allied leaders; Slothrop asks, "Who's that guy in the glasses?" It is President Truman;

Slothrop was unaware Roosevelt had died. He takes the news hard. Everyone around Slothrop, including Säure, seems to be a simulation. The buildings too seem fabricated, like a movie set.

Säure mentions Tchitcherine is in Potsdam, which disturbs Slothrop. Säure suggests he talk to "der Springer," who "leaps perpetually ... across the chessboard of the Zone," like the knight chess piece. Säure arranges a fake ID for Slothrop with the name Max Schlepzig.

At Zehlendorf, near Potsdam, some Russian soldiers challenge Slothrop. Slothrop fears Tchitcherine is behind this somehow, but he is allowed to pass on. He reaches the canal, steals a boat, and paddles all day toward Potsdam, which is heavily guarded.

The address Bodine gave him, 2 Kaiserstrasse, in Neubabelsberg, turns out to be the temporary White House for the American government representatives in Potsdam. Unchallenged, he finds the bag of hash under a bush. Film star Mickey Rooney walks out onto a balcony and makes eye contact with Slothrop, who is still in Rocketman costume. Slothrop creeps away, only to be stopped moments later. Someone whispers to him, "Yes, you were followed all the way." He is grabbed and hauled away.

Analysis

As with the chase by miniature train in Part 3, Episode 2, the pie fight with Marvy is comical. All around them in the Zone, battles have been raging, real battles in which artillery was fired and soldiers died. Slothrop has lived through the V-2 rockets raining death and destruction on London. But the actual battles depicted in *Gravity's Rainbow* are amusing. The stakes seem low and the consequences slight. This shift in emphasis, from slaughter to slapstick, helps Slothrop have his own journey as a character. Pynchon is not beholden to the conventions of war stories in *Gravity's Rainbow* because it is something other than a war novel.

In this part of the novel, plotlines are still converging. Characters have connections: Slothrop is connected to Geli, who is connected to Tchitcherine, who is connected to Enzian. And Tchitcherine, Enzian, and Slothrop all hunt the "quintuple zero," the 00000 V-2 rocket. The paranoid systems also connect up. As the narrator says of Marvy's possible

connection to other Slothrop antagonists, including Lyle Bland, "There may be no limit to their connections." If all the villains converge, then everything will reveal something about the main character, Slothrop. (However, in the end the novel does not go that way.)

As someone working on an alphabetization campaign, Tchitcherine was an agent of order, a bringer of systems. Thus he works against entropy, the tendency of systems toward increasing disorder. Entropy was originally conceptualized in thermodynamics, a science initially oriented to the workings of steam engines. However, thermodynamics also considers the work of atoms and molecules; this branch is called statistical mechanics. The narrator makes an analogy between letters of the alphabet and molecules: "How alphabetic is the nature of molecules." Tchitcherine himself is "a giant supermolecule" with an ability to systematize by forming bonds with others.

Tchitcherine recognizes the price of working for order on the alphabetization campaign. Writing down the beautiful songs of the dueling boy and girl would cause them to be lost. Now in the Zone, he is his own system. The narrator describes Tchitcherine as building a "little State ... in the German vacuum" of the Zone. His state has only one purpose, "a need to annihilate the Schwarzkommando and his mythical half-brother, Enzian." He also sides with Marvy and other occupying powers in "trying to shut [the Schwarzkommando] down." As Enzian's half-brother, Tchitcherine is his double or reflection. He is also Enzian's opposite, colluding with order rather than liberation.

Tchitcherine is also a double of Blicero, or Weissmann, as he was known in South West Africa. Just as Weissmann, the conquering colonist, had his indigenous Herero lover, so Tchitcherine, representative of the Soviet state, has his minority Kazakh companion, Džaqyp. Blicero and Enzian became lovers against a backdrop of the destruction of the Hereros by the Germans. Likewise, Tchitcherine was in Central Asia at a time of famine and death in the Soviet Union. The famine and death were caused by collectivization, the forcing of farmers onto collective farms to labor to meet production quotas. Although the most deaths occurred in the Ukraine, the highest proportion of deaths during collectivization was in Kazakhstan. Thus, like Enzian, Džaqyp is one of the few survivors of a decimated population. Pynchon here crystallizes a relationship of state domination (Germany over Hereros, Soviet Union over Kazakhs) into the personal relationships of pairs of men. The paired lovers (or perhaps simply friends, in

the case of Tchitcherine and Džaqyp) demonstrate how much power the dominating one has.

As Slothrop becomes Rocketman, the narrator obliquely comments on the power of naming: "Names by themselves may be empty, but the *act of naming* ..." The narrator trails off, declining to say what powers fill the act of naming. Slothrop is surrounded by quite a crowd of partiers in Berlin. However, despite his companions in Berlin, his later isolation is foreshadowed in a conversation with Säure. "Are your people after it [the Schwarzgerät]?" asks Säure, meaning the Americans or British. "I don't have any people," Slothrop answers. He means he is not the agent of any government, but he also means he is alone. "They" have taken his one friend, Tantivy, and his own father allowed him to be experimented on.

In Potsdam a fantastical, fictional character—Rocketman, heroic and ridiculous—could potentially come in contact with real, historical figures from World War II. Rocketman's goofy mission—seizing some hashish—intersects with the mission of architecting the postwar peace. In a way, the people inside Potsdam's temporary White House are more real than Slothrop; they are historical and he is fictional. As though he is aware of this difference but unable to articulate it, Slothrop feels everything around him is unreal. Truman does not seem like the real president to Slothrop, and the narrator describes the change of presidents in the language of moviemaking: "the face [Truman's] that has silently dissolved in to replace the one Slothrop never saw [Roosevelt's]." Of all the real, historical power brokers in the villa, the only one Slothrop sees is an actor, Mickey Rooney. In this way Pynchon suggests history is also a simulation.

Part 3, Episodes 8–12

Summary

Part 3, Episode 8

It is the next night. A group of Argentinian anarchists float in a U-boat in the canal. Slothrop met one of them, Squalidozzi, in Part 2, Episode 7. Slothrop delivered a message to Zürich for Squalidozzi, but back in Geneva they failed to meet again. Since then, Squalidozzi has met Gerhard von Göll, a film

director and black marketer also known as "Der Springer." Von Göll offered to make a movie for the Argentine anarchists; he suggested *Martín Fierro*, to the Argentines' delight. *The Gaucho Martín Fierro* (1872) is an Argentinian epic poem by José Hernández. Its fictional protagonist, Martín Fierro, is something of a national hero, and "on the U-boat he is considered an anarchist saint." The episode gives a summary of the story of Hernández's epic poem, in which Fierro "flee[s] across the frontier, to live in the wilderness, to live with the Indians."

Von Göll and Squalidozzi discussed whether to film the sequel, Hernández's poem *The Return of Martín Fierro*. In the sequel Fierro "sells out: assimilates back into Christian society." Von Göll filmed some "phony Schwarzkommando footage ... last winter in England for Operation Black Wing." Now he has heard there is a real Schwarzkommando in Germany.

The Argentines' U-boat appears on the radar of the U.S.S. *John E. Badass*, Seaman Bodine's ship. The U-boat fires a torpedo at the *Badass*. However, Bodine has dosed the coffee urn on the *Badass* with Oneirine, one of Jamf's drugs. Oneirine affects the time consciousness of those who take it. Somehow this means "the two fatal courses [of the *Badass* and the torpedo] do intersect in space but not time."

Part 3, Episode 9

Tchitcherine is in Germany, accompanied by his driver, "a teenage Kazakh dope fiend." Tchitcherine is thinking about a transcript of a "Sodium Amytal session" of Slothrop's: "Black runs all through the transcript." Slothrop talks about the Schwarzkommando and other German words formed with the prefix "schwarz," for black: Schwarzgerät or black device, and "Blackwoman, Blackrocket, Blackdream." Tchitcherine is puzzled Slothrop does not report to anyone; he never delivers his findings about the rocket to any organization. Tchitcherine wonders if Slothrop is looking for "the Black-rocket ... the 00000." He also thinks Slothrop is bound to run into Enzian. The driver interrupts Tchitcherine's thoughts to comment on the quality of Slothrop's hash, and "they both start cackling insanely."

Part 3, Episode 10

Slothrop is on sodium amytal; he wakes to find himself "still in

Rocketman garb" and in possession of most of the Potsdam hash. Someone has taken a chunk of it. He falls asleep and dreams about birds in the Berkshires, and about his father, Broderick Slothrop. Then Slothrop wakes again and discovers he is at an old movie set. There he meets Margherita Erdmann, a minor starlet of silent film. Gerhard von Göll directed her in "dozens of vaguely pornographic horror movies."

Margherita tells Slothrop they are on the former set of von Göll's movie *Alpdrücken* (Nightmares). She says the most striking thing about all her performances for von Göll was her passivity: "I watched all our films ... I never seemed to *move*."

Margherita recalls her costar, Max Schlepzig. She thinks Max is the father of her daughter, Bianca. Slothrop tells her he is traveling on a forged passport under the name Max Schlepzig. He says somebody probably gave him this name as a "random alias." Margherita thinks the passport is genuine and proves Max is dead. She also thinks nothing is "random" about their meeting: "They want you right here, right now."

In *Alpdrücken* Margherita played "the lesbian ... who's whipped to death at the end." She now implores Slothrop to (partly) reenact the scene. Slothrop, aroused by Margherita's costume of stocking and garters, complies. They make love, she remembering Max, he remembering Katje. In passion, Margherita calls out her daughter's name: Bianca.

Part 3, Episode 11

Franz Pökler remembers watching the movie *Alpdrücken* long ago. He was aroused by Margherita Erdmann's masochistic performance. He went home that night and made love to his wife, Leni. They conceived their daughter Ilse that night, he believes.

Pökler has come to a kind of German children's resort, a place named Zwölfkinder (12 Children) to meet his daughter Ilse. He recalls his early days with the rocket, when he worked with a club of rocket amateurs funded by the SS. Leni was critical. "They're using you to kill people," she told him.

Pökler recalls colleagues from those early days of rocket work. Kurt Mondaugen had been a radio technician in South West Africa, where he met Weissmann and some Hereros. Pökler also recalls Enzian, "the protégé of Major Weissmann." In 1937 Pökler and "some 90 others" went to work at the rocket site Peenemünde, Germany, on the Baltic Sea.

He recalls Ilse's previous two visits to him. Each time she arrived one day at Peenemünde, stayed a while, and then left without warning. He felt love for her but wondered whether she was an impostor.

The episode shifts focus to "Friedrich August Kekulé von Stradonitz," 19th-century German founder of organic chemistry. Kekulé had a dream about the Ouroboros, a mythical snake swallowing its own tail. The dream gave Kekulé a clue to the ringlike structure of the benzene molecule. Pökler wonders who sent Kekulé the dream. Was there a system, a bureaucracy sorting such dreams?

Ilse's third annual visit to Pökler was in late August of 1939, "nearly the end of peacetime." Pökler was given two weeks' furlough and they spent them at the Zwölfkinder resort for children. One night Ilse—or the impostor playing Ilse—tried to seduce him. She asked him, "Papi, may I sleep next to you tonight?" Pökler wondered if they thought he had a daughter fetish.

The visits have continued: "A daughter a year, each one about a year older." In August 1944, again Pökler is at Zwölfkinder to meet Ilse (or "Ilse"). In the spring of 1944 Pökler was transferred to Nordhausen for further work on the rocket. He has known for some time Ilse lives at Dora, one of the "re-education camps" that supplies slave laborers to the rocket works at Nordhausen, Mittelwerke.

After the visit, Pökler keeps trying to enter the Dora camp. The SS guards won't let him in. Finally, in April of 1945, as Germany is falling to the Allies, a "young SS guard, one of the last to leave," delivers a message from Weissmann to Pökler. It says, "*She has been released,*" meaning Ilse was saved from the camp. Pökler knows "this was payment for the retrofit work he'd done on the 00000."

Just before the Americans arrive, Pökler walks out of Mittelwerke and into Dora. He is overwhelmed by "the odors of shit, death, sweat, sickness, mildew, piss" and the sight of "the naked corpses being carried out ... to be stacked in front of the crematoriums." He vomits and weeps, though the narrator notes this does not cause the prison walls to melt. He finds a "random woman," barely alive. He spends half an hour holding her hand. He puts his wedding ring on her finger before he leaves, so she can barter it for "a few meals, or a blanket, or a night indoors, or a ride home."

Part 3, Episode 12

Slothrop and Margherita dine and sleep in a house in the Russian sector of Berlin. (After World War II, Berlin was occupied by Allied powers in separate Russian, British, French, and American sectors.) Slothrop wakes up in the night and goes to find Säure Bummer, to give him the hashish he retrieved from Potsdam.

The next day, Slothrop wakes up near noon. Säure and a composer named Gustav argue about who is better: German composer Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827) or 19th-century Italian composer Gioachino Rossini. Then "the heat [police] come busting in" and Slothrop flees, returning to Margherita. She is in an anxious state, having suffered hallucinations during Slothrop's absence. They settle into a domestic routine, with Margherita requesting increasing sadism and Slothrop complying.

Slothrop dreams about a three-part poem. In Part I of the poem, "a woman is attending a dog show which is also, in some way, a stud service." The excited woman couples with several dogs of various breeds, as well as "a tall horse ... cats and minks, hyenas and rabbits." In Part II, the woman is pregnant, and when she is near delivery she asks her husband to row her out into the river. Then "Part III finds her at the bottom of the river." A "flood now of different creatures, octopuses, reindeer, kangaroos" comes out of her body. Slothrop goes fishing in the Spree River in Berlin, thinking about the dream.

Analysis

The discussion between von Göll and the Argentine anarchists illustrates the way *Gravity's Rainbow* shifts between reality and simulation. *Gravity's Rainbow* is a fiction that makes reference to real, historical events, such as World War II. But it also grafts onto that history a number of improbable fictions: ACHTUNG, for example, or the Argentine anarchists who hijack a U-boat. Thus *Gravity's Rainbow* flips back and forth between simulation and reality. Just so, von Göll flips back and forth between the phony Schwarzkommando of British soldiers in greasepaint and the "real" Schwarzkommando of Hereros. (Although the "real" Schwarzkommando is also Pynchon's fictional invention.)

Both the Hereros and the Argentine anarchists return from the colonized New World to the colonizing Old Europe, hoping to find their freedom or destiny there. In this way they both

reverse trends of actual history. Germany and other colonizing European nations went to Africa on ventures of domination hailed as destiny. After the war, some Nazis escaped to South America. (For example, Adolf Eichmann was arrested in Argentina in 1960.) *Gravity's Rainbow* reverses this journey; Argentinians escape to Germany. Pynchon uses this fictional Germany to explore the idea of an anarchist, stateless realm.

The question then becomes how long this stateless, free, anarchist moment can last. Squalidozzi and von Göll discuss filming *The Return of Martín Fierro*. This is the sequel to the epic *The Gaucho Martín Fierro*. Just as the narrator says, in the sequel Fierro "sells out: assimilates back into Christian society." He has a wife and children in the sequel, and at the end he leaves the plains and returns to his family. Later, in Part 3, Episode 32, Tchitcherine comes upon von Göll filming a scene from one of his *Fierro* films on the heath. Thus von Göll demonstrates he still believes "even the freest of Gauchos end up selling out, you know. That's how things are."

The narrator compares Pökler's love for his daughter Ilse to "persistence of vision." Persistence of vision is the phenomenon enabling a film's series of still images to be perceived as moving images. Rather than seeing 24 separate frames per second, the mind holds on to the vanished frames and blends them with the coming frames, producing the illusion of continuous movement. The narrator's explicit comparison is to Ilse's staggered, separate visits. She has been "flashing ... frames of her, leaving it to him [Pökler] to build the illusion."

However, the illusions produced by persistence of vision can also be compared to a novel. *Gravity's Rainbow* is composed of separate episodes, not unlike the separate still images of a film. Like Pökler, the reader builds the illusion of a single, vast plot from the separate images. Slothrop, too, can be seen as separate images: Infant Tyrone, Slothrop, Ian Scuffling, Rocketman, Pig-Hero. The reader builds the illusion of a single personality.

Part 3, Episodes 13–17

Summary

Part 3, Episode 13

Rocket engineer Horst Achtfaden is aboard the *Rücksichtslos* (ruthless or reckless), a specialized "Toiletship" in the German Navy. Other American and German rocket scientists are aboard the *Rücksichtslos*, in varying states of paranoia. Achtfaden tells himself, or someone tells him, "This Toiletship here's a wind tunnel's all it is." Just as a wind tunnel reveals the stresses and problems in a test rocket, so Achtfaden is a turbulence test for history.

Achtfaden, reflected in countless mirrors in one of the Toiletship's bathrooms, is asked about his guilt for his part in the Nazi war machine. Achtfaden feels he was only responsible for one segment of the rocket's flight, "up to the point where the air was too thin to make a difference." He claims, "Some typewriters in Whitehall, in the Pentagon," caused more civilian deaths "than our little A4 could have ever hoped to." He remembers a rocket scientist who found solace in Eastern mysticism.

In fact Achtfaden is not aboard a "Toiletship." Enzian and the Schwarzkommando are interrogating him with the help of sodium amytal. Achtfaden knows "they want the Schwarzgerät." He says he worked only on "weight control" and they should talk "to Guidance." Seemingly unable to stop himself, he gives them the name of a guidance engineer, a friend of his named Klaus Närrisch. Achtfaden thus discovers he has "a new parameter for his self-coefficient now: betrayal."

Part 3, Episode 14

Margherita and Slothrop leave Berlin on a barge on the Spree-Oder Canal. They head to Swinemünde, a Baltic seaport and rocket site. Slothrop seeks the Schwarzgerät; Margherita plans to meet her daughter, Bianca, on the ship *Anubis*. Along the way they stop in a resort town Margherita recognizes called Bad Karma.

In Bad Karma, Margherita (or Greta) is spooked by a woman in black. The *Anubis* arrives, full of raucous partygoers. For a laugh "some joker pulls the ladder up" as Slothrop tries to board. He falls in the river and must shed his Rocketman helmet and cape. Once on board he finds sexual shenanigans, fox-trot music, drugs, everything "that was going on" at the party on the Riviera. A woman lends him evening wear.

The woman, Stefania, tells Slothrop the rumors about Bianca. She says Margherita had sex with numerous masked men in a deleted scene from *Alpdrücken*. Any one of them might be Bianca's father. She also tells Slothrop that Margherita is married to Miklos Thanatz, with whom she performed "a little touring show for the boys at the front." They also performed at rocket launch sites.

Stefania and Slothrop join the others on the deck. There are passengers of all nationalities, and "a fabulous or-gy" is underway, as a song announces. There is talk of the drug Oneirine, one of Jamf's inventions. Thanatz says he was at Blicero's rocket site. He found Blicero to be "a screaming maniac."

The highlight of the orgy is a performance by Margherita and Bianca. Bianca is 11 or 12. She wears a "little red frock halfway up her slender thighs, with black lace petticoats." First Bianca sings "On the Good Ship Lollipop," imitating the mannerisms of child star Shirley Temple: "Each straining baby-pig inflection, each curl-toss, unmotivated smile, and stumbling toe-tap." Then Margherita and Bianca have a staged argument, which ends in Margherita spanking Bianca while onlookers continue their orgy.

Part 3, Episode 15

Slothrop wakes up in a cabin with Bianca. They have sex. Bianca talks to him about hiding: "We can get away. I'm a child, I know how to hide." She promises to hide him, too. Slothrop feels detached; he disentangles himself and leaves, sure he will never be back. The episode's focus shifts to Slothrop's youth in the Berkshires, his Harvard years, the comic books he read. The episode considers how "They" want "you" to think there is no difference between a being and an image of that being: "No difference between a boxtop and its image ... their whole economy's based on *that*." The episode concludes with a consideration of "all [Bianca's] putative fathers—Max Schlepzig and masked extras ... Franz Pökler." Of all the fathers, the one Bianca is closest to is "you," the narrator says. "You'll never get to see her. So somebody has to tell you."

Part 3, Episode 16

Still aboard the *Anubis*, Slothrop meets Ensign Morituri "of the Imperial Japanese Navy." Slothrop had noticed Morituri

watching the orgy and not participating. Now they sit on deck chairs and Morituri tells Slothrop his story. He "put in a few weeks' training ... in Kamakaze school," and then he became a propagandist. He traveled to Germany for his propaganda work, where he met Margherita Erdmann and her husband at the time, Sigmund. Morituri was a lonely foreigner who spent a lot of time drunk on beer. Sigmund and Margherita also seemed like outsiders, which drew him to them. Sigmund and Margherita were desperate to cure Margherita's mental symptoms, including insomnia. She also had begun to believe she was Jewish and would be persecuted. They came to Bad Karma for the mud baths, "hot and greasy mud with traces of radium, jet black, softly bubbling."

Before Bad Karma there were "stories about the children in the local newspapers." One night Morituri sees Margherita attempt to sacrifice a young boy in the black mud. She believed the boy was Jewish and she herself was "Israel ... the Shekhinah, queen, daughter, bride, and mother of God." Morituri leaped from the shadows and enabled the boy to escape from Margherita. This was "the only known act of heroism in his career." Margherita and Sigmund fled Bad Karma immediately, that same night. "The next day was 1 September"—that is, September 1, 1939, the beginning of World War II. After that, other dangers closed in on young children.

Morituri thinks Margherita still believes she is Shekhinah, which is a Jewish term for the presence of God in the world. He believes in Margherita's mind, this is combined with the radioactive mud and the children she drowned in it. He thinks she thinks Slothrop is one of those mud-children. Then Morituri reveals he is from Hiroshima, "a city on Honshu, on the Inland Sea, very pretty." He is eager to return to his family there.

Slothrop leaves Morituri and meets Stefania, who tells him Margherita has locked herself "in the head," the ship's bathroom. Slothrop goes looking for Bianca, then he pleads with Margherita to come out. She lets him in, but she says, "But *you're* one of Them." Her proof is that he came out of the river.

Part 3, Episode 17

This episode considers Margherita's many identities, including her names (Greta, Gretel) and her film roles. In *Weisse Sandwüste von Neumexiko* (White Deserts of New Mexico) "she played a cowgirl." She rode a horse named Snake—later Tchitcherine's horse in Central Asia. She was in a comedy with

Max Schlepzig, in which she played the party girl Lotte Lüstig. The episode also recounts dark incidents. Margherita slipped out of the house in Berlin one night to commune with a corpse. The corpse told her, "We live very far beneath the black mud." Margherita also shows Slothrop her scars, from her husband Thanatz whipping her.

At a rocket site Margherita and Thanatz explored a deserted road. Some spirit or force spoke to them, saying, "Not one step farther ... Go back now." They did, and they came upon "Blicero in his final madness." Margherita noticed, "Something was being planned, it involved the boy Gottfried."

Margherita attended a séance or meeting with Blicero, who called her Katje. There was plastic on the table, something "for the F-Gerät." She concedes she might have misheard "S-Gerät." The séance or meeting devolves into an orgy. Margherita is given "an exotic costume of some black polymer" and is told "this is Impipolex, the material of the future." After the orgy, on her return to the rocket site, she feels "something must have happened at the site."

Analysis

Achtfaden's fantasy of a "Toiletship" functions as a satire of the division of duties in the V-2 rocket program. Just as Achtfaden believed he was responsible for only one segment of the rocket's flight, the Toiletship serves only one function in the Nazi war machine. But even the Toiletship must have everything a ship has; it must be commanded, navigated, and maintained. And the Toiletship is part of an armed flotilla. A Nazi Toiletship is still a Nazi ship.

Just so, Achtfaden's responsibility for the V-2 rocket may not end in the high thin atmosphere. It is true "some typewriters in Whitehall" are responsible for many war deaths. (Whitehall is the building in London that houses many government offices.) A comic singer of the 1960s, Tom Lehrer, wrote a song called "Wernher von Braun." In it he spoofed von Braun as a hypocrite who took responsibility only for launching rockets, not aiming them. "Once the rockets are up, / who cares where they come down?" The fictional von Braun concludes, "That's not my department." Just so, "Guidance" is a separate department at Peenemünde. It is possible Achtfaden betrays Klaus Närrisch because he knows he is guilty of war crimes.

Part 3, Episodes 11 and 13 both mention wind tunnels, the

apparatus for testing the rocket's reaction to the stresses of flight. Like film, the wind tunnel is ultimately an image for *Gravity's Rainbow*. In a wind tunnel, air is blown over a stationary object, such as the V-2 rocket, at a speed simulating its flight. In Part 3, Episode 11, the wind tunnel is compared to the separate frames of a film and Ilse's separate visits. "What would the time scale matter?" Pöckler wonders. Whether the "frames" of Ilse's visits occurred at a rate of "a 24th of a second or a year" would not matter, "no more, the engineer thought, than in a wind-tunnel." In Part 3, Episode 13, the Toiletship is compared to "a wind tunnel." Just as a wind tunnel, in a brief time, puts a rocket through "tensor analysis," there should be "nodes, critical points ... superderivatives of the crowded and insatiate flow [of time, of history]." A derivative measures the rate of change over time; a derivative is about segments of time. In the film comparison, Pynchon proposes *Gravity's Rainbow* is a temporal illusion. In the wind tunnel comparison, Pynchon proposes *Gravity's Rainbow* is an illusion that tests or specifies the critical nodes of history.

Margherita is similar to Slothrop in one respect. Just as Slothrop dons many costumes and has many names in *Gravity's Rainbow*, Margherita has numerous separate selves: "She had more identities than she knew what to do with." Margherita may be the initial test case for how dispersed Slothrop can become. Readers tend to lend unity to a character, even one presented differently in different episodes, as Pynchon explores in Part 3, Episode 11, where the character's continuity is linked to an optical illusion. In Part 3, Episode 17, Pynchon uses a term from the science of optics to describe Margherita. Describing the many "Gretels" Margherita has been, the narrator says, "comatic images surround their faces, glowing in the air." In optics, comatic images are caused by a defect or "coma" in a lens. Margherita demonstrates the optics of discontinuity.

Part 3, Episode 15 again compares Slothrop to the legendary hero Tannhäuser. Tannhäuser was a medieval German poet and also the focus of an opera by 19th-century German composer Richard Wagner. In one legend, Tannhäuser abandons love, symbolized by the court of Venus, and goes to confess his sins to the pope. The pope says Tannhäuser's sins cannot be forgiven, any more than his papal staff (the crook-shaped wooden hook he carried) could burst into flowers like a living plant. The dejected Tannhäuser returns to the Court of Venus, his days of pilgrimage over.

In this comparison, Slothrop is the anti-Tannhäuser. Unlike

Tannhäuser, he will not return to love. He will leave his "court of Venus" in abandoning Bianca: "Eventually he'll go, and for this he is to be counted, after all, among the Zone's lost." Unlike Tannhäuser, for Slothrop "the Pope's staff is always going to remain barren." As one of "the Zone's lost," Slothrop is again one of the preterite, another theme of *Gravity's Rainbow*.

Part 3, Episodes 18–21

Summary

Part 3, Episode 18

The *Anubis* is still making its way downriver. A storm hits just as the ship reaches "the Oder Haff," the harbor of the Oder River. The *Anubis* is behind schedule in reaching Swinemünde. Those who participated so gleefully in the orgy are now seasick and vomiting; the ship is full of "barfing aristocracy."

Slothrop can't find Bianca. He thinks about the story Margherita told him about the S-Gerät and Imipolex. He wonders if Margherita was planted by Them: "They knew Slothrop would jump for it [the Imipolex story]." He also feels distant now from his gift of "dowsing Rockets." (Dowsing is a mystical or supernatural way of finding underground water by holding out a twig or branch. Slothrop is comparing his rocket-sensitive erections to a dowser's wand.) Nowadays he feels "bridges that might have led back" to the days of dowsing for rockets "are down now for good."

Slothrop thinks he sees Bianca on the storm-tossed deck of the *Anubis* and sees her "lose her footing on the slimy deck." Then something or someone strikes him in the kidneys and flips him overboard, too. He lands in the waters of the Oder Haff.

Part 3, Episode 19

Slothrop is rescued, hauled aboard the barge of Frau Gnahn and her son Otto. Frau Gnahn and her son are black marketers; she calls herself "the Pirate Queen of the Baltic Run."

In the morning, the storm is over and Slothrop goes ashore to

meet Der Springer, who turns out to be Gerhard von Göll, the filmmaker. Otto, Slothrop, and von Göll come upon Klaus Närrisch. Närrisch is the guidance expert Achtfaden gave up to the Schwarzkommando.

Slothrop and von Göll philosophize. Von Göll is comfortable with the division of people into "elite and preterite," the saved and the lost. Pynchon is relying on a Calvinist meaning of the word "preterite" as those who are not chosen by God and thus not saved.

Von Göll, Otto, and the others invite Slothrop to join them as they head to Peenemünde, the rocket launch site. Also along for the ride are "six chorus girls ... a small pit band ... many many cases of vodka ... a troupe of performing chimpanzees," and the entertainers' impresario, G.M.B. Haftung.

Slothrop and many of the chorus girls, musicians, and chimps get seasick, vomiting over the rail. The whole sick party soon arrives at Peenemünde, now in ruins. There they run into Major Zhdaev, a Russian friend of von Göll's. Zhdaev has von Göll arrested. Slothrop thinks Tchitcherine is behind the arrest. Frau Gnahn makes a plan to bust out von Göll. Slothrop should "pull a diversionary feint," and then he, Närrisch, and Otto will sneak in and grab von Göll. The episode concludes with a tangent about an imaginary competition for the worst, most psychologically damaging mother.

Part 3, Episode 20

Otto, Slothrop, and Närrisch are sneaking around the rocket site at night, looking for von Göll. Haftung joins them, as do some chorus girls and chimpanzees. They gather before a rocket assembly building. The girls and chimps make a diversion, and Slothrop and his companions enter the building. Unarmed, they pretend their vodka bottles are Molotov cocktails full of gasoline.

Närrisch and Slothrop light cigars with which to light the Molotov wicks. Then they go "sneaky-Peteing like two cats in a cartoon off toward Test Stand VII." The narrator remarks, "Slothrop ... has begun to thin, to scatter." He has less "personal density" and a "narrower ... sense of Now." He has become "tenuous," to the point of forgetting what he is doing.

He and Närrisch come to a pump house. They run into a gigantic Russian sergeant, who reacts sulkily. "You're *mean*," he complains as the two cigar-smoking men disarm him and

free von Göll. Now armed, they have the drop on Tchitcherine and Zhdaev, who stroll up unawares. Närrisch and Slothrop make Tchitcherine and Zhdaev give them their Russian uniforms for a disguise. Tchitcherine is friendly; he and Zhdaev have been smoking Slothrop and Bodine's hash. Some Russian soldiers happen by and Slothrop finesses the situation. Tchitcherine is impressed.

Most of the party makes it to the meeting point with Frau Gnab, but Närrisch is left behind. Slothrop wants to go back for him, but "They will kill us," says Otto. Närrisch will go out shooting, just like 1930s American gangster John Dillinger. Närrisch worked on "the S-Gerät program at Nordhausen." He was involved in a "modification to the guidance, minor as it was."

Part 3, Episode 21

Enzian and two other Zone-Hereros, Andreas and Christian, burst into a basement in Hamburg. They are trying to stop the Empty Ones from performing an abortion on a Herero woman, Christian's sister Maria. "It's too late," however. The basement is empty.

Enzian and the others go in search of Maria's husband, Pavel. He is addicted to inhaling gasoline fumes, so they go look for him in the refinery. The refinery has been bombed, like much of Germany. As they search for Pavel, Enzian has a paranoid insight into the war: "There floods on Enzian what seems to him an extraordinary understanding." He realizes this ruined refinery "is *not a ruin at all. It is in perfect working order.*" The bombing completes it, and both sides colluded in arriving at this point. Enzian has many racing thoughts about the vast conspiracy leading to the destruction of the refinery. His thoughts are fueled by "Nazi surplus Pervitins," a brand of amphetamines.

They find Pavel high on gasoline fumes, hallucinating a Moss Creature. Christian attempts to shoot Pavel in revenge for what has happened to Maria. Enzian knocks the rifle aside. He thinks about the new mission of the Zone-Hereros: interpreting the text of the ruin. Perhaps all the Zone-Hereros are needed for this task, he thinks. Then they all go in search of Ombindi's connection in seedy Saint Pauli in Hamburg, Germany.

Analysis

Symbolically, Slothrop's fall overboard is a fall into preterition, the state of being passed over by God, the state of damnation. This symbol is crystallized in the name of the body of water Slothrop falls into: the Oder Haff. There really is an Oder River in Germany, and "Oder Haff" means the harbor mouth of the Oder River. But it also sounds like "the other half," a phrase referring to poorer classes in the United States. The phrase was popularized in Jacob Riis's 1890 book of reportage, drawings, and photographs of poor tenement neighborhoods called *How the Other Half Lives*. Slothrop falls from an elite (if damned) party on the *Anubis* to a ragged, preterite band of black marketers and entertainers aboard Frau Gnab's barge.

In Part 3, Episodes 19 to 21, there is a lot of action—derring-do, nighttime raids, hairsbreadth escapes. The stakes seem higher than the airborne pie fight's. For example, Slothrop is certain the left-behind Närrisch will be killed by the Russians. But comic elements remain. Slothrop, Otto, and Närrisch are armed only with pretend Molotov cocktails. A true Molotov cocktail is a bottle of gasoline with a flammable wick. So Slothrop and his crew reverse the metaphor, occasionally pausing to take a swig of vodka from their pretend Molotov cocktails.

These episodes also mark two divergent tendencies in *Gravity's Rainbow*. Plotlines are converging, as in a traditional narrative. The mysterious Der Springer turns out to be the film director of Margherita Erdmann, uniting those separate threads. The plot also seems moving toward a conventional resolution, as the secret of the 00000 rocket comes into clearer focus. Under interrogation, Klaus Närrisch reveals he worked on guidance. Though it has not yet been revealed, Närrisch modified the guidance of the 00000 rocket so it could carry a human payload.

However, the other tendency of *Gravity's Rainbow* is also revealed in these episodes. At the same time plotlines are converging and mysteries are being solved, there is a dispersal. Slothrop has begun "to thin, to scatter." For now, this has an effect on Slothrop, but not so much on those around him. His "narrower ... sense of Now" causes him to forget what he is doing. Later in the novel this scattering becomes more intense. At that point, other people around Slothrop can no longer "hold him together." Also, in Part 3, Episode 18 the Slothrop story arc begins to recede in importance. In Part 1 it seems *Gravity's Rainbow* is primarily about Slothrop and his erotic connection to V-2 rockets. The engine of the plot

appears to be Slothrop's attempt to learn the truth about himself. But by Part 3, Episode 18, Slothrop feels disconnected from what had once been so important to him, his talent for "dowsing Rockets." It seems unlikely he can do much about discovering the truth when the "bridges that might have led back" to the days of dowsing for rockets "are down now for good." As the novel proceeds, other plotlines take the place of the Jamf-Slothrop plotline.

As the Slothrop story recedes, the attempt of Enzian and the Schwarzkommando to build a V-2 rocket of their own is increasingly focused on. Enzian has a paranoid insight worthy of Slothrop when he reinterprets the ruins of a bombed factory. However, the changes in Part 3 are not just a matter of which story arc becomes more prominent. The Zone itself is changing. The free Zone of creative chaos, which drew Hereros and Argentinian anarchists to seek their liberation there, is closing down and solidifying. "Separations are proceeding," Enzian thinks. "Each alternative Zone speeds away from all the others, in fated acceleration, red-shifting, fleeing the Center."

Part 3, Episodes 22–25

Summary

Part 3, Episode 22

Back at Swinemünde, Slothrop wakes up on Frau Gnahn's barge. Der Springer has a mission for Slothrop, "a minor piracy." He wants Slothrop to board the *Anubis* with him and retrieve the missing hash. Slothrop is still angry with Der Springer about leaving Närrisch behind. He agrees to the task anyway, in return for discharge papers from the U.S. Army.

Frau Gnahn rams the *Anubis*. Slothrop, Otto, and Springer board the boat with grappling hooks, like pirates. Slothrop heads down into the hold to look for the contraband in the engine room, and "just as he touches the deck, all the lights go out." In the darkness someone attacks him, savagely kicking him in the face. The unseen assailant tells him he must continue to climb down to the engine room. When he reaches it, "his hand closes on stiff taffeta." He cannot see but he thinks it must be Bianca. The lights come back on, and Slothrop

dreads to see her. He takes the bundle of hash and leaves. Bianca is still "dancing dead-white and scarlet at the edges of his sight."

On Frau Gnahn's boat they celebrate with champagne, but "Slothrop's hands are shaking." They land at Stralsund, Germany, a port on the Baltic Sea. From there Slothrop goes his own way, on land.

Part 3, Episode 23

The episode begins with a poem or song. Its first verse recalls the legend of Tannhäuser, the 13th-century German poet. The episode shifts focus to England. At the White Visitation, Brigadier Pudding died "of a massive *E. coli* infection." Katje remained at the White Visitation for a while. She found some reels of film and watched them. Some were of her, newly arrived at Pirate's house, filmed by Osbie Feel. Other reels showed the octopus Grigori "watching the Katje footage." This is how Grigori was trained to attack Katje in Part 2, Episode 1.

"Spliced on at the end of all this" footage is something like "a screen test of Osbie Feel." Osbie talks about the scenario for a film he plans to make. Katje believes this part of the film is meant for her: "It is a message, in code." She seeks out Osbie and learns Pirate is "out scouting up some transportation." The drug-taking Osbie is surrounded by "maps, schedules, *An Introduction to Modern Herero*, corporate histories, spools of recording wire." Katje recognizes Osbie and Pirate are "some counterforce" in the making, and she joins in.

Part 3, Episode 24

Katje and Pirate are in what seems to be an afterlife. It overflows with candy: "popcorn in melted marshmallows and butter, and thousands of kinds of fudge, from liquorice to divinity." But the still-living Katje and Pirate are also there. It is a place for double agents, Pirate realizes: "These are, after all, people who kill each other." Soon Pirate also realizes "this is one of his own [fantasies] in progress." Pirate begins to cry, realizing he might "die ... without having helped a soul: without love, despised, never trusted."

A long conversation begins, about the sexual acts of "Anonymous" with various people. It is unclear whose stories these are. Pirate and Katje think of such acts as "loving the People." But Katje points out, "The people will never love [us] ...

we will *always* be bad." She and Pirate dance then, "though Pirate never could before." The others dance too, a crowd of "dancing Preterition."

Part 3, Episode 25

Slothrop continues his trek across the Zone, now in the "narrow gassen" of a town in northern Germany. (*Gassen* is German for lanes or narrow streets.) Slothrop is still wearing Tchitcherine's uniform, which he donned in Part 3, Episode 20 during the raid on the rocket site. He removes the insignia from the uniform to attract less attention. Other people displaced by the war are on the roads: "The Nationalities are on the move. It is a great frontierless streaming out here." There is a communal sharing of food, but Slothrop finds the crowds of DPs (displaced persons) intense—"too *strong*, like faces of a racetrack crowd."

At a farmhouse, Slothrop falls asleep and dreams about Tantivy Mucker-Maffick, "his friend from long ago." Tantivy is in the afterworld, unreachable by Slothrop, "the stretch of an impotent cry past Slothrop's reach." Slothrop travels through the countryside, becoming "intensely alert to trees." The narrator points out, "Slothrop's family actually made its money killing trees ... grinding them to pulp." Slothrop apologizes to the trees. A tree tells him he can sabotage a logging operation someday to make amends.

Slothrop comes across a boy named Ludwig, who says he is looking for his lemming named Ursula. Lemmings are rodents that migrate in swarms, and therefore Slothrop can't believe the boy has a solitary lemming for a pet. "*One lemming*, kid?" Lemmings are also popularly thought to leap together off cliffs into the sea, in a kind of mass suicide. The ghost of "Slothrop's first American ancestor William" starts whispering to Slothrop. He says Jesus's miracle of walking on the Sea of Galilee should be seen "from the lemming point of view." It was only meaningful because of "the millions who had plunged and drowned."

The episode switches focus to the story of William Slothrop. He was "one of the very first Europeans" to go as far west as the Berkshire Mountains of Massachusetts. He raised pigs. He found them "good company" and was pained by their slaughter. He thought one pig might escape death and "validate all the ones" who died, "all [William's] Gadarene swine who'd rushed into extinction like lemmings." (In the gospel of Matthew, Jesus

cast demons out of a man from Gadara. The exorcised demons fled into a herd of swine. The possessed pigs from Gadara—the "Gadarene swine"—then rushed off a cliff and drowned in the sea.)

William develops heretical religious ideas, and he writes "a long tract about it ... called *On Preterition*." In some Protestant doctrines, Christians are divided into "the elect," those chosen by God, and "the preterite," those not chosen, passed over by God. William champions the preterite, and he argues Judas is the savior of the preterite. The narrator then wonders if William's ideas were "the fork in the road America never took."

Slothrop or the narrator wonders, "Is he [Slothrop] drifting, or being led?" Meaning, is he a free man or are shadowy manipulators determining all his moves? Slothrop and Ludwig then follow a girl (or they are led) down into the basement of a church. There in the basement is Major Marvy.

Analysis

Part 3, Episode 22 again references the Tannhäuser theme. Tannhäuser was a poet, and it is not initially obvious why Slothrop should be likened to him. Slothrop is seldom, if ever, seen writing. However, Tannhäuser was also a minnesinger, a medieval German musician-poet who sang of courtly love. (The minnesinger is the German equivalent of the French troubadour.) Slothrop is a lover who plays the harmonica. This may seem a stretch initially, but in fact Slothrop is repeatedly compared to Tannhäuser.

The song in Part 3, Episode 22 asks, "Where is the Pope whose staff will bloom for me?" The song also mentions "Lisaura," the lover Tannhäuser abandoned. Slothrop repeatedly abandons his lovers; most recently he left Bianca behind, in another episode that references Tannhäuser. But unlike Tannhäuser, he will not return to the court of Venus, that is, return to love after his pilgrimage. He will also not be forgiven.

"Who would have thought so many would be here?" asks the narrator at the beginning of Part 3, Episode 24. Where "here" refers to is not clear, although it seems to be an afterlife. But the narrator's question recalls a line in 20th-century Anglo-American poet T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*: "I had not thought death had undone so many." Since Katje and Pirate are not dead, Pynchon may be making this comparison to underline

how serious the stakes are. Katje and Pirate's double-dealing has put their souls in peril.

Dead or alive, the inhabitants of this strange realm are all double agents, as Pirate figures out. Pirate's realization coincides with a realization of the reader's: Pirate must have been a double agent as well. He might not have been a Nazi, however. It is possible he acted both for and against Slothrop. In Part 2, Katje is motivated to help the White Visitation because of her collaboration with the Nazis in Holland. Now, in Part 3, Episode 24, Pirate is motivated to act for good—not because he did something evil, necessarily, but because he seems to have wasted his life. When he cries for Scorpia Mossmoon and other people, he also cries about the futility of his life: "To die ... without having helped a soul: without love, despised, never trusted." This provides the motivation for Pirate to assemble a "counterforce."

Part 3, Episode 25 further develops *Gravity's Rainbow's* theme of preterition, the state or condition of being passed over by God in favor of the elect or chosen persons. Enzian reversed the perspective on the ruin in Part 3, Episode 21, by saying a bombed factory was functioning as intended. Likewise, William Slothrop reverses perspective on the elect and the preterite, promoting "holiness" for the preterite, "without whom there'd be no elect," and "mercy in the name of Judas."

Part 3, Episode 25 also demonstrates one of the two main tendencies in the later episodes of *Gravity's Rainbow*. The Zone is shutting down, becoming occupied by separate powers, states, or tribes. "Each alternative Zone speeds away from all the others," as Enzian sees in Part 3, Episode 21. Above all, the Zone is in danger of being occupied by cartels. But at the same time, the Zone is still a place of hope throughout much of Parts 3 and 4. The Zone is "without elect, without preterite, without even nationality." Just like the Hereros and the Argentinian anarchists, Americans could find their liberation in the Zone, the narrator suggests. If there is a way back to William Slothrop's alternative vision, says the narrator, it is through the Zone "while all the fences are down ... [while] the whole space of the Zone [is] cleared, depolarized."

Part 3, Episodes 26–29

Summary

Part 3, Episode 26

Major Marvy thinks Slothrop is a Russian officer. He generously offers him "some o' Duane Marvy's Atomic Chili." He tells Slothrop a "buncha 'suckers ... hijacked Der Springer" from Peenemünde. He is referring to Slothrop, Otto, and Närrisch's raid (Part 3, Episode 20).

Marvy is accompanied by his friend Clayton "Bloody" Chiclitz. Marvy is selling contraband furs and hatching other schemes. He thinks "there's a great future in these V-weapons." Marvy, Chiclitz, and Slothrop ride out to an A4 rocket battery. Slothrop finds "the Schwarzkommando mandala: KEZVH." This is the mystical symbol the Zone-Hereros made from the initials of the five stages of launching the V-2 rocket.

Marvy says Slothrop's "comrades" are going to attack the Schwarzkommando at midnight. He thinks Slothrop is in the "Soviet CIC," the Soviet counterintelligence corps. Slothrop plays up Marvy's suspicions. He says it is very important to him to "gather certain information" about the Schwarzkommando before the midnight raid. Marvy gives him directions to their location and a ride back to town. Slothrop accepts the ride, thinking to himself about getting revenge on Marvy. "Next time it won't be any custard pie," he swears.

Slothrop goes looking for the Schwarzkommando. He wonders why he hasn't thought about "Imipolex G, all that Jamf a-and that S-Gerät" in a long time. He starts to think about them again when he is jumped by the Schwarzkommando. Enzian is not with them. Slothrop tells Andreas Orukambe about the planned midnight attack. Over dinner with Slothrop, the Schwarzkommando discuss whether to flee. Andreas says, "We have to go where we go ... Where Mukuru [a Herero god] wants us to go." Slothrop tells them what he knows about the S-Gerät, Greta Erdmann, "the Heath, the gasoline works, the name Blicero," and Imipolex G. In return Andreas explains the spiritual significance of the five stages of the rocket launch. They represent "birth, soul, fire, building," and "the pen where we kept the sacred cattle." Slothrop hopes the mandala will protect the Hereros that night, "a spell against Marvy tonight, against Tchitcherine."

Part 3, Episode 27

Tchitcherine has captured and interrogated Närrisch, who tried "to go out [cowboy movie star] Audie Murphy style." That is, Närrisch tried to go out shooting. However, he was overcome by Tchitcherine's men. Närrisch gave Tchitcherine significant details about the 00000 rocket, including that "there was a radio link *from* the ground *to* the S-Gerät but not the other way round." There was also "a special oxygen line [tube]" in the 00000 rocket. Weissmann (Blicero) was in charge of coordinating the S-Gerät project and he "also commanded the battery that fired Rocket 00000." There was also "a load inside near vane 3 that complicated roll and yaw control."

Tchitcherine is with Marvy and Chiclitz. They have just attacked the Schwarzkommando compound, but the Hereros had already fled. Tchitcherine continues puzzling over new leads. He wonders, "Who's the mysterious Soviet intelligence agent that Marvy talked to?" (This was Slothrop, wearing Tchitcherine's uniform.)

Marvy complains about the pressure he is under. He has "General Electric breathin' over [his] shoulder," and "Standard Awl" (Oil) as well. The oil companies are eager to get the rocket technology. Marvy explains the complex history of General Electric's interest in the project. According to Marvy, it goes back to FDR's advisor and former GE president Gerald Swepe. "A Jew," Chiclitz helpfully points out.

Marvy and Chiclitz—"these two fools"—spin out paranoid, anti-Semitic theories. Meanwhile Tchitcherine tries to get a grip on the situation. In a kind of vision or hallucination, "a very large white Finger" looms out of the sky at Tchitcherine. The finger points to "A Rocket cartel. A structure cutting across every agency ... that ever touched it."

Within the borderless Zone, Tchitcherine thinks, "a State begins to take form in the stateless German night." It is widespread and universal, like "the Church of Rome." It is "the Rocketstate." Tchitcherine reflects on how everyone seems to be part of this state except himself and his brother Enzian. At episode's end he is thinking about how crazy and dangerous Marvy is.

Part 3, Episode 28

Slothrop is on his long walk to Cuxhaven, where he hopes to

get discharge papers. The summer is ending, "in deceleration." Slothrop finds "shapes keep repeating for him." The shape he sees most is "the staircase gables that front so many of these ancient north-German buildings." The narrator points out the similarity between this shape and the mathematical calculation of a cannonball's flight. Mathematical analysis breaks the curve of flight into staircase segments.

Slothrop finds himself in a "coastal town, near Wismar," Germany. One night as he sleeps, children "surround [him] and tell him the story of Plechazunga, the Pig-Hero." Plechazunga saved their village from a Viking raid "sometime back in the 10th century." The town holds a yearly festival in honor of the Pig-Hero.

This year the town has no one to play the role of Pig-Hero, and the festival is the next day. The townspeople prevail on Slothrop and he agrees. He wears a plush pig costume in "pink, blue, yellow, bright sour colors."

There are fireworks, and Slothrop is deliberately singed with gunpowder in his role as Pig-Hero. He speaks his Pig-Hero line: "I am the wrath of Donar—and this day you shall be my anvil!" After all kinds of hijinks, the festival breaks up and people huddle in "clumps of three and four." They are doing black-market trading, and for some reason this makes Slothrop nervous. The police arrive and start busting up the activity. Soon the police have "Russian reinforcements."

A girl tells Slothrop, "There's a warrant out for you." She adds, "The Russians found your uniform. They think you're a deserter." Now Slothrop is stuck with the pig costume, his other clothes confiscated. He goes home with the girl, who is "about seventeen." She tells Slothrop she comes from a long line of printers with "German Wobbly" traditions. ("Wobbly" is a slang term for the Industrial Workers of the World, an anarchist union at its peak in the early part of the 20th century.) Given their political leanings, the printers "didn't go along with Hitler."

Their tryst is broken up. The police are going "house to house, looking for their deserter." Still in his pig costume, Slothrop lets the girl show him a way out of town.

Days pass, and Slothrop "keeps to open country, sleeping when he's too tired to walk." Slothrop comes upon a female pig, and they become traveling companions. After much walking "they enter a slow-withering city. ... The sign over the city gate ... reads ZWÖLFKINDER." This is the children's resort Franz Pökler brought his daughter to year after year.

Pökler is there, happy to be reunited with the female pig, Frieda, who is his pet. He is "living in the basement of the town hall."

They talk, and Slothrop recognizes the name Pökler. Pökler gets nervous and gets his gun out. But Slothrop tells him about "the Zürich information with Pökler's name on it, [and] the Russian-American-Herero search for the S-Gerät." Pökler promises to tell Slothrop about Imipolex G, but he first tells Slothrop "something of his Ilse and her summer returns." This reminds Slothrop of Bianca and her "dead flesh." He considers they were both conceived via Greta Erdmann's role in the *Alpdrücken* film. He wonders, "How could they not be the same child?"

Part 3, Episode 29

That same evening Slothrop gets some information about Jamf from Pökler. As a chemistry professor, Jamf increasingly preached the virtues of moving beyond organic chemistry. He told them to "move beyond life, toward the inorganic." But in fact, Jamf never did research in inorganic chemistry himself. "He stayed with C—H," the covalent bond of carbon and hydrogen. Then Jamf left Germany for the United States. There he fell "under the sinister influence of Lyle Bland," Slothrop's so-called uncle.

Analysis

The solidification of the Zone intensifies in Tchitcherine's vision in Part 3, Episode 27, as "a State begins to take form in the stateless German night." Tchitcherine sees the Zone not as splitting up into separate powers, but solidifying into one universal state, "the Rocketstate." What causes Tchitcherine to notice these phenomena is "a very large white Finger, addressing him." This finger parallels an image in Part 1, Episode 4. On the gravestone of Slothrop's ancestor Constant Slothrop, "the hand of God emerges from a cloud." Later in Part 1, Episode 4, Slothrop concurs this is how fate does intervene in human affairs: "Yes the great bright hand reaching out of the cloud." Here in the Zone the hand—or finger, rather—does not belong to God but to "the Rocketstate." (This Rocketstate is not the same as the apparently similar Raketen-Stadt, which is Slothrop's futuristic Rocket City.) The Rocketstate has the potential to take over not just the Zone, but the world, like "the Church of Rome."

In Part 3, Episode 26, Slothrop has a fleeting thought about Jamf and the Schwarzgerät, which is that he hasn't thought about them in a while. Pynchon cuts off these reflections by having the Schwarzkommando accost Slothrop right then. The incident illustrates the slowness with which things happen in *Gravity's Rainbow*. Major shifts in emotion and motivation do not happen in an abrupt, "one and done" way. In Part 3, Episode 18, Slothrop feels distant from his days of "rocket dowsing." That development drains away some of the motivation for investigating Jamf and the Schwarzgerät. In Part 3, Episode 26, Slothrop notices how seldom he's thinking about them. In Part 4, Episode 1, Slothrop gives up on the "primal dream" of understanding Jamf and the Schwarzgerät. In place of a punctual event, the sprawling *Gravity's Rainbow* gives readers echoes and resonances across many pages.

In Part 3, Episode 28, Slothrop takes on yet another identity, the Pig-Hero of Wismar. The novel has already prepared the reader to accept pigs as the emblem of the preterite, the unsaved. William Slothrop worked out his heretical ideas about preterition while he raised pigs on the family farm. In William's retelling, the Bible's Gadarene swine, like Ludwig's lemmings, are preterite creatures who rush together to their doom. Thus, as Pig-Hero, Slothrop is a hero of the preterite. He also experiences great creaturely comfort while in his pig identity, for a while. In Wismar he enjoys "a peaceful, drunken day, full of music ... frying onions, spilled beer and fresh fish." On the road, he enjoys the company of Pökler's pet pig. He also has a moment that unites him with his Slothrop family heritage of turning trees into paper. He sleeps with a nameless girl in Wismar, who tells him her family were printers, and probably anarchist printers at that. Thus his Slothrop family dedication to "shit, money, and the word" seems transformed into a more saintly devotion to only "the word." Her story "touches Slothrop's own Puritan hopes for the Word, the Word made printer's ink."

The brief Part 3, Episode 29 provides some puzzling background for the power of Imipolex G, the plastic invented by Jamf. Readers see various characters swooning over Imipolex G. Slothrop has an early sense memory of its smell. Margherita Erdmann finds Imipolex G more erotic than any other material. In Part 3, Episode 29, Jamf is shown urging his students to "move beyond life, toward the inorganic." But as Pökler notes, Jamf "stayed with C—H," the covalent bond of carbon and hydrogen. As a polymer, Imipolex G would also have had covalent bonds. This does not explain Jamf's stated preference for inorganic chemistry in his lectures to his

students. But it perhaps adds to the allure of Imipolex G to see it as alive. It is "the first plastic that is actually *erectile*," as noted in Part 4, Episode 6.

Part 3, Episodes 30–32

Summary

Part 3, Episode 30

This episode focuses on Lyle Bland of Boston, Massachusetts. He has "so much money he don't know what to do with it all." He is also one of the main conspirators at the origin of Slothrop's story. Along with Slothrop's father, Broderick, Bland conspired to sell Slothrop to Jamf for research. The narrator proposes there are "machineries committed to injustice," but also "provisions active for balancing things out once in a while." The narrator suggests Bland will get what he deserves, partly from his association with "the Masons." (This reference is to the Freemasons, a fraternal order and secret society.)

There is a conspiratorial edge to the account of Bland's career. He held "the patent for that 100-miles-per-gallon carburetor." The implication is Bland suppressed the invention to increase his profits. He also conspired to get "the male work force ... paying enough attention" to their own genitals, again to increase profits (and have an efficient workforce).

Bland is a kind of node, connected to many of the figures in Slothrop's story in Europe. He has connections to "the Alien Property Custodian," which disposed of confiscated German interests in the United States. Through this organization he became connected to Jamf, which eventually led to Bland and Broderick Slothrop selling Tyrone Slothrop to Jamf for research. Other connections are detailed.

Through a complicated scenario involving pinball machines and a Masonic temple in Mouthorgan, Missouri, "Lyle Bland, who couldn't care less, is made a Mason." The narrator runs through conspiracy theories about the Masons. For example, "There is a theory going around that the U.S.A. was and still is a gigantic Masonic plot." The proof is "the strange single eye crowning the pyramid ... on every dollar bill." But "by the time Bland joined up, the Masons had ... degenerated into just another businessmen's club."

However, Bland has a sensitivity for "the magic in these Masonic rituals." He returns from Masonic meetings in an agitated state. After one meeting he "rose up out of his body, about a foot." Startled, he falls back into himself. Eventually he learns to "roll over in mid-air and look back" at himself, the "inert white container" of his body.

Bland starts spending almost all his time on his mystical experiences. Strange people come to his house to "instruct" him "in techniques of voyage." The narrator considers the value of those arctic voyagers who failed to return. Perhaps those who came back "to fame, to praise" are the ones who failed. Eventually Bland assembles his family and bids them farewell. "Tonight, I am going out for good," he tells them. Then he lies down on the davenport and does not wake again.

Part 3, Episode 31

The episode is set in Cuxhaven, a town from which the Nazis launched V-2 rockets. Two English doctors are searching for Slothrop on Pointsman's orders. One of them wonders "if Pointsman isn't *losing his grip*." A corporal tells them how to find Slothrop. He wears a "big bloody pig suit," he says. "You'll know him when you see him."

In Cuxhaven, "soldiers 'n' sailors" and chorus girls are carousing. Seaman Bodine is there too, involved in the drug trade with a colleague named Albert Krypton. Krypton then runs into Slothrop, who tells Krypton he is Rocketman, the one who liberated Bodine's hash from Potsdam. Some soldiers come to arrest Slothrop, but with the help of Krypton he gives them the slip. Still chased by the soldiers, Slothrop escapes with Bodine and Krypton. He wants them to take him to Putzi's, a brothel outside Cuxhaven. "Got to see that Springer," he explains.

Putzi's is "a sprawling, half-fortified manor house" full of "fetishists, spies, and folks just looking for company." Springer isn't there. A girl named Solange takes Slothrop to the baths, where he shucks his pig suit.

In the baths, Bodine meets up with Major Marvy. "Got your 'snow' [cocaine]," Bodine tells Marvy. Marvy is in high spirits and starts enjoying himself with a prostitute. Then the MPs (military police) raid Putzi's. The naked Marvy cannot find his uniform. He grabs the pig costume and puts it on. "Here's our elusive swine, gentlemen," announces a British MP as he arrests Marvy.

Marvy is "strapped ... at knees and chest to a stretcher" and taken to Cuxhaven in an ambulance. On the beach, in the back of the ambulance, the two doctors perform an "operation" meant for Slothrop: they castrate Major Marvy. They save the testicles, "souvenirs for Pointsman."

Back at Putzi's, Slothrop is asleep with "Solange," who is actually Leni Pökler. Slothrop dreams of Bianca while Leni dreams of Ilse. In a way they are the same child, the narrator says, both spawned on Margherita's movie *Alpdrücken*. Slothrop's attempt to get discharge papers from von Göll at Cuxhaven has been a bust. "Herr von Göll is a very busy man," an associate explains to Bodine, and he has not sent any "papers, no military discharges, passports—nothing."

Part 3, Episode 32

Tchitcherine is on a hill above Lüneberg Heath, where Blicero's (Weissmann's) rocket battery was. Through binoculars he watches von Göll film *Martín Fierro* for Argentine anarchists. The scene being filmed is a singing contest between Fierro and a black man. Tchitcherine finds the scene eerily similar to one from his life. While he was in Central Asia, he watched a boy and girl in a singing contest. Tchitcherine also thinks about the 00000 rocket: "Weissmann installed the S-Gerät and fired the 00000 somewhere close by."

But Tchitcherine is cautious. He doesn't know why "Major Marvy dropped out of sight." He speculates, "There is a counterforce in the Zone." Much else seems ominous to him. He wonders who "the Soviet intelligence man" was who tipped off the Hereros. (It was Slothrop.) He wonders who "got rid of Marvy." He thinks it might be "a Rocket-cartel."

He recalls an encounter in Berlin with a Soviet who told him, "You're regarded as 'useful.'" Tchitcherine realizes this is "a death sentence." The man also speculated Tchitcherine was not "supposed to survive the War." "When you did," he said, "they had to look at you more closely."

Tchitcherine returns his attention to the film shoot. "A dozen nationalities, dressed as Argentine estancieros [ranchers]," are eating at the film shoot's kitchen. Among them are the Argentine anarchists. The buildings for the movie set "are real, not a false front in sight." When shooting is finished, "nothing will be struck," that is, the stage sets will remain standing. Perhaps the set will become a community. The narrator wonders how the military government will react to "a

community like this in the middle of their garrison state." There are other odd places in the Zone, including a village "taken over by army dogs." The dogs have a "man-installed reflex: Kill The Stranger." They don't know the reflex was trained into them. Some philosophical dogs wonder why they each remember one benevolent man (their trainer).

The focus switches to speculations about how to make use of the dog village and its philosophizing dogs. "The study has been contracted to, of all people, Mr. Pointsman." Pointsman's fortunes are down: "Since the castrating of Major Marvy, Pointsman has been officially in disgrace."

Clive Mossmoon and a colleague, Sir Marcus Scammony, wonder, "What shall we do with Pointsman?" They also talk about Slothrop. Scammony says, "We sent him out to destroy the blacks, and it's obvious now he won't do the job." However, Scammony thinks Slothrop is harmless and might have even left Germany by now. He claims the Americans have similar plans for "their own, ah, target groups [minority populations]." Mossmoon and Scammony are lovers. The episode ends with a consideration of homosexuality in the army. In World War I, "English men came to love one another decently, without shame or make-believe," while they risked "their sudden deaths." Since then relations between men have become routinized and bureaucratic, and the "real and only" sex happens "on paper," meaning, in the machinations of the powerful.

Analysis

The story of Bland's comeuppance sees him punished with a lonely death. But it is not entirely satisfying. Slothrop does not learn of it; only the readers know Bland becomes obsessed with Freemasonry and dies in his mystic experiments. However, Part 3, Episode 30 provides an important insight into the workings of *Gravity's Rainbow*. The novel has so many séances, sodium amytal interrogations, glimpses of angels, and other strange or supernatural clues. Part 3, Episode 30's analysis of Bland provides one of these clues. With his vast wealth, Bland "could've bought programmers by the truckload" to make sure only harmless information about him circulated. Because the standard sources of information could be bought by them, Slothrop and those like him, "with the greatest interest in discovering the truth," have to turn to other sources. Therefore Slothrop and other truth-seekers must rely on "dreams, psychic flashes, omens, cryptographies, drug-

epistemologies, all dancing on a ground of terror, contradiction, absurdity."

In Part 3, Episode 31, Slothrop once again is not there to witness the defeat of an enemy. Major Marvy is castrated in Slothrop's place, but Slothrop will never know. (The incident also leads to the decline of Pointsman's star at PISCES.) In a conventionally structured novel, plotlines would converge. Slothrop's witnessing Marvy's defeat would be once such convergence. However, a conversation between Slothrop, Bodine, and Solange seems to comment on this structure. When Bodine encourages Slothrop to go with Solange, Slothrop resists, suspecting "this is some kind of a plot." Bodine's revealing reply is, "*Everything* is some kind of a plot, man." However, as Solange points out, everything is a separate plot: "The arrows are pointing all different ways," she says. This conversation is "Slothrop's first news ... that the Zone can sustain many other plots besides those polarized upon himself." When Bland and Marvy come to their bad ends out of Slothrop's sight; these are plots not "polarized upon" Slothrop. However, this is not a lesson in humility. The point is not that Slothrop should learn to see himself as less important. The narrator offers hope "this network of all plots may yet carry him to freedom." Like the Zone, the novel *Gravity's Rainbow* "can sustain many other plots." Pynchon likewise holds out the hope these plots can lead to freedom.

From Tchitcherine's perspective, "a counterforce" seems to be working against him. Someone eliminated Marvy, and "a Soviet intelligence officer" tipped off the Hereros about the coming raid. To the reader, these events seemed like accidents. Marvy accidentally fell into Pointsman's clutches, and Slothrop stumbled into the pose of a Soviet intelligence officer. However wrong Tchitcherine might be about these particulars, his idea of a "Rocket-cartel" could be correct. Much of the rest of the book concerns whether the Zone can sustain pockets of freedom while forces like the "Rocketstate" are solidifying. Examples of such pockets of freedom are the set of von Göll's *Fierro* movies and the dog village.

It is not clear how seriously readers should take the talk of Mossmoon and Scammony. "We sent him out to destroy the blacks," Scammony says. It isn't clear who Scammony means by "we," but there is a clue when he says, "Labour wants the American found as much as we do." The Labour Party is a British political party. In 1945 Winston Churchill and the Conservative Party were defeated as Labour was voted into power. Perhaps Mossmoon and Scammony are disgruntled

conservatives. In any case, their theory does not explain everything about the plot against Slothrop. Perhaps the UK government did attempt to use him for its own racist ends. But that does not explain why Slothrop was experimented on in the first place, or why IG Farben has had him under surveillance. The Scammony-Mossmoon conversation is a thread, but not the complete solution, to the mysteries of Slothrop.

Part 4, Episodes 1–3

Summary

Part 4, Episode 1

Sometime in August, Slothrop hears a plane flying above the mountains. It is Pirate Prentice flying a "hijacked P-47," an American military airplane. The counterforce has started its work: "By now, Osbie Feel ought to be in Marseilles," and "Katje will be going to Nordhausen." The focus shifts back to Säure's place in Berlin, where Gustav and Säure argue about Rossini again. Then "Slothrop moseys down the trail." From a stream he retrieves "the old Hohner" harmonica he lost down the toilet at the Roseland.

He is still hoping to get discharge papers and go back to the United States: "Yup, still thinking there's a way to get back." But otherwise he has been changing; his self is an "albatross," a useless burden. He does not want to go on looking into "the primal dream" of himself and Jamf. (The 20th-century founder of modern psychology, Sigmund Freud, believed early, or primal, life events shaped one's later emotional life.)

At the same time he has abandoned his primary motivation, the secret of himself, his self seems to be everywhere. He keeps encountering graffiti in his name, "ROCKETMAN WAS HERE." He leaves answering graffiti in the shape of a rocket's nose cone.

The episode concludes with a memory of Slothrop doing roadwork in Massachusetts, picking up litter by the highway. In those youthful days he could look at all the random junk, "rusted beer cans ... Kleenex wadded to brain shapes," and "he could *make it all fit*." Now he can no longer make things fit, particularly after the memory of how he "became a crossroad." In a kind of vision he sees a rainbow, but it is as though it is a

penis penetrating the earth, and "his chest fills and he stands crying, not a thing in his head, just feeling natural."

Part 4, Episode 2

Roger Mexico drives over the Lüneberg Heath in a German luxury car painted "army-green." He recalls his last encounter with Jessica, who has been transferred to Cuxhaven. In the spring she came to see him at the White Visitation. Roger explained why he was still looking for Slothrop: "I just can't leave the poor twit out there, can I? They're trying to destroy him." Jessica pointed out the war had ended: "We're at peace." The narrator remarks, "But Their enterprise goes on."

Now the war is over, Jessica is done with Roger. He sees this as her capitulating to Them. He has some nostalgia for the era when the rockets were falling, as that was the time they were together. Jessica thinks, "Now he wants to go rescue Slothrop, another rocket-creature." She finds the idea of Slothrop "creepy" because he is "a vampire whose sex life actually *fed* on the terror of that Rocket Blitz." Jessica leaves Roger for Jeremy, and Roger cries.

After the breakup, Roger is lifted out of his despair by a conversation with the spiritualist Milton Gloaming. Gloaming talks to Roger about Slothrop and Imipolex G. Roger is astonished: "IG Farben had Slothrop under surveillance? Before the war?"

As Roger delves into the plot, he comes to believe Pointsman transferred Jessica to Cuxhaven to thwart or punish Roger. Infuriated, Roger travels to London to disrupt a board meeting Pointsman is attending. Roger urinates on the conference table and attendees to express his anger.

Later, at the White Visitation, Pirate Prentice explains Roger made some mistakes in understanding Their plot. "You're a novice paranoid, Roger," says Pirate. In addition to "a They-system," he says, Roger needs "at least as thorough a We-system." The We-system is a "contrary set of delusions—delusions about ourselves." Gloaming arrives and introduces a member of the Schwarzkommando. The counterforce then assembles in Pirate's maisonette. The episode ends by returning to the present, with Roger driving to Cuxhaven.

Part 4, Episode 3

A U.S. Army company is in Thuringia, a state in central Germany known for its forests. Pfc. [Private first class] Eddie Pensiero gives a haircut to a colonel from Kenosha, Wisconsin. The light is provided by a single bulb, and the electricity is generated by a soldier "hand-pedaling the twin generator cranks."

Eddie is "an amphetamine enthusiast" and has a strange way of proceeding with the haircut. In his speed-induced, hyper-acute awareness, he cuts at each individual hair. Meanwhile, the colonel comments on the remarkable sunsets lately. "Do you suppose something exploded somewhere? ... Another Krakatoa?" he asks. (The Krakatoa volcano in Indonesia erupted in 1883. Fine ash drifted around the earth and sunsets were spectacular for the following year.) Outside, someone plays the blues on a harmonica. The colonel tells a story about climbing around in a ruin in Germany, but the narrative focus of the episode takes several jumps. In one of them, a voice scolds a narrator for getting off track, going "off on another of your senseless and retrograde journeys." That conversation transforms into one between "Mister Information" and "Skippy." They talk about "the Leid-Stadt," German for "Pain City," and they talk about "Happyville." Then the story shifts to Happyville, which is "under the mountain." The colonel is there. So is Laszlo Jamf, "preserved like a '37 Ford against the World's ups and downs."

The bulb lighting the colonel's haircut is also preserved against change: "This bulb is *immortal!*" The episode shifts and becomes "The Story of Byron the Bulb." It begins with the prehistory of Byron's soul, before he was manufactured. Then he is manufactured at "Osram, in Berlin." Phoebus, "the international light-bulb cartel, headquartered in Switzerland," keeps track of all bulbs, "but Phoebus doesn't know yet that Byron is immortal." The episode tracks Byron's life as he moves from one household to another.

Byron's "transcendence" is a problem for Phoebus. The narrative shifts to a paranoid theory about how Phoebus regulates bulb life, bulb efficiency, and the electric grid. There is also discussion of the international electricity industry, and links between General Electric and Krupp, a German arms manufacturer. Byron is aware of these conspiracies but cannot intervene, "condemned to go on forever, knowing the truth and powerless to change anything."

The episode concludes by bringing various threads together. "Laszlo Jamf walks away down the canal," while the "colonel is left alone in Happyville." At the same time, back at C-Company in Thuringia, Eddie stands poised with his barber shears aimed at the colonel's jugular vein.

Analysis

When Slothrop abandons his project of understanding "the primal dream" about Jamf and himself, Pynchon moves this novel into very unconventional territory. The quest for self-knowledge has been one of the important plots since such novels as 18th-century English writer Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones*. Protagonists do not always succeed in getting what they want, but they seldom abandon the attempt with a quarter of the book still to go. From this point on, *Gravity's Rainbow* becomes even less realistic. It always included fantastic elements, such as Slothrop's rocket sensitivity, or the fighter-pilot dogfight turned pie fight. But from here on out, fragments of narrative seldom seem to be happening in the same world. For example, Byron the Bulb, or the kamikaze fighter pilots, are difficult to connect to Slothrop's story.

However, even as Slothrop becomes "scattered" and abandons his main goal, he has his most intense experience in all of *Gravity's Rainbow*. In the mountains in an uncertain location, probably somewhere in Germany, he sees a phallic rainbow unite with the Earth. Slothrop responds in a deeply emotional way, and "he stands crying." His mind is empty—"not a thing in his head"—but "his chest fills." The contrast between the empty head and the full heart suggests he has abandoned his goal of intellectually understanding the vast conspiracy, but he feels a deep sorrow, perhaps at the futility of stopping "Them." The reasons for the intensity of Slothrop's reaction become clear only later, in Part 4, Episode 6. He sees a scrap of newspaper announcing the bombing of Hiroshima, and he views the accompanying photograph of the iconic mushroom cloud as a penis "dangling in the sky straight downward." The scattering of Slothrop's personality and the abandonment of his quest enable the novel to take in events on a larger, world-historical scale. With Hiroshima, the phallic connection between skyborne rockets and earthly destruction surpasses anything contained in the Slothrop plot.

Some readers believe the harmonica player of Part 4, Episode 3 is Slothrop. Slothrop does retrieve his lost harmonica in Part 4, Episode 1. But what business would Slothrop have with "C-

Company" in Thuringia? It is hard to picture Slothrop attached to an American fighting force at this point in the story. He has been AWOL for the better part of a year, and has worn the uniforms of Britain and the Soviet Union, as well as a Pig-Hero costume. It seems more accurate to say Slothrop is scattered; aspects of him turn up here and there in the story. There is a bit of Slothrop in the harmonica player, and a bit of Slothrop in Byron the Bulb, who goes plunging down a toilet, traveling out to sea. But neither character "is" Slothrop, not entirely.

The counterforce assembles in Episodes 1 and 3 of Part 4, but its first sally is distinctly underwhelming. On the level of social conventions, Roger's urinating on the conference table is shocking, but this act is unlikely to change Them or thwart Their actions. In part, Roger's vengeance against Pointsman plays out this way because Pynchon is writing a comic novel. World War II combat has been transformed into a comic register of seltzer bottles and inappropriate urinating. But his act is also underwhelming because of who the counterforce is—the preterite, the "losers." If they were hypercompetent and ruthlessly violent, Roger, Pirate, and the others would be Them.

Part 4, Episodes 4–6

Summary

Part 4, Episode 4

Katje meets some Hereros. They sing a song about paranoia, accompanied by tap dancing. They carry "a girl all in silver lame, a loud brassy dame." Katje realizes "the brazen blonde bombshell is none other than herself." As Blicero's former captive and lover, Katje has become part of the Hereros' rocket legends and rituals.

Katje is introduced to Enzian and they discuss Blicero. He knows of her from Blicero's letters to him, in which Blicero called her a "Golden Bitch." Enzian talks about the long-ago days in which he loved Blicero. "A former self is a fool," he says, but one must be merciful to such a fool. He tells Katje, "Your story is the saddest of all. ... *You've only been set free.*"

They agree to join forces. Enzian tells her she only has to locate Slothrop. After that she can quit. Katje insists she is all in. She wants to know what she "did to him, for Them" and how

They "can be stopped." Enzian reveals the Hereros "have someone who was with Blicero in May. Just before the end." This "someone" is Thanatz; the Hereros plan to interrogate him. Katje says she will "come and listen."

Part 4, Episode 5

Thanatz tells his story to the Hereros, starting with the *Anubis*. Just like Slothrop, he was washed overboard in a storm. He was picked up by "a Polish undertaker in a rowboat." The undertaker, a fan of Benjamin Franklin, is trying to get struck by lightning. He thinks it will help him "handle bereaved families."

The Polish undertaker sets Thanatz ashore, where he runs into a village of nostalgic "175s" or homosexual ex-prisoners from Camp Dora. (The German law outlawing homosexuality was designated Paragraph 175. The Nazis did not write this law, but they enforced it with concentration camps.) These "175s" are "homesick" for the world of Dora. They have recreated it, complete with a hierarchy of "really *mean ass* imaginary Nazi playmates." They call the leader of their imaginary Nazi guards Blicero; he is a legend to them: "He is the Zone's worst specter." The 175s believe Blicero is alive. This troubles Thanatz, whose experience with Blicero and the 00000 made him turn away from Blicero for good. Thanatz was there "on the Heath when 00000 was fired."

Thanatz goes to a gasworks to deliver a message. He is apprehended by a gang of Polish guerillas. They realize he's not the man they wanted, and they release him "into a DP encampment." (DP is World War II slang for "displaced person" or refugee.) He spends weeks riding the rails with other DPs.

The episode moves up to the present, in which Thanatz tells the Hereros all about "that last rocket-firing on the Heath." The novel does not reveal the details of the firing in this episode, but Thanatz tells the Hereros what the rocket was, "how it was used, where the 00000 was fired from, and which way it was pointed." Because he tells them so much they need to know, they consider him "the angel they've hoped for." The Hereros' rocket is ready, "all assembled at last." The rocket unites the Herero factions, "Empty, Neutral and Green all together now."

Part 4, Episode 6

Slothrop is in the futuristic "Raketen-Stadt" (Rocket City, in German). Slothrop is a "typical American teenager" and his father is trying, "episode after episode," to kill him. The style is the breathless, slangy language of 1940s comics and serials: "Weepers! ... good try, Pop, but you're not quite as keen as The Kid today!"

Slothrop teams up with three others in "the Floundering Four," a group of flawed superheroes. Myrtle causes miracles; Marcel is a mechanical chess player; Maximilian has "a natural sense of rhythm, which means *all* rhythms, up to and including the cosmic." Slothrop's superpower is not described. The superheroes try to find "the Radiant Hour," an hour that "is being held captive." Maximilian starts reading a book called *The Wisdom of the Great Kamikaze Pilots*. Soon the episode shifts to the first of 12 titled subsections.

The Low-Frequency Listener

Slothrop tries to listen in on a German U-boat frequency, "a wave length of 28,000 meters." He wants to communicate with the Argentine anarchists.

Mom Slothrop's Letter to Ambassador Kennedy

"Well *hi Joe*," writes Nalline Slothrop to Joseph Kennedy, ambassador to Great Britain. She tries to get him to contact "a few of those jolly old London connections just *once more*." She is presumably looking for news of her son, Slothrop.

On the Phrase "Ass Backwards"

Säure and Bodine discuss the English phrase "ass backwards." Säure says, "You ought to be saying 'ass forwards,' if backwards is what you mean." The discussion drifts to music.

My Doper's Cadenza

Bodine sings a song called "My Doper's Cadenza." A cadenza is a virtuoso solo piece inserted in a movement. In Säure's tenement building in Berlin, drug use and drug dealing are

rampant. An attempt is made to dig an "anti-police *moat*" around the building. The moat is dug from below, leaving a "thin crust of street" on top.

Shit 'n' Shinola

Säure and Bodine discuss the English phrase "Shit from Shinola ... As in, 'Aw, he don't know Shit from Shinola!'" (Shinola was a brand of shoe polish.) One possibility "is that Shit and Shinola are in wildly different categories." The narrator then focuses on the similarities: "Shit ... is the color white folks are afraid of ... [it] is the presence of death." Shinola is the same color. The episode connects the toilet of the Roseland Ballroom, where Slothrop lost his harmonica, to "Red [Malcolm X]," shoe polish, Harvard, Ambassador Kennedy's son, and Slothrop.

An Incident in the Transvestites' Toilet

Slothrop is dressed in a gown like Fay Wray's, the female lead in the movie *King Kong*. In a public bathroom, an orangutan hands Slothrop "a round black iron anarchist *bomb*" with a lit fuse. A man dressed like film actress Margaret O'Brien grabs the bomb from Slothrop and throws it in a toilet. The bomb explodes in the toilet with the sound "KRUPPALOOMA": it "was a sodium bomb. Sodium explodes when it touches water." A gang beats up and abuses the man dressed like O'Brien for having thrown the bomb.

A Moment of Fun with Takeshi and Ichizo, The Komical Kamikazes

Takeshi is "tall and fat," and Ichizo is "short and skinny." The mismatched pair are both meant to fly to their deaths. Takeshi flies a plane and Ichizo flies in "an Ohka device, which is a long bomb, actually, with a cockpit for Ichizo." They are stuck on a remote air base, too far from any targets.

Streets

The episode seems to be told from the perspective of a future archaeologist, examining the ruins of World War II in Germany. The archaeologist discusses the "men called 'army chaplains.'" The chaplains "talked to the men who were going to die about

God, death, nothingness, redemption." Then the focus shifts to Slothrop on a street in some ruined German city. He catches a glimpse of "a scrap of newspaper headline" and a news photo. The photo appears to show a white penis, "dangling in the sky straight downward out of a white pubic bush." The scrap of headline reads "MB DRO ROSHI"; that is, "BOMB DROPPED ON HIROSHIMA."

Listening to the Toilet

The narrator says police who come to raid a residence for drugs will start by "shut[ting] off the water first." That way "you really can't get rid of much of anything any more, dope, shit, documents." The subsection title, "Listening to the Toilet," comes from the idea of listening for the water shutoff.

Witty Repartee

The bored Takeshi and Ichizo threaten one another with machine guns, in play. Their weapon of choice is "the Hotchkiss" machine gun, which "comes in many nationalities."

Heart-to-Heart, Man-to-Man

Slothrop's father talks to him about "this, ah, 'screwing in' you kids are doing." The kids are "keying waves," which means putting electric waves into their brains. His father says it's dangerous. "Suppose someday you just plug in and go away and never come back?" Slothrop replies that is what "every electrofreak dreams about."

Some Characteristics of Imipolex G

The characteristics of Imipolex G include its being "the first plastic that is actually *erectile*." It would respond to electronic stimulation. It might also respond to "the projection, *onto* the Surface, of an electronic 'image,' analogous to a motion picture."

Analysis

In Part 4, Episodes 4 and 5, elements of the story have become mythical to other characters. Katje is the "Golden Bitch" and part of the Hereros' worship of the 00000 rocket. Blicero has

become a myth to the ex-prisoners of Camp Dora. In both cases, the mythicized character has a reflection or double. A "girl all in silver lame" represents Katje to the Hereros. Various ex-prisoners play at being Blicero, reimagined as a cruel prison guard. In each case, the people using Katje or Blicero for their rituals or performances do not have any firsthand experience. Blicero was never at Dora and Katje is only just now meeting the Hereros. Katje's and Blicero's transformation into legends might seem to give them more substance, more "temporal bandwidth," as the narrator said earlier. But this also means the information about them is less reliable. The information is mythical rather than factual. Somewhat like Slothrop, Katje and Blicero are being scattered across the Zone. However, they don't attain Slothrop's level of extreme dispersion.

There is no legend of Gottfried. Alone among the Peenemünde trio who played Hansel and Gretel and the witch, Gottfried has no double. (At least, not in these episodes.) This omission intensifies the mystery about Gottfried. For the Hereros, the mystery is cleared up as soon as Thanatz talks about "that last rocket-firing on the Heath." Readers learn about Gottfried in the novel's final episode.

Part 4, Episode 6 is like a miniature version of the novel *Gravity's Rainbow*. Like the novel, it is fragmented into episodes. Before Part 4, Episode 6 fragments, it is partly a story about four superheroes, one of whom is Slothrop. The story of their adventures shifts when it suddenly becomes apparent "for the first time," the narrator notes, "the 4 and the Father-conspiracy do not entirely fill their world." There are also "many other struggles, [and] there are also spectators" in "this dingy yellow amphitheater." In Part 3, Episode 31 Slothrop realizes, also for the first time, "that the Zone can sustain many other plots besides those polarized upon himself." Here the revelation is repeated, and then the news is followed by 12 miniature episodes or sub-episodes, many only distantly or thematically connected to Slothrop.

There is a hinge between the main part of the episode and the 12 miniature episodes. The superhero Maximilian starts reading a book about kamikazes. Before long there are two miniature episodes about kamikaze pilots. Maximilian does not just have a sense of musical rhythm, but of "all rhythms, up to and including the cosmic." Perhaps he has a sense of the rhythms of *Gravity's Rainbow*, and these episodes demonstrate that. However, the explanation cannot be pushed too far or made too neat. These miniature episodes do not seem to be Maximilian's thoughts or dreams.

Also worth noting is the way traces of Slothrop appear in so many of the miniature episodes. Slothrop is featured in some episodes, like "The Low-Frequency Listener," and in "An Incident in the Transvestites' Toilet." However, elements of Slothrop are also scattered in the other episodes. Takeshi and Ichizo know an "old Kenosho the loony radarman," a callback to the "Kenosha Kid" of Slothrop's drug experiment. In "Streets," the scrap of newspaper headline gives stunning news that only gets its emotional due elsewhere in the novel, in Slothrop's vision of the rainbow. In this episode, the novel's rhythms are fully as "scattered" as Slothrop himself becomes by the end of the novel.

Part 4, Episodes 7–9

Summary

Part 4, Episode 7

The time and place of this episode are uncertain. Tchitcherine and his driver Džabajev have parted ways. A man named Nicolai Ripov, "of the Commissariat for Intelligence Activities, is in town and closing in" on Tchitcherine. "Tchitcherine understands that he is finally alone now." He recalls conversations with the drug salesman Wimpe, who discussed a drug called Oneirine theophosphate. The prefix "theo-" indicates "the *Presence of God*." This drug gives its users "the dullest hallucinations known to psychopharmacology." But the hallucinations are like "hauntings," and they have "narrative continuity."

The episode shifts to a section subtitled "Tchitcherine's Haunting." Tchitcherine is on Oneirine, and someone, perhaps Ripov, is interrogating him. But Tchitcherine is asking the questions. He wants to know if his Soviet handlers intended for him to die. He asks Ripov if he is "supposed to die for them." Ripov replies, "You're not much use dead."

Tchitcherine and Ripov discuss why he was "hunting [his] black brother," Enzian. Ripov says Enzian was never Tchitcherine's target. Others allowed Tchitcherine to chase Enzian, the better to keep track of Enzian themselves. Ripov reveals Tchitcherine will be sent on another assignment, to Central Asia, where the Soviets are sending "German rocket personnel." Tchitcherine

feels the assignment is almost the same as death: "To return to Central Asia is, operationally, to die."

Part 4, Episode 8

The counterforce assembles at a German inn called der Grob Säugling, which *Gravity's Rainbow* translates as "Gross Suckling." (A *Säugling* in German is an infant still nursing, a suckling.) Present are Carrol Eventyr, Ensign Morituri, Thomas Gwenhidwy, and Roger Mexico. They figure out the 00000 rocket was fired in the direction of true north.

Roger recalls a conversation with Jessica. She told him she was planning to have Jeremy's baby. Roger pleaded with Jessica to return to him anyway: "Have his baby. I'll love you both." He was about to cry when along came his rival for Jessica's love, Jeremy. He invited Roger to dinner and Roger accepted. Jeremy "has forgiven Jessica her time with Roger." The soiree will be at the home of Stefan Utgarthaloki, once a manager for the Krupp arms manufacturing company in Germany.

Roger decides to bring a friend, Seaman Bodine. Bodine wears "a zoot suit of unbelievable proportions." Its "pointed lapels ... extend so far outboard of the rest of the suit" they have to be supported with coat hangers.

At the party, a quartet of musicians plays the "suppressed quartet from the Haydn Op. 76, the so-called 'Kazoo' Quartet in G-Flat Minor." One of the musicians is Gustav, from Säure's circle in Berlin. Bodine gets into an intense conversation about Haydn and how to play the kazoo quartet.

Utgarthaloki's uncanny wife is described: "She is a blonde image of your mother dead." This leads to a reference to Slothrop's mother, Nalline. Slothrop himself is now "scattered all over the Zone." It is unlikely "he can ever be 'found' again, in the conventional sense of 'positively identified and detained.'" The narrator then comments on the failings of the Counterforce. They are cowed by money.

Roger contemplates the plot against him. Then he and Bodine start playing a game. At the dinner table, they compete to see who can describe the most disgusting dish: "*snot soup*," "*clot casserole*," and so on. A guest gamely joins in, but most of the others are disgusted. Jessica and Jeremy leave, with Jessica weeping and Jeremy "shaking his head at Roger's folly."

Part 4, Episode 9

In late August or early September of 1945, Geli Tripping uses witchcraft to search for Tchitcherine. Another witch counsels her, offering her a spell. Geli knows the Schwarzkommando "are on a collision course with Tchitcherine." She also learns he is being followed by "Beria's top man, the sinister N. Ripov himself." (Lavrentiy Beria was the head of the secret police in the Soviet Union from 1938 to 1953.)

Geli is "the World-choosing sort" of witch, rather than one who seeks to rise through the bureaucratic ranks of witches. As such, she is attuned to the natural world, "the World just before men." Humans (apart from witches) are aware of the world only later, when nature is "dead, in still strata, transputrefied to oil or coal." Humans are "God's spoilers. ... Counter-revolutionaries. *It is [their] mission to promote death.*" This death is part of "the impulse to empire" and it is "holding down the green uprising." Geli sides with the green uprising. She senses "Titans stir[ring] far below" and the god Pan.

The episode shifts focus to Blicero and Gottfried, only a few weeks before the end of the war in Germany. Gottfried kneels at Blicero's feet. Blicero rants to Gottfried about empire, America, death, and "the edge of the World." He tells Gottfried that America was "the site for its [Europe's] Kingdom of Death, that special Death the West had invented." Blicero says he wants "to break out—to leave this cycle of infection and death."

Analysis

It is possible Ripov never speaks to Tchitcherine, as Tchitcherine is on the drug Oneirine. The conversation with Ripov is sensible enough to be one of the dull hallucinations caused by Oneirine. It also has the "narrative continuity" attributed to Oneirine hallucinations. If Ripov is not there, then the conversation is imagined by Tchitcherine. If this is the case, the conversation says more about Tchitcherine's state of mind than about what will happen to him when he returns to the Soviet Union.

They converse about "a Theory of History." The theory under discussion is a Marxist one. Karl Marx was a 19th-century German philosopher who wrote about politics and economics. Tchitcherine sees the Marxist theory of history as a "dialectical ballet of force, counterforce, collision, and new order." Marx adopted the idea of dialectics from 19th-century German

philosopher G.F.W. Hegel. For Hegel, history and ideas progressed through stages he called thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. This is Tchitcherine's "force" and "counterforce," which have a "collision" and result in a "new order."

Tchitcherine has perhaps turned to the "cold comfort" of a Marxist view of history because his other projects have come to nothing. He never found Enzian, and now he learns—or, at least, entertains the notion—that seeking Enzian was someone else's idea all along. Ahead he sees only the "operational death" of exile to the desert, with other rocket personnel. However, although Tchitcherine has a dialectical view of history, it is not certain the novel has a dialectical structure. There has been a force, They, and there is now a counterforce, but they do not seem to collide. Roger's attempts amount to tilting at windmills: he urinates on a desk, and he makes disgusting jokes. Whatever Roger, Katje, and Osbie's counterforce is, it does not seem capable of the "dialectical ballet" Tchitcherine imagines. Even Roger considers the counterforce a "failed Counterforce," a thing of the past.

However, despite the silliness of Roger's jokes, Part 4, Episode 8 also has a mythic, heroic dimension. The dinner host is Stefan Utgarthloki. His last name contains the name Loki, a trickster god of Norse mythology. His peculiar wife, known only as Frau Utgarthloki, has aspects of Hel, Norse goddess of death. Hel's body is traditionally described as half alive and half a corpse. Pynchon describes Frau Utgarthloki as a "blonde image of your mother dead." Roger and Bodine could be said to triumph over the trickster god and his deathly companion, making a mockery of his party. But this is thin broth, if this is the counterforce's triumph. The force—"They"—can lob bombs and occupy people's minds. "The Man has a branch office in each of our brains," the narrator adds.

Geli takes a long view that puts Tchitcherine, Mexico, Slothrop, and indeed all humans on one side, one tremendous They. From her witchy perspective there is a revolutionary force, "the green uprising." On its side are nature, Titans, and the ancient Greek god Pan. All humans are part of the counterrevolutionary force that suppresses the green uprising. Her perspective is strange, but she zeroes in on some of the same villains as in Slothrop's conspiracies. Petrochemical cartels feature in Slothrop's They. Geli likewise sees "men" as interacting only with dead nature, "transputrefied to oil or coal."

Blicero wants to cut the cycle short and somehow escape death by evidently sacrificing Gottfried. However, he is not

doing anything new. Many adults in *Gravity's Rainbow* sacrifice or exploit children. Pynchon underlines Blicero's similarity to other men. Mixed in with Blicero's sweet talk to Gottfried is this memory: "You used to whisper me to sleep with stories of us one day living on the Moon." These were Ilse's stories; Ilse (or one of the Ilse simulacra) used to talk to Franz Pökler about living on the moon. Blicero's attempt to "leave this cycle of infection and death" seems more likely to continue it.

Part 4, Episodes 10–12

Summary

Part 4, Episode 10

In early September 1945 Enzian is "ramrodding his brand-new rocket through the night." He is accompanied by 12 Herero disciples. Together they are bringing the 00001 to Lüneberg Heath. It travels "disassembled, in sections—warhead, guidance, fuel and oxidizer tanks, tail section." There are many interpreters of "Rocket state-cosmology." According to some interpreters, there is "a good Rocket to take us to the stars" and "an evil Rocket for the World's suicide."

Enzian and the disciples come across a fake Herero, in "black greasepaint." They take evasive action. Tensions resume between Enzian and the leader of the Empty Ones, Ombindi. The Empty Ones "are quietly, without violence, relieved of all watch duties tonight." Enzian sends a "decoy trek" of Hereros north, to draw off the enemy. Ludwig and his pet lemming, Ursula, tag along after Enzian.

Part 4, Episode 11

Tchitcherine is sitting by a stream. On a bridge overhead is graffiti, including a game of hangman and the partial word "GE_ _RAT_ _". Geli has cast a love spell on Tchitcherine, and now she finds him. They make love "on a cold grass bank" by the stream. Tchitcherine hears a rumbling. He gets dressed and goes to investigate. It is the Schwarzkommando, passing by. Tchitcherine and Enzian come face-to-face, but Tchitcherine does not recognize Enzian, or they do not recognize each other. "They talk broken German," and Enzian gives

Tchitcherine "half a pack of American cigarettes and three raw potatoes." Tchitcherine returns to Geli lying by the stream. "This is magic," says the narrator, but it is "not the first time a man has passed his brother by ... without knowing it."

Part 4, Episode 12

On "a September morning" a woman gives a guided tour of a futuristic Rocket City. The focus shifts to Thanatz and Ludwig, who are discussing sadomasochism and fantasies of parental discipline. Thanatz rants a bit, arguing against the "reflexive shame" attached to such fantasies. "Why will the Structure allow every other kind of sexual behavior but *that* one?" asks Thanatz. He answers his own question: "Submission and dominance are resources it [the Structure] needs for its very survival." Instead of this system, Thanatz preaches "Sado-anarchism."

The episode delves into mystical traditions, including Kabbalism, a form of Jewish mysticism, and Rosicrucianism, a tradition of Christian mysticism. The narrator also considers the connection of "the Grail" to blood. (The Holy Grail was sought by knights of Arthurian legend in England. Some traditions said the Holy Grail they sought was a cup that caught the blood of Christ as he was crucified.) Bodine sees Slothrop; he is one of the few who can "hold him together, even as a concept." Slothrop "is being broken down ... and scattered." The rest of the episode is divided into 15 subsections.

The Occupation of Mingeborough

This subsection concerns what has gone on in Mingeborough, Massachusetts, in Slothrop's absence.

Back in Der Platz

Gustav the musician has returned to Säure's tenement building, Der Platz. He uses a kazoo to smoke hash. Gustav fits Byron the Bulb into the hole atop his kazoo. The narrator considers "a reverse world" in which "the dope ... finds *you*" and guns cause bullets to be "sucked back out of the recently dead," bringing them back to life. Meanwhile Von Göll, also known as Der Springer, sits on a toilet, smoking "a reefer."

Weissmann's Tarot

A Tarot reading of Weissmann, also known as Blicero: "He is the father you will never quite manage to kill," the narrator says of Blicero. Thus "the Oedipal situation in the Zone these days is terrible." Sigmund Freud, a founder of 20th-century psychology, believed infants and children experienced powerful emotional and erotic attachments to their parents. (However, he did not advocate sexual activity for children.) Generally these desires took the form, in male children, of wanting to kill their father, their rival for the mother's love.

The Last Green and Magenta

Lüneberg Heath "grows green and magenta in all directions." The narrator adds "it was spring," perhaps alluding to the season of Blicero's launch of the 00000.

The Horse

The "last horse" in Germany is going to be ritually sacrificed. Many others were killed or eaten for food during the war.

Isaac

This subsection deals with "an Aggadic tradition" about Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac in the book of Genesis in the Bible. In Genesis, God tells Abraham to sacrifice his only son, Isaac. Abraham prepares to go through with it but is divinely halted at the last moment. The Haggadah or Aggada is the rabbinical literature that does not deal with laws the Jews must observe. In this "Aggadic tradition" in *Gravity's Rainbow*, Isaac sees "the antechambers of the Throne," presumably God's throne.

Pre-Launch

Blicero has dressed Gottfried in white and he puts him inside the 00000 rocket. The mysterious Schwarzgerät is the Imipolex G shroud enclosing Gottfried.

Hardware

Gottfried's 00000 rocket has "a window [made] of artificial sapphire" so he can look out. There is a "data link" so Blicero can communicate with him, but "there's no return channel" for Gottfried to talk to Blicero.

Chase Music

Superheroes and fictional detectives start arriving too late. It's a convention of genre entertainment for the hero to exclaim, "My God, we are too late," and then save the day, not too late after all. But lately, they really *are* too late. The focus shifts to Pointsman, who is "an ex-scientist now." He "actually misses the dogs."

Countdown

The narrator says the backwards countdown of rocket launches "was invented by [20th-century German filmmaker] Fritz Lang in 1929 for the Ufa film *Die Frau im Mond* [The Woman in the Moon]." A man gives a Kabbalistic interpretation of the rocket countdown: "At the Creation ... God sent out a pulse of energy into the void." The pulse sorted itself into "ten distinct spheres or aspects." These correspond to the Kabbalist symbol of the Tree of Life. A new world will be "brought into being by the Great [Rocket] Firing."

Strung Into the Apollonian Dream ...

Gottfried is warm inside the rocket, waiting for it to be launched. "Something real is about to happen" to him. Imipolex G is "is a smell he knows" from "sweet paralyzed childhood."

Orpheus Puts Down Harp

At the Orpheus Theatre in Los Angeles, in the 1960s or 1970s, manager Richard M. Zhubb talks to a reporter. Viewers at midnight shows are playing the harmonica, turning the screenings "into a state of near anarchy."

The Clearing

Blicero and his crew launch the 00000 rocket with Gottfried inside. "The flame suddenly turns blue. The sound of it grows to full cry."

Ascent

The rocket moves up and up, propelled by burning fuel. "This ascent will be betrayed to Gravity," says the narrator, meaning the rocket will eventually fall. Soon Gottfried notices the roaring has stopped: "Brennschluss, when was Brennschluss *it can't be this soon*." The narrator considers, "What is this death but a whitening, a carrying of whiteness to ultrawhite ... bleaches, detergents." With the word "Now—" the narrator signals the rocket has begun its descent.

Descent

Back at the Orpheus Theatre the audience is clapping and shouting anarchically. The movie has unexpectedly stopped and "the screen is a dim page spread before us, white and silent." The rocket reaches "its last immeasurable gap above the roof of this old theatre, this last delta-t." The delta-t is related to the measure of time in physics. The rocket is poised for this small time, "this last delta-t." Therefore, "there is time ... to touch the person next to you," or to sing a hymn. The episode concludes with a hymn by William Slothrop, Puritan ancestor of Tyrone Slothrop. The hymn promises "though thy Glass today be run" (though the time has run out), "the Light" will "find the last poor Pret'rite one." The verse ends, and the narrator says, "Now everybody—."

Analysis

Enzian's story is never quite concluded, since it is not known whether the Hereros fire their 00001 rocket, or what effect it has. The Enzian/Tchitcherine enmity also concludes somewhat anticlimactically. After gunning for Enzian, Tchitcherine withdraws into not recognizing him and sharing a few friendly words. He is revealed to be the double of Gottfried. Like Gottfried, he will be sealed in a V-2 rocket on a sacrificial mission. It is possible his is the "good rocket to take us to the stars" and Gottfried's is the "evil Rocket for the World's suicide." Those two rockets are also the two descendants of

the V-2. The same V-2 rocket technology led to the space program and the intercontinental ballistic missile (with nuclear warheads).

Once again, Slothrop's "scattered" condition is commented on. Immediately following the description of Slothrop as "broken down ... and scattered," Part 4, Episode 12 breaks down into 15 separate sections. Fragments or aspects of Slothrop appear in many of the subsections. The heading of the final subsection is "Orpheus Puts Down Harp." In Greek mythology, Orpheus was a hero with extraordinary musical gifts. He married Eurydice, who died soon after. He tried to bring her back from the underworld, but he broke one of the magical rules, that he not turn back and look at her. In *Gravity's Rainbow* Slothrop may be an Orpheus figure because of his association with the harmonica. But according to the title of the subsection, Orpheus has laid his musical gift aside.

The final, open-ended line of the novel is "Now everybody—," perhaps enjoining readers to sing along with the hymn. In Part 4, Episode 6, the song of the "Glozing Neuter" ends with the line "Now ev'rybody—," likewise encouraging listeners to join in the singing. The "now everybody" in the "Glozing Neuter" song sends the audience back to the song's first line. All will sing together from the top. Just so, the narrator's "Now everybody—," coming just after the hymn, encourages readers to join the novel's last sentence onto its first: "Now everybody—a screaming comes across the sky."

If *Gravity's Rainbow* is circular, it has the same structure as 20th-century writer James Joyce's modernist masterpiece *Finnegans Wake*. *Finnegans Wake*'s final sentence likewise fits onto its first, making the book a thing to be continually reread. Joyce had a vision of a cyclical history, as well. Pynchon may have wanted to make his mark with a nod to Joyce's masterpiece. But the loop structure has purposes in *Gravity's Rainbow* other than serving Pynchon's ambitions.

It is possible to see the Los Angeles setting of the last scene as the end of another loop—the parabola of the 00001 rocket. Temporally, it makes no sense. Enzian's rocket is fired—if at all—in 1945, and the other hangs over the Orpheus Theatre in the 1960s or 70s. But it could also be said the order of Their world, with its program of racial domination, was set to explode in Los Angeles three decades later. In that case, the novel one has just read, about the 1940s, is also about the world at the moment of the novel's publication.

“” Quotes

"A screaming comes across the sky."

— Narrator, Part 1, Episode 1

The narrator is describing the flight of a V-2 rocket. The narrator uses the present tense, and therefore seems to describe a timeless, frozen moment of suspense just before the rocket strikes. However, since the V-2 traveled faster than the speed of sound, the "screaming" would have come across the sky only after the rocket struck its target. This is the perspective from the moment in history when Pynchon wrote *Gravity's Rainbow*, in the late 20th century. The novel is about the world after the V-2 rocket has struck—that is, the world shaped by the technology descended from the V-2 rocket. Space travel, ballistic missiles, and the threat of nuclear annihilation all shaped the 20th century.

"Everyone's equal. Same chances of getting hit. Equal in the eyes of the rocket."

— Roger Mexico, Part 1, Episode 9

In a discussion about the V-2 rockets and the statistical analysis Roger is doing, Jessica says, "It isn't fair." She would like Roger's equations to show which parts of London are safer, but statistics cannot do that. Roger counters by saying it is fair because everyone in London has the "same chances of getting hit." Mexico's work follows that of real-life British statistician R.D. Clarke, who determined the V-2 rockets fell on London in a Poisson distribution. The Poisson distribution suggests the probability that a set number of events will occur in a defined interval of time or space with a constant rate and independent of the time of the last event. Clarke's work mattered for the reason the fictional Mexico's work would: the question was how accurately the Nazis could aim the V-2. Thus it was important to research whether clusters of V-2 strikes in particular areas of London were targeted or random.

"Don't forget the real business of the War is buying and selling."

— Narrator, Part 1, Episode 14

The narrator is discussing Katje's desire to do good, to feed the Allies enough information to make up for the deaths she caused while working for the Nazis in the Netherlands. At first the narrator chides Katje for acting "as if there's a real conversion factor between information and lives." Then the narrator says there really is such a conversion factor, written down in a manual at the War Department. Thus the "real business of the War" is selling human lives in return for advances in technology and science, or in return for information enabling corporations to increase profits and entrench their power positions. The usual way of looking at war is to see all the economic, scientific, technological, and espionage advances as subordinate to the military aim: to win the war. In this reversed perspective, the battles are less important than the mobilization of science and industry. The way the narrator capitalizes "the War" also suggests the war is a kind of super-state, cutting across lines between the Allied and Axis powers.

"This is the War's evensong, the War's canonical hour, and the night is real."

— Narrator, Part 1, Episode 16

On a whim, Mexico and Jessica stop in to a church service on Sunday evening. The service is "evensong," a nighttime service in the Anglican Church, consisting mostly of choral music. In the choir that night a Jamaican man sings. Since Jamaica was once a colony of Britain's, the evening service could almost be British war propaganda: the nation and her former colonies banding together in time of war. However, the narrator capitalizes "the War" to suggest the war is an entity beyond nations. If this is the War's evensong, then this is the War's momentary pause in hostilities. But since "the night is real," the terrors, violence, and subterfuge of the war are real. The pause in the church is only a pause, and even a momentary feeling of national unity cannot withstand the war.

"AN ARMY OF LOVERS CAN BE BEATEN."

— Narrator, Part 1, Episode 19

The narrator says graffitied slogans such as this appear "on the walls of the Red [communist] districts" of Berlin in the early 1930s. This is part of Leni's story.

The slogan says the opposite of what is said in the *Symposium*, a philosophical dialogue written by 5th-century Greek philosopher Plato. In this dialogue, someone named Phaedrus says, "And a state or army which was made up only of lovers and their loves would be invincible. For love will convert the veriest coward into an inspired hero."

It is not certain what the graffiti means. Perhaps it was written by communists, and it means there are homosexual lovers on the fascist side, and the fascists will be defeated. Perhaps it warns communists not to think they are invincible. The difficult slogan recalls another historical moment, Paris in 1968. During the student uprisings in the Latin Quarter (the neighborhood around the Sorbonne, a university), poetic and puzzling graffiti appeared on the walls. Among the most famous of these is "Beneath the paving stones, the beach." Pynchon makes the connection explicit by referring to "the Red districts" just as the student protests in Paris took place in the Latin Quarter. The connection between 1930s Berlin and 1960s Paris underlines the way *Gravity's Rainbow* shows the world order set up during World War II still affected the latter half of the 20th century.

"It might ... be a collaboration here, between both sides of the Wall, matter and spirit."

— Narrator, Part 1, Episode 19

The narrator wonders why the Nazis want to talk to Walter Rathenau, the dead Jewish statesman. The narrator gives rational reasons, such as Rathenau's being a "philosopher with a vision of the postwar State." This the "official version" of the reason for the Nazis' interest in the spirit of Rathenau. But the narrator gives a paranoid reason, without endorsing it. "If one were paranoid enough," the Nazis might be visiting the séance

for a "collaboration" between matter and spirit. This underlines the way technology and supernatural phenomena are linked in *Gravity's Rainbow*. It also suggests structures of power and bureaucracy extend into the afterlife.

"The people out here were meant to go down first. We're expendable."

— Thomas Gwenhidwy, Part 1, Episode 20

The doctor Thomas Gwenhidwy works in the poor East London area, so he witnesses firsthand the damage the V-2 rockets cause. He is aware the damage is greater in East London than elsewhere. In conversation with Pointsman, he lays out a theory: powerful people caused Southeast London to be inhabited by poor people. Gwenhidwy thinks the powerful saw London was most vulnerable to attack from the south and the east. Thus the poor people of East London were "expendable."

Pointsman calls Gwenhidwy's theory "very paranoid," to which Gwenhidwy responds, "It's true." This exchange crystallizes two of the novel's themes. Pynchon is interested in what he calls "the preterite," the people who are excluded from the goods of the world. *Gravity's Rainbow* plays with the idea that only a paranoid worldview could do justice to the preterite.

"Perhaps, after all, we were meant to meet."

— Katje Borgesius, Part 2, Episode 1

Katje says this to Slothrop just after he rescues her from the attack by the octopus. It is the kind of thing a lover or seducer says. Katje implies fate or destiny had a hand in bringing her and Slothrop together. However, Slothrop and the readers know something else is going on. Another woman who witnessed the scene has just warned Slothrop to "be careful." She had asked whether Slothrop knew "all the time about the octopus ... because it was so like a dance." Thus there is dramatic irony in Katje's statement that she and Slothrop were

"meant to meet." Dramatic irony occurs when the audience or the reader knows something the characters in the story do not. Katje does not know Slothrop suspects the octopus attack was staged. Readers soon learn the octopus was Grigori, the one Pointsman trained. As Slothrop says, "Oh, that was no 'found' crab, Ace—no random octopus or girl, uh-uh."

"Their feelings about blackness were tied to feelings about shit."

— Narrator, Part 2, Episode 8

The narrator is describing something Gavin Trefoil says at the White Visitation. Trefoil is a psychic who can voluntarily change the color of his skin. He is used for the Operation Black Wing film, the footage of fake black Nazi soldiers. The film is meant to be used in some way as psychological warfare, to demoralize the Nazis.

Trefoil scandalizes white people at the White Visitation by telling them "their feelings about blackness were tied to feelings about shit." He goes on to say their "feelings about shit [are tied] to feelings about putrefaction and death." Trefoil is pointing out racial prejudice involves attributing many vile aspects to the despised or dominated racial minority. But he is also pointing out something about *Gravity's Rainbow* itself, which explores this same connection of racism and fear of death.

"Enzian's been stuffing down Nazi surplus Pervitins these days like popcorn at the movies."

— Narrator, Part 3, Episode 21

Pervitins were a brand of amphetamines German soldiers were given during World War II. They enabled soldiers to fight and march for long periods with little rest. German army scientists had experimented with Pervitin to find out whether it would be useful for the army. Thus the actual historical facts in the book are almost as strange as Pynchon's discussions of military experiments with octopuses and psychics.

In the context of the novel, the narrator's remark casts doubt on Enzian's ideas. Enzian has been thinking the ruined oil works is functioning exactly as it is supposed to. He is fascinated by the idea the wreckage was meant to happen, and the Hereros were meant to interpret the text of the wreckage. However, the remark about Pervitins pulls the rug out from under the reader. Just as the reader might be getting persuaded by Enzian's paranoid ideas, the narrator reminds readers Enzian's thinking is distorted by amphetamine use. Throughout *Gravity's Rainbow* the paranoid ideas are never stable.

*"Without elect, without preterite,
without even nationality to fuck it
up."*

— Narrator, Part 3, Episode 25

The narrator is relaying Slothrop's thoughts about "the Zone," the novel's name for areas of Europe involved in the V-2 rocket's production. Slothrop has been wondering whether the United States can somehow turn back to a former possibility, a road it did not take. He thinks this possibility is to be found in the Zone. The chaos and destruction of war have created conditions where something new is possible. Because so much has been cleared away, something new might be created without divisions into such categories as elect and preterite. At the same time Slothrop believes They have planned history down to the last millisecond, but something has escaped Their control. The chaos They wrought has perhaps created the conditions for Their undoing.

*"A Rocket-cartel. A structure
cutting across every agency
human and paper that ever
touched it."*

— Narrator, Part 3, Episode 27

Tchitcherine is having a kind of vision, similar to one Slothrop had earlier. A large finger seems to be looming out of the sky.

The "Finger is calling Tchitcherine's attention" to the idea of a "Rocket-cartel." A cartel can be an agreement among nations at war. It can also be a clandestine agreement between producers or manufacturers for the purpose of fixing prices. Or it can mean political groups that have combined for common action. Perhaps all these definitions are in play in Tchitcherine's vision. He thinks both Russia and Germany might be involved, together, in this Rocket-cartel. His evidence is that Russia bought weapons from the German arms manufacturer Krupp.

Tchitcherine's ideas about the Rocket-cartel contrast with Slothrop's ideas about the Zone. Tchitcherine attends to phenomena that are the opposite of what Slothrop notices. Slothrop sees destruction, chaos, and the ground cleared for new possibilities. Tchitcherine sees vast, complex systems of order, still functioning after the war and in the Zone.

*"Do you suppose something
exploded somewhere? ... Another
Krakatoa?"*

— The colonel, Part 4, Episode 3

In a dreamlike sequence, an American colonel is getting a haircut, somewhere in the mountains in Germany. He comments on the remarkable sunsets lately. Therefore he wonders if "another Krakatoa" exploded. (The Krakatoa volcano in Indonesia erupted in 1883. Fine ash drifted around the earth and sunsets were spectacular for the following year.)

There is dramatic irony in the colonel's remarks. It is late August 1945. Therefore readers know "something" has exploded, and they know it is worse than the colonel realizes. On August 6, 1945, U.S. planes dropped an atomic bomb on Hiroshima, Japan. On August 9, 1945, a second atomic bomb was dropped on Nagasaki, Japan. In a different way than Krakatoa's volcanic ash, the atomic bombs affected the whole world. There was now a danger of world annihilation through these new, more powerful weapons. But the colonel only supposes "something has exploded somewhere." He lacks the angel's-eye view the novel supplies.

"Scattered all over the Zone."

— Narrator, Part 4, Episode 8

The narrator is commenting on the condition of Tyrone Slothrop. He no longer holds together as a person. A few people, including Seaman Bodine, can see him as a person and "hold him together as a concept." But for the most part, Slothrop is dispersed. At the end of Slothrop's character arc there is only a shattering into fragments. It is as though Slothrop's character arc were the parabola of a V-2 rocket's flight. The novel refers to that parabola as "gravity's rainbow" because it is shaped by forces of rocket thrust and gravity. Traditionally at the end of the rainbow is a pot of gold. At the end of Slothrop's ballistic, weaponized rainbow is a detonation.

"The Light [will] ... / Find the last poor Pret'rite one."

— William Slothrop, Part 4, Episode 12

These are words of a hymn by William Slothrop, a Puritan ancestor of Tyrone Slothrop's. The Puritans were religious reformers in 16th- and 17th-century England. Many, like the fictional William Slothrop, immigrated to England's new colonies in America. William Slothrop, however, soon goes his own path of reform. He develops heretical ideas of inverting the meanings of "elect" (or saved) and "preterite." He believes the people not chosen by God, the preterite, are the true key to salvation. He also believes the true savior is Judas rather than Jesus.

The hymn says, "There is a Hand to turn the time, / Though thy glass today be run." The "glass" is an hourglass. The sand has run out, meaning there is no more time. Since "thy" is not capitalized, it is likely the "you" addressed in the hymn is not God. It is perhaps addressed to the dead or dying. Though their time has run out, there is still a hand, God's hand, steering time. The hymn says this hand will go on turning or steering time until "the Light ... / Find[s] the last poor Pret'rite one." Thus the mighty will be cast down and the low, the preterite, raised up. Since this hymn is on the last page, the novel's "glass" has also run, its time has run out. But there is still hope for the downtrodden preterite.

Symbols

V-2 Rocket

Gravity's Rainbow begins and ends with images of the V-2 rocket in flight. Germany fired V-2 rockets on London and Belgium from September 1944 to March 1945. The full German name for the V-2 is *Vergeltungswaffen-2*, or "Vengeance Weapon 2." After the British RAF (Royal Air Force) bombed the largely civilian target of Lübeck, Germany, in 1942, Hitler reallocated funds for this stalled "vengeance weapon."

A rocket differs from a cannonball or a bullet in that it carries its own fuel. Jet airplanes also carry their own fuel, but to oxidize (burn) that fuel, they rely on air intake. A rocket carries its own oxidizer; the V-2 carried liquid oxygen. This innovation is significant because it enabled the rocket to travel above Earth's atmosphere. Even for rockets used as weapons, such as the V-2, the ability to travel in the upper atmosphere is an advantage. These details matter because *Gravity's Rainbow* is about how World War II shaped the postwar world. The V-2 rocket was the basis of two important later developments: space travel and intercontinental ballistic missile systems with nuclear warheads. Thus the V-2 rocket was the beginning of the threat of nuclear annihilation during the Cold War, when *Gravity's Rainbow* was published. As the narrator says in *Gravity's Rainbow*, there is "a good Rocket to take us to the stars" and "an evil Rocket for the World's suicide."

In *Gravity's Rainbow* Slothrop is stationed in London during the V-2 bombings. The V-2 travels faster than the speed of sound, and so it explodes before the sound of its descent can be heard. The V-1 rocket was nicknamed the "buzzbomb" because of the distinctive sound it made as it fell. As Slothrop says, "After a while you adjusted—found yourself making small bets, a shilling or two." But with the soundless V-2, "You couldn't adjust to the bastards." Thus for the first time Slothrop is "surprised to find that he was really scared."

Rocketman's Helmet

In Berlin, Säure Bummer and his friends dress Slothrop from "a stash of Wagnerian opera costumes" and dub him "Rocketman." The Rocketman getup includes "a pointed helmet with horns." Slothrop removes the horns so the helmet will resemble "the nose assembly of the [V-2] Rocket." As Rocketman, Slothrop symbolizes the merging of human and machine into one being.

It is not only Slothrop who merges with the rocket. While Slothrop tours the Mittelwerke rocket factory, he thinks about a futuristic city. This "Rocket-City" has as its constitution a set of "Articles of Immachination." Pynchon coined the word "immachination"; it means "becoming a machine." Also on the Rocket-City tour there is talk of humanoid space helmets. The "eye-sockets are fitted with quartz lenses" and the wearer's "nasal bone and upper teeth have been replaced by a metal breathing apparatus."

However, "immachination" does not just mean people become machinelike, cold, and dead. The rocket acquires characteristics of life. As Katje says to Slothrop, "Between the two points, in the five minutes [of the V-2 rocket's flight], it lives an entire life." That life also becomes quasi-human, as two of *Gravity's Rainbow's* characters enter the rocket. Blicero puts Gottfried, dressed like a bride, inside the specially modified 00000 rocket. This suggests a mating of human and machine.

Although Slothrop eventually loses his Rocketman costume, the idea of the helmet returns. Toward the end of the novel, Slothrop has become "scattered" and no longer holds together as a person. At the same time, Rocketman graffiti like "ROCKETMAN WAS HERE" appears all over the Zone. In response, Slothrop draws some concentric circles: "*What he was really drawing was the [V-2] rocket, seen from below.*" That is, he draws the rocket's nose cone, the same shape as his helmet. In this way, Rocketman's helmet remains the symbol of the merging of human and machine.

The Letter S

The letter S is the key to two different series of significant

aspects of *Gravity's Rainbow*. The first series is connected to the color black, and to secrecy. The second series connects the doubled letter S to a multiplicity of meanings, many having to do with the rocket. Altogether, the multiplicity of S-signs in *Gravity's Rainbow* shows how the novel involves the reader in a paranoid practice of scanning and interpretation.

First, it is connected to the color black, which signifies secrecy and clandestine activities. The engineers involved in the secret modifications of the 00000 rocket refer to a part of the rocket assembly with the shorthand "S-Gerät." This stands for "Schwarzgerät," in German, which can be translated as "black device" or "black thing." Slothrop also reads in the Jamf dossier about the "Schwarzknabe" (black child, Tyrone himself) and the Schwarzvater, who is Tyrone's own father, "Blackfather Slothrop." In all of these, "black" seems to mean clandestine, in the sense of "black ops." However, Enzian comments on the similarity between these terms and the "Schwarzkommando," the name for the Herero rocket battery. "Suppose ... Blackinstrument, Blackcommand, just happened to be" next to each other on an alphabetical list, Enzian says.

"Blackinstrument" is a translation of Schwarzgerät and "Blackcommand" is a translation of Schwarzkommando. Enzian may be suggesting there is a reason white people use the color black to signify what is underground, illicit, and secret.

Apart from all the terms beginning with "Schwarz-," the letter S turns up in another context. When Slothrop tours the underground rocket factory at Nordhausen, the narrator points out the curved shape of the tunnels, which is crisscrossed by connecting tunnels: "Picture a ladder with a slight S-shaped ripple in it, lying flat." That is, there are two parallel S-shaped tunnels, lying side by side. The narrator points out the many symbols and signs with this double-S shape. The SS could stand for "the shape of lovers curled asleep" or the "double integral sign" from calculus, \iint . But most of all, the double-S shape stands for "the double lightning-stroke ... the SS symbol." The SS began as an elite segment of the Nazi party and eventually included armed battalions. The multiplicity of S meanings and double-S meanings is overwhelming. Ultimately, this reflects the welter of meanings Slothrop has to sift through to understand Their plot.

Themes

Sexuality

At times characters in *Gravity's Rainbow* believe sexuality will help them escape from society. For instance, Mexico and Jessica, in love, have their trysts in a hiding place, in a state of "gentle withdrawal" from the war. Deviant or atypical sexuality is also proposed as a way out of Their control. Thanatz preaches what he calls "sado-anarchism." He believes sadomasochism is disallowed by what he calls "the Structure": "Submission and dominance are resources it [the Structure] needs for its very survival." Thus sadomasochism (or "sado-anarchism") would drain the resources They need. However, the novel also provides many counterexamples of sadomasochism that are not at all liberating. Blicero and Gottfried, for example, are locked in a practice that ends with Gottfried's death.

In *Gravity's Rainbow* there is no sexual desire so unusual They can't use it. Slothrop has a sexual response conditioned into him as an infant. As V-2 rockets fall on London, Allied forces try to understand and control Slothrop's strange sensitivity. Slothrop is not the only character controlled or exploited in this way. At PISCES, when many are worried Brigadier Pudding will cut the budget, Pointsman calmly says, "We have made arrangements with him." The arrangement is a sexual one involving Katje and sadomasochism.

Paranoia

Since the 19th century, *paranoia* has been the term for having an intricate system of delusions. Often the paranoid person believes they are persecuted. Paranoia thus involves a lot of scanning and interpretation; no sign is too subtle to not fit into the paranoid system. It is also a ruthlessly single-minded type of interpretation. Every sign points to the central paranoid delusion. For Pointsman the behaviorist, the rigidity of paranoia correlates to a pattern of brain activity. Pointsman describes paranoia as the activation of a single area of the brain, with

everything else shut down: "One bright, burning point, surrounded by darkness." The darkness is also representative of the paranoid person's blindness to anything that does not fit their delusional system. The bright point—the delusion—is "cut off ... from all other ideas, sensations, self-criticisms, that might ... restore it to normalcy."

The world does sometimes arrange itself, in Slothrop's eyes, around a single, burning point: "They" are out to get him. However, Slothrop does not seem to be mentally ill. For one thing, in the world of the novel, They *are* out to get him. He was experimented on as a child and has been under surveillance ever since. Slothrop also has a self-awareness about paranoia. He sometimes refers to himself as paranoid. When he tells Tantivy he thinks They might be writing his name on every rocket, Tantivy plays it off as a joke or thought experiment. "Operational paranoia," Tantivy calls it, a method of pretending to be paranoid. "Who's pretending?" is Slothrop's reply. *Gravity's Rainbow* also comments on this usefulness of paranoia. There might be "something comforting—religious, if you want—about paranoia." Slothrop sometimes experiences the opposite of this comfort, and it is devastating. This is "anti-paranoia, where nothing is connected to anything, a condition not many of us can bear."

Gravity's Rainbow is not just about a paranoid main character. It suggests only paranoia can adequately interpret the complex intricacies of history, politics, and science. Through "some interlock between [Lyle] Bland and the [German] Ufa movie-distribution people," a plot may have caused Pöckler to become a rocket engineer. There are cartels, including an "international light-bulb cartel." Corporations like General Electric, Grössli Chemical Corporation, and IG Farben share interests; "the real business of the War is buying and selling." The war is not just a matter of armies, but of labyrinthine bureaucratic organizations—PISCES, ARF, ACHTUNG. Only a paranoid system can take on this welter of detail and make it meaningful.

Angels

Angels often appear briefly in the episodes of *Gravity's Rainbow*. Katje and Pirate rendezvous at a windmill called "The Angel." The rocket officer Blicero is enamored of the works of

20th-century German poet Rainer Maria Rilke, whose *Duino Elegies* (1923) often focus on beautiful, terrifying angels. Like Rilke's, Pynchon's angels are terrifying. The angels in *Gravity's Rainbow* do not intervene in human affairs or even speak. There are no angel characters in the novel, only brief, arresting appearances of immense, supernatural beings. Such is the angel that appears while British planes are bombing the city of Lübeck, Germany. The angel is so large it is "miles beyond designating, rising over Lübeck that Palm Sunday with the poison-green domes underneath its feet."

The angels in *Gravity's Rainbow* could seem to represent a realm beyond the machinations of power and the violence of the war. But séances at the White Visitation and elsewhere suggest otherwise. The medium Carroll Eventyr tries to use his "control" or guiding spirit, Peter Sachsa, to question a now-dead RAF pilot about the angel over Lübeck. Sachsa says a "storm ... sweeps now among them all, both sides of Death." That is, the storm of war also rages in the angels' realm. The shadowy "They" also seem intent on making use of the afterworld. At a séance held at Peter Sachsa's, the clientele is the "elite ... from the corporate Nazi crowd."

Since the angels represent no hope of escape, why are they in *Gravity's Rainbow* at all? The angels provide another order of magnitude for the book's paranoid plots. Just as the focus of *Gravity's Rainbow* can move downward in scale to the infinitesimal "water bugs" in Christ's manger, it can also zoom out to encompass immense angels. When the departed spirit Roland Feldspath contemplates Slothrop, he thinks, "Is this the one? *This?* to be figurehead for the latest passage?" That is, for a passage between life and death, or perhaps between human and angelic orders. The presence of angels lends a sense of immensity and complexity to *Gravity's Rainbow*. Scholar and critic Robert L. McLaughlin even suggests that "they are the ultimate manifestation of Them, the novel's ubiquitous controllers." The angels make the world of *Gravity's Rainbow* vaster and more complex than it would be were the novel limited to human affairs.

Childhood

Pynchon uses children's games, toys, and fairy tales, such as Hansel and Gretel, to evoke the war in a novel without any

battle scenes. When Slothrop endures the "Disgusting English Candy Drill" at Mrs. Quoad's, he encounters candy weapons, such as "a .455 Webley cartridge of green and pink striped taffy." There is also "a six-ton earthquake bomb of some silver-flecked blue gelatin, and a licorice bazooka." While shopping in Woolworth's, Slothrop comes across "a heap of balsa-wood fighter planes and little-kid-size Enfields." In Part 3, among the first sights of the war-torn Zone is a children's playhouse. Slothrop spends the night there and encounters the ghost of a child. These childhood elements suggest the losses and devastation of war, while also shifting the focus from military to civilian losses.

However, Pynchon also uses the theme of childhood to suggest the vast reach of Their power. There is nothing beyond Their reach, not even childhood. As the narrator asks in Part 1, Episode 16, "What do you think, it's a children's story? There aren't any." There is no separate sphere of childhood, protected from the violence and moral corruption of the adult world. However, *Gravity's Rainbow* also points out it is in Their interest to pretend there is such a protected sphere of innocence. "In a corporate State, a place must be made for innocence, and its many uses," says the narrator of Zwölfkinder. Zwölfkinder is the children's amusement park and resort where Franz Pökler visits a series of simulacra of his daughter Ilse. As the narrator says, "an official version of innocence" is useful to the "corporate State," and "games, fairy-tales, legends from history, all the paraphernalia of make-believe can be adapted." The "culture of childhood" gives Them an alibi, a realm of innocence.

Finally, childhood is the place of secrets, mysteries, and trauma for Slothrop and for others. For Gottfried, the smell of Imipolex G recalls his "sweet paralyzed childhood." He may not be thinking of his actual childhood, but of his time with Blicero and Katje in the forest. There Blicero's power over Gottfried is represented as enchantment, as if Blicero were the witch in the fairy tale "Hansel and Gretel." For Slothrop the smell of Imipolex G—"a soft and chemical smell, threatening, haunting"—recalls early childhood, "from before his conscious memory begins." Slothrop knows only "something was done to him, in a room, while he lay helpless." Ultimately Slothrop abandons his attempt to understand the secrets of his childhood. However, his childhood demonstrates the reach of Their power.

Entropy

Entropy is a term from physics. In a closed, thermodynamic system, entropy represents the quantity of thermal energy unavailable for conversion into work. (Thermodynamics is the branch of physics that deals with mechanical movement or heat relationships. *Work* in thermodynamics means the transfer of energy when one thing moves another, like billiard balls smacking into one another.) The larger the quantity of entropy, the more disorganized the system. Entropy also applies to other systems, not just thermodynamic ones. The more general concept of entropy is that systems tend toward increasing disorder.

Pynchon makes an analogy between physical and sociopolitical entropy within the plotlines of *Gravity's Rainbow*. The war's vast, international, and secretive system of profit extraction works hard to keep entropy at bay. Everything that might seem disorderly is put to work, even the strange sexual proclivities of Brigadier Pudding, or the toilet-focused mumblings of a drugged Slothrop. However, the Zone is an increasingly entropic place. As the witch Geli Tripping says to Slothrop, "Forget frontiers now. Forget subdivisions. There aren't any."

The structure of *Gravity's Rainbow* also moves from order to entropy. In Part 1, the novel is conventionally ordered, despite such fantasies as the Giant Adenoid and Slothrop's trip down to the toilet. In Part 1, the novel is the story of a main character, Tyrone Slothrop, and his odd sensitivity to the V-2 rocket. As other characters are added, they too eventually connect to Slothrop or to the V-2 rocket. Leni Pökler turns out to have been married to a rocket engineer who worked on guidance. The long backstory about German imperialism in South West Africa promises to connect to the V-2 rocket through Enzian. All roads seem to lead to Peenemünde, one of the Nazi rocket firing sites. A conventionally ordered novel might bring Slothrop, Tchitcherine, Katje, Enzian, Blicero, and others all to Peenemünde for a final climax of the plot. However, the plotlines of *Gravity's Rainbow* do not converge. Instead the episodes are increasingly disconnected. For example, the stories of Byron the Bulb or of the Kamikaze pilots have only thematic connections to Slothrop's story. Likewise, the main character himself, Tyrone Slothrop, is subject to an entropic process of dispersal. In Part 3, Episode 20, Slothrop "has begun to thin, to scatter." He becomes so scattered he ceases

to exist much for other people. Few "can still see Slothrop as any sort of integral creature any more." Most people "gave up long ago trying to hold him together, even as a concept." The theme of entropy suggests a grim fate for everything and everyone in the universe.

Suggested Reading

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