

From Potsdam to Putzi's: Can Slothrop Get There in Time? And, in Time for What?

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Inexplicably, the afternoon has been going on for longer than it should. Daylight has been declining for too many hours. (GR 489)

Time is always an issue in narrative literature. The conventional *story*, composed of character actions within a causal logic, always covers a represented expanse of time. That represented expanse of time, however, is rarely, if ever, reported to the reader in a purely linear chronological fashion; likewise, it is rarely, if ever, reported without gaps or without moments of "disnarration," to use Gerald Prince's term, that engage the reader in narrative's writerly dimension. Time in the *discourse* is concerned with more than reported time; the time of the telling also influences the reader's experience of time in fictional texts. Moreover, the intersection of factual history with/in fictional narrative adds further dimensions of telling time to the reader's experience of the text. Modernist and postmodernist narrative dynamics as well as reader-response, poststructuralist and new-historicist theories for reading narrative have schooled the contemporary reader to suspend belief rather than disbelief and to question the multi-functional nature of time in narrative fiction—even to the point of discovering time traps within the text.

Some time traps are, of course, simply authorial errors in keeping track of the represented events. In other cases, the author disconnects narrative time from any rigid chronological order to allow the narrated actions to appear to just happen. Nevertheless, when an author deploys chronological markers in the text, especially those drawn from extratextual chronologies such as history or ritualized annual celebrations, then the reader must account for those markers for telling narrative time. Since time and chronology underwrite a particular experiential epistemology, readers will most likely negotiate chronological markers with a theory of correspondence to historical facticity—although even then we often encounter in narratives facts that may be open to question. The markers become, like reminders of cultural or personal holidays on a calendar, indications of when events take place within the relational structure of textual events. But when

these markers in narrative fiction contradict each other because they come from different correspondence systems, or when an absent marker is so desired by one's correspondence theory that the reader writes an interpretive narrative over the one in the text, then a different conception of time needs to emerge from the reading experience to recognize potential time traps along the narrative path. That different conception of time, I would argue, drawing on distinctions proposed by Brian McHale, is more ontological than epistemological, and for its reading, or its time telling, this different conception of time must be understood pragmatically as a condition of possible chronologies rather than as a single chronology required by a correspondence theory. For instance, the bombing of Dresden during the Second World War may anchor Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five* in history, but Billy Pilgrim's slipping through different times in his life to the point when his entire life is simultaneous asks the reader to reconsider the chronology represented and the nature of time itself.

A similar condition obtains when one considers how readers process narrative geography within a text. Some narratives are set in a completely imaginary geography; although an allegorical cognate may exist, the reader is free to imagine a world very different from the one s/he inhabits or that other readers of the same text would imagine. Other narratives draw strongly on an actual geography even though the exact details are imagined, so if one visits the Yorkshire moors of Emily Brontë, one feels the very atmosphere and ground of *Wuthering Heights* even if the exact house never existed exactly as described.¹ Last, narratives such as James Joyce's *Ulysses* seek such precision in representing an actual place that Joyce's famous boast that if Dublin "one day suddenly disappeared from the earth it could be reconstructed out of [his] book" (qtd. in Delaney 10) strikes the reader who has also been to Dublin, even though much has changed in that city over the years, as hardly a boast at all.

If we posit that time traps can occur within narrative texts, then clearly place traps can occur as well. Although many writers map their narratives, the locales chosen for representation may signify on symbolic, cultural or historical registers as well; therefore, a writer can exploit particular locations in the real world to add depth to the narrative even if in a strictly logical sense it may make no sense why a character travels from point A to point C by way of point B. As with telling time, if an actual locale is represented, a theory of correspondence to geographical facticity once again becomes operational. Moreover, if we consider chronology and geography in conjunction, we must negotiate the gap between correspondence to fact (realism) and the symbolic deployment of time and place.

Although many texts could be cited to illustrate time and place traps in narrative, Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow* is an exemplary text from which to demonstrate how the reader is maintained in a condition of doubt and uncertainty as he or she works to reconcile the various temporal and geographical registers deployed in the text. Like Joyce, Virginia Woolf, William Faulkner and other authors of complex temporal and geographical structures in narrative texts, Pynchon seems determined in *Gravity's Rainbow* to challenge any and all constructions of narrative time and place. From the base-story setting during the last year of the Second World War and its immediate aftermath, textual time in *Gravity's Rainbow* follows patterns of historical events, of holidays and religious feast days, of cinematic devices deployed in the text, of realist assumptions about normative passages of time needed to complete represented actions, of symbolic time, and of parallels and contrasts among the timelines of different characters and between the represented time of the primary story (1944–1945) and the represented time of the discourse (the late 1960s and early '70s). Likewise, the narrative geography in *Gravity's Rainbow* has been determined in part by actual locales of the war (London, Nordhausen, Potsdam, Peenemünde, Cuxhaven) and in part by imagined spaces (the Casino Herman Goering, Bad Karma, Zwölfkinder). Pynchon's text uses its matrix of temporal and geographical dimensions to unsettle the reader and to discourage attempts to construct narrative meaning based on any single temporal or geographical epistemology. Although deliberate indeterminacy is hardly unusual in narrative fiction, *Gravity's Rainbow* raises the stakes for critics who hang their interpretations on temporal and geographical markers.

Khachig Tölölyan was the first to tackle these problems, in "War as Background in *Gravity's Rainbow*." He concedes at the outset of his study that "the tangled events of *Gravity's Rainbow* cannot be rearranged into a single, clear, and unified plot"; nevertheless, he rightly observes that those events "do have a coherence that becomes more accessible when one constructs a chronology, a geography, and a chart of the combatants who are locked in the variety of struggles subsumed under the rubric of War" (31). In this rich analysis and interpretation of historical background for Pynchon's text, Tölölyan provides us with a schematic chronology for the novel and a rudimentary map of Slothrop's journey through the Zone. As Tölölyan observes, Pynchon is often partially precise (33) in his deployment of dates and places, precise enough to be suggestive and provocative, but not quite precise enough to let the reader pin something down definitively. Often the best Tölölyan's chronology can do is identify the time of an episode as "August, 1945." Clearly, other registers for tracking the chronology of

the text are essential if we are ever to pin down a reliable chronology—if, indeed, that is our goal.

The most extensive consideration to date of the questions of time and place in *Gravity's Rainbow* is Steven Weisenburger's *Gravity's Rainbow Companion*. In this immensely valuable reference work, Weisenburger carefully annotates a wide array of factual material Pynchon has embedded in his narrative. One result is a narrative chronology based on dates Pynchon clearly signals (for instance, the Battle of the Bulge, Christmas, Whitsunday, the Potsdam Conference) and on unobtrusive references in the text to "phases of the moon, remarks about weather, movies playing at London theaters, a song playing over the radio . . . BBC programs, newspaper headlines, and saints' days" (GRC 9). Additionally, Weisenburger argues that "the most significant discovery of the annotations is that *Gravity's Rainbow* unfolds according to a circular design. . . . *Gravity's Rainbow* is not arch-shaped, as is commonly supposed. It is plotted like a mandala, its quadrants carefully marked by Christian feast days that happened to coincide, in 1944-45, with key historical dates and ancient pagan festivals" (GRC 3, 9-10). The evidence Weisenburger marshals is quite persuasive on its face, but problems creep in that hint at a time trap in the making.²

Weisenburger establishes for part 1 of *Gravity's Rainbow* a base chronology of December 18-26, 1944. Embedded within this nine-day base chronology, and making the reader's task of telling time more difficult, are a number of analepses (flashbacks), some quite extensive, and some scenes that can be read as running concurrently rather than consecutively. Moreover, like other writers, Pynchon makes good use of accelerating and retarding devices to construct a rich temporal rhythm for a narrative that opens numerous fragmented plot lines while refusing to focus the first-time reader's attention on any particular one.

First of all, if we build a base chronology on extratextual details, then should we expect that other details will fit the principles for time-telling already established? Furthermore, is such an expectation realistic, especially for a postmodern narrative? Don't we usually allow for narrative details that serve other narrative ends than simple chronology? For instance, at the opening of episode 14 of part 1, Pynchon writes, "this rainiest day in recent memory" (GR 92): such a weather feature, which turns into "a snowy night, [with] five rocket bombs since noon" (106), should be glossable if Pynchon follows the London *Times* as closely as Weisenburger asserts he does in constructing the narrative chronology. Neither reference (nor an analeptic one to the "half-moon" [104]) is cited in the *Companion* (although Weisenburger may, indeed, have used these details for

corroborating his chronology); nevertheless, Weisenburger dates the base time of the episode December 22. His chief rationale must be that if the novel's first part ends on December 26, it must begin on December 18 to accommodate the historical marker of the Battle of the Bulge (mentioned in the novel as the "Rundstedt offensive" [52], so called for German General Karl von Rundstedt, who launched it; only later would it be known by the "bulge" in the Allied lines that did not break), which began on December 16, and to span the nine days of the Advent and Christmas season. However, even if Weisenburger's historical and symbolic evidence holds, a mimetic problem develops in this time frame. Episode 14 contains the filming of Katje Borgesius for octopus Grigori's conditioning for the rescue scene in the first episode of part 2. Enough internal evidence places this latter episode, as Weisenburger does, "around Christmas 1944" (GRC 105), yet for the chronology to hold, both Grigori's conditioning and the whole plot against Slothrop have to be effected in three to five days. Such a narrow time frame would violate most mimetic temporal rules for narrative, but *Gravity's Rainbow* is a postmodernist narrative, and therefore anything can happen. Although we may accept such a violation of mimetic rules, the question remains as to how much we can rely on the factual details woven into the text as signposts to what does happen.

As Pynchon's writing frequently demonstrates, his narrative is not bound by conventional literary mimesis even though it often exploits representational strategies on a par with the most internally consistent mimetic fictions. Thus we find in *Gravity's Rainbow* occasions when we confront a temporal paradox between a chronology structured on extratextual material and a postmodern playfulness that opens the textual field to what Mikhail Bakhtin would call carnivalesque representations that bend and challenge our requirements of order in fictional reality. Moreover, attempting to construct any rigid chronology may detract from the glorious excess that is the *Gravity's Rainbow* we admire so much. The reader's experience of time in part 1 is that more happens than can possibly fit into nine days, yet paradoxically, the chronology seems to hold. Likewise, as I have shown elsewhere, the geographical conceit of Slothrop's map of sexual adventures and the map of V-2 rocket strikes gives rise to an interpretation of Slothrop's sexual connection to the rocket which may be more a psychological fiction constructed by Pointsman than a narrative fact.

Part 2 of *Gravity's Rainbow* spans the time "around Christmas 1944" to Whitsunday, May 20, 1945. Given this part's focus on Slothrop and his experiences at the Casino Hermann Goering on the Riviera, the time telling and the geographical location are much more

straightforward in terms of conventional narrative representation of action. However, except for a specific reference at the part's midpoint to the spring equinox (236), the precise dates of events that occur between the frame dates of Christmas and Whitsunday are indistinct. Indeed, the opening episode, which details Slothrop's rescue of Katje from the conditioned octopus Grigori and which all internal evidence from part 1 points to as occurring on Christmas day, is essentially devoid of any representational coding that it is Christmas. The reader is more likely to imagine the picnic on the beach taking place in a much warmer season than late December.

In addition, Slothrop's dream about "Jenny" indicates that he may have left London sometime after New Year's: "'Jenny, I heard your block was hit, somebody told me, the day after New Year's . . . a rocket . . . and I meant to go back and see if you were all right, but . . . I just *didn't* . . . and then They took me to that Casino'" (256). But the status of this potential chronological marker is problematic. First of all, it occurs in a dream. Second, the other two references in the novel to "Jenny" (not counting the folktale character Jenny Greenteeth [147]) echo other chronological and geographical problems in the text. The first reference to a "Jennifer" (so they may not even be one and the same) occurs in an early passage relating to the yarns Slothrop spins around his amorous affairs for Tantivy (23), suggesting his relations with her occurred before the opening day of the text. The third, and last, reference to "Jenny" or "Jennifer" occurs during Speed and Perdoo's investigation, "Slothropian Episodic Zone, Weekly Historical Observations (SEZ WHO)," and as with other attempts to verify the stars on Slothrop's map, this is "another dead end" (271). Last, if we also consider Roger Mexico's temporal correlation of Slothrop's map with the map of rocket strikes—"Slothrop has dated most of his stars. A star always comes *before* its corresponding rocket strike. The strike can come as quickly as two days, or *as slowly as ten*. The mean lag is about 4½ days" (86; second emphasis added)—the rocket that hits Jenny's block the day after New Year's apparently falls outside the chronological limits of Mexico's poisson distribution.

Such chronological inconsistencies require the reader to decide how significant chronological fidelity or chronological symbolism is to the reading produced. In Weisenburger's reading, the symbolism of dating is highly significant: "part 2 of *Gravity's Rainbow* is symbolically bounded by the birth of a savior and the proof of his resurrected glory" (GRC 105). On many levels Weisenburger's point is interpretively desirable, especially when the reader factors in the analepsis in part 4 to Captain Blicero's launch of Gottfried in rocket 00000 sometime during this chronological span (Weisenburger's most desirable

speculative date for this launch is April 1, which happened to be Easter Day in 1945 (GRC 263)). At the same time, the reader must be aware that to read symbolically is a conscious choice for organizing textual material within specific archetypal patterns; and if *Gravity's Rainbow* teaches us anything, it is to be suspicious of reading too much into the order of things.

The time and place traps have now been set as we move into part 3. Weisenburger has demonstrated that using extratextual markers can make the narrative chronology quite precise in places, and that the emerging chronology also carries symbolic potential. On the other hand, as I have suggested, our immediate experience of reading the text produces an impression that the narrative's temporality is more contingent than fixed to definable patterns. I believe Pynchon uses moments of textual uncertainty to highlight the paradox of contingency and order that underwrites artistic production and life in general. Put another way, the correspondence theory that overdetermines Weisenburger's chronology is always shadowed by an emerging pragmatic conception of time that opens textual time to more elastic possibilities for composition and decomposition.

Part 3, "In the Zone," continues Slothrop's picaresque adventures in postwar Europe. I concentrate here on Slothrop, to the exclusion of other plot lines, because his story is the central organizing story for most readers, especially first-time readers. Although subsequent readings lead us to see other patterns, Slothrop's journey through the Zone of postwar Germany occupies most of the narrative time in this part of the text. Slothrop enters the Zone in the first of a series of disguises, as Ian Scuffling, war correspondent.³ He later becomes Rocketman, Max Schlepzig, a Russian deserter, and finally the pig-hero Plechazunga. His assuming the disguise of a war correspondent invites us to see Slothrop's correspondence to the war, but as he assumes other disguises, the systems of correspondence become increasingly fantastic, and he progressively loses all sense of a coherent identity.

Weisenburger argues that in part 3 we can again be quite precise in our dating:

The action begins around May 18, several days before the end of part 2, on Whitsunday. Part 3 will end just before dawn on August 6, 1945, the Feast of the Transfiguration, when Christianity celebrates the radiance of Jesus' divinity revealed to his disciples on a mountaintop. In the novel Slothrop will experience a parody of that sacred revelation as part 4 begins, but part 3 will draw to a close on the morning of August 6, when the *Enola Gay* and the atomic bomb it cradles are approaching the city of Hiroshima. (GRC 149)

This reading has obvious symbolic potential as it aligns the Slothrop plot with the religious feast day and the coincidental dropping of the first atomic bomb. But when we try to make the narrative fit this chronology, difficulties arise, in many cases because of the problematic conjunction of time and place as Slothrop travels through the Zone.

Slothrop's actions at the opening of part 3 innocently appear to fit Weisenburger's chronology. Slothrop meets Geli Tripping sometime in late May: when they have their dawn frolic on the Brocken, "May Day Eve's come and gone and this frolicking twosome are nearly a month late" (GR 329). Yet a problem of time and place, one that prefigures others to come in part 3, lurks behind this playful scene. No mention is made of how Slothrop and Geli travel from Nordhausen to the summit of the Brocken. The text notes that the distance (from the Mittelwerke) is "twenty miles" (329), but measuring twenty miles on a two-dimensional map is entirely different from traveling the actual terrain. Anyone who makes the trip point to point, even if we can't retrace the characters' steps exactly, will discover that it is no simple hike from Geli's bombed-out room in Nordhausen to the peak of the Brocken.⁴ The playfulness of the scene obscures the complexities of traveling through the postwar Harz Mountains. As we will see, the challenge to Weisenburger's chronology of part 3 comes down to whether Slothrop can get from here to there in the time marked by the symbolic dates. Tracing Slothrop's journey from Potsdam to Putzi's will show the paradox of trying to tell time in *Gravity's Rainbow*.

When Slothrop infiltrates the Potsdam Conference (July 17–August 2, 1945) in his Rocketman outfit to recover six kilos of hashish (GR 377–83), the reader is given a historical marker with which to tell time for the remainder of part 3. Weisenburger dates Slothrop's Potsdam raid at its earliest possible date, July 18; and for there to be any chance of the text's fitting the symbolic/historical timetable, this date is the only one possible for aligning Slothrop's comic adventure with the diplomacy that contributed to the decision to use the atomic bomb on Japan to end the Second World War and to start the Cold War, with its attendant nuclear threat. But for Slothrop to travel from Potsdam to Cuxhaven by August 5 (so the castration intended for Slothrop but performed on Major Marvy can coincide with the bombing of Hiroshima on August 6), mimetic constraints must be suspended. Given Slothrop's actions during his journey, it is a mimetic impossibility for him to reach Cuxhaven in eighteen days.

To summarize quickly (see the Appendix for a detailed tracking of references to time and place during Slothrop's journey): After Potsdam, Slothrop spends an unspecified number of days in Berlin (Douglas Lannark suggests ten days⁵) with Greta Erdmann. Episode 12 in part 3

comprises Slothrop and Greta's Berlin time, but rather than definitive chronological markers, it contains markers of iterative time (daily routines): "At first they stay together days at a clip. [. . .] Sometimes he manages to be alone out by the river. [. . .] They manage a fish a day, on lucky days two. [. . .] Sometimes she'll leave the house, and stay away for days" (445-46). However indeterminate, the text suggests that Slothrop and Greta spend many days in Berlin before they travel by barge on the Oder River to the fictional Bad Karma, a resort somewhere on the way to Swinemünde. In Bad Karma they board the *Anubis*, beginning Slothrop's Baltic adventures, which include some sexual encounters, a fall overboard, a rescue by Frau Gnab, a black-market run with der Springer to Peenemünde, a rescue of Springer from Tchitcherine, and a second boarding of the *Anubis*. When Slothrop disembarks at Stralsund, which Weisenburger dates July 31, he still has over 200 miles to travel to reach Cuxhaven in the six days the symbolic/historical timetable demands.⁶ But Slothrop appears to travel only on foot, and, now disguised in Tchitcherine's uniform, he meets up with Ludwig, who is searching for his lost pet lemming, near Rostock, has another run-in with Major Marvy, goes out of his way to warn the Schwarzkommando of an impending raid, and, at a town "near Wismar" (567), trades disguises to become Plechazunga, the archetypal pig-hero of a town festival.

My quick summary needs to slow here. Weisenburger dates the Plechazunga chapter (episode 28 of part 3) "Thursday and Friday August 2-3" (GRC 244), basing these dates mainly on the clear statement in the text that this *Schweineheldfest* occurs on "a Thursday" (GR 567; emphasis added). But five lines above, the text notes that the children are "singing good-by to another summer" (567) — a chronological marker implying that it may be later than the first days of August. In any case, on Thursday, Slothrop delays his journey (he still has nearly 150 miles to travel to reach Cuxhaven) to play the Pig-Hero (568-71) until the Russians break up the festival and find the Russian uniform he had been wearing. That evening (572-73) he says good-bye to the printer's daughter who hid him, and after one of *Gravity's Rainbow's* characteristic sets of ellipsis points, we are told Slothrop "keeps to open country, sleeping when he's too tired to walk, straw and velvet insulating him from the cold. *One morning* he wakes in a hollow" (573; emphasis added). How much time has passed here is indeterminate. For Weisenburger's symbolic/historical reading to hold, we would have to read "One morning" as "Next morning," or Friday, August 3, for this day when Slothrop is awakened by the warm tongue of Frieda the pig, and the two of them begin traveling together, raiding a henhouse along the way (574). "By nightfall they have entered a

wooded stretch," and the "[n]ext day, about noon" (575)—or, in even the most conservative chronology, Saturday, August 4—they enter Zwölfkinder, where Slothrop spends the next episode (which Weisenburger pegs as August 3) talking with Franz Pökler. From Zwölfkinder to Cuxhaven, Slothrop still has to travel from the Baltic coast to the North Sea coast, crossing the Elbe on the way—all the time dressed in the pig suit! Last, even when Slothrop reaches Cuxhaven, the narrative suggests he spends some time there—"he's in and out all the time" (592)—before "the very delivery date for that discharge [Slothrop and Springer] arranged sailing in with Frau Gnab to Stralsund. And tonight, of all nights, *after a week of not bothering him*, the police decide to come after Slothrop" (602; emphasis added).

The time trap has been sprung. Physically and mimetically, Slothrop cannot get to Cuxhaven by August 5, so to choose the symbolic/historical reading, an interpretively desirable reading, requires a suspension of disbelief. I think Weisenburger inadvertently falls into this trap because his project to annotate *Gravity's Rainbow* is by necessity underwritten by a theory of correspondence to historical facticity for processing literary details. Using the extratextual chronological markers of history and Christian feast days, Weisenburger seeks to fit the story to a meaningful pattern of corresponding events. However, the time trap results from the reader's general impression of the time needed for the events to occur and for Slothrop to move from place to place in northern Germany, and from the less obvious mimetic markers of narrative time—"one morning," "next day"—that deconstruct the symbolic/historical correspondences. Moreover, throughout the text the reader's experience of temporality is regularly disrupted by various time-shift devices and by the many concurrent plot lines s/he has to remember. Therefore, rather than trying to use exclusively a correspondence theory to establish a fixed chronology, the reader can approach time in *Gravity's Rainbow* pragmatically. As with other patterns of signification in the novel, the reader must make provisional decisions about constructing time patterns for the narrative; but in Pynchon's text, it appears that no single chronology can be trusted.

Nevertheless, Weisenburger's reading is desirable, and it fits with the readings of critics who focus on the spiritual thematics in the text and of those who focus on the historical politics represented. If the reader can't live suspended "at the hinge of doubt" (GR 672) produced by conflicting chronologies, Pynchon allows, I suggest, for different constructions of time in this portion of the text to set up the accelerating fragmentation of the narrative in part 4. To be in the world is to be within a conventional temporality, but as Slothrop loses his contact with reality and begins to disperse, the reader sees narrative

time slipping more and more radically. Thus the novel closes with the telling of the springtime launch of Gottfried in the Schwarzgerät⁷ in alternation with the telling of the events at the Orpheus Theatre in Los Angeles in the late 1960s or early 1970s.

By learning to read the time and place traps in *Gravity's Rainbow*, we do not discover an ultimate meaning. Instead, we discover a primary component of the novel's postmodern narrative strategy. Moreover, we come to understand how our tentative and pragmatic engagements with textual time and place simulate our experience of postmodern existence. Telling time is telling the complex stories of our lives, and with relation to Pynchon's 1973 text, telling the narratee's life poised at the cusp of an end to all time, as the text closes with the point of an ICBM reaching its last Δt above the Orpheus Theatre, whose film of *Gravity's Rainbow* has inexplicably broken at the climactic moment.

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Appendix:

Chronology of *Gravity's Rainbow* from Potsdam to Putzi's

The Potsdam Conference was held from (Tuesday) 17 July through (Thursday) 2 August 1945; the first atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, Japan, on (Monday) 6 August 1945.

Page	Phrase	Scene and Comment
371-83		Episode 3.7: GAC dates this episode 18 July.
372	The man who forged these [Slothrop's Max Schlepzig ID papers] has been in and out of Potsdam on them a dozen times since the Conference began	How much we can trust Säure here is debatable, but Slothrop doesn't question him, accepting that one could already have entered Potsdam "a dozen times since the Conference began." If this isn't hyperbole, does it throw into question the dating as 18 July? See 382 below.
374	By Säure's black-market watch, it's nearly noon. From 11 to 12 in the morning is the Evil Hour, when the white woman . . . comes out of her mountain	Same day: prefiguration of Slothrop's meeting with Greta
377	He's through Zehlendorf by midafternoon	Same day
379	Massive movement in the dusk	Same day
379	Presently he cuts right again, toward the sunset	Same day
381	The shore of the Griebnitz See is dark, starlit	Night, that same day
382	your average weekday night here at the great Conference	How many weekday nights does it take to establish what is "average"? Of course, this observation is focalized through Slothrop as he peers into the party: on what basis does he determine that this night is like all the others? July 18, by the way, fell on a Wednesday in 1945.

383-90		Episode 3.8: Aboard the Argentine U-boat
389	The property of time-modulation peculiar to Oneirine	A hint about how narrative time will work in this oneiric text?
390-92		Episode 3.9: Tchitcherine and Dzabsjev smoking some of the Potsdam hashish: <i>GRC</i> dates this episode "mid-July," but it clearly follows 3.7.
392-97		Episode 3.10: <i>GRC</i> dates this episode "later the same day as" 3.9.
392	Slothrop comes to in episodes that fade in and out of sleep. . . . He spends an anxious hour or two undoing the top [of one of the hashish packages]. . . . He dozes off and dreams. . . . Slothrop wakes again to the white room	Probably sometime in the afternoon of 19 July; the rest of the day Slothrop spends getting to know Greta.
397-433		Episode 3.11: The Pöklér chapter: <i>GRC</i> dates the "nominal time" of the episode as "July 9, 1945, or shortly thereafter," although most of the chapter is a far-ranging flashback.
433-48		Episode 3.12: <i>GRC</i> dates this episode "still the later half of July."
433	Back to Berlin, with a terrific thunderstorm blowing over the city	After the Potsdam raid and meeting with Greta; probably the evening of 20 July; Lannark (RD) reports that Berlin had a thunderstorm on the evening of the 20th.
434	a few hours later Slothrop wakes up	Slothrop in bed after making love with Greta: late evening
434	He hasn't really thought about them for a while. Hmm, when was that? The day he sat with Säure in the café . . . oh, that was day before yesterday	Slothrop thinking about Jamf and Impolex; indication that today is now 20 July (or two days after episode 3.7), nearing the cusp of the day change at midnight (see below).
434	The rain lets up at midnight	Same night, now early on 21 July; Slothrop goes out to find Säure; the time-telling of this search gets quite precise on 434-37.
439	when Slothrop wakes up it's at the height of the Evil Hour	Slothrop at Säure's, between 11 and noon, 21 July
440	This rainy morning	Same day

442	Twenty minutes later	Afternoon of the same day, having fled Säure's, Slothrop returns toward Greta.
444	[Greta] cries all day	Greta after Slothrop's return; same day as above, 21 July
445	At first they stay together days at a clip, till he has to go out dealing, or foraging. He doesn't sleep much. . . . Sometimes he manages to be alone out by the river, fishing. . . . They manage a fish a day, on lucky days two. . . . When Greta cries in her sleep for longer than he can listen to, he has to wake her. They will try to talk, or to screw, though he's less and less often in the mood. . . . Whippings seem to comfort her. . . . Sometimes he's too tired even for that. She keeps provoking him. One night he puts in front of her a broiled fish	Classic iterative paragraph suggesting the passage of time, punctuated by the specific "One night" scene. In tracking the chronology of Slothrop and Greta here, however, we are at a loss to know how many days actually pass; and according to a principle of "time modulation," we may be reading how time feels rather than how it literally passes.
446	Getting closer [to the S&M scenario Greta desires] every day, and he's afraid. He's never seen anything like it. When he goes out to the city she begs to be tied with her stockings. . . . Sometimes she'll leave the house, and stay away for days, coming home with stories. . . . Whatever it is with her, he's catching it	Classic iterative paragraph, but now suggesting a new phase in their relations, not one contemporaneous with the earlier iterative paragraph (445).
446	one night he saw DIE, SLOTHROP	Indeterminate
446	One Sunday out at Wannsee	Indeterminate; however, to fit the <i>GRC</i> chronology, this could only be 22 July (which is not likely given the fixed and iterative chronology above) or 29 July (which leaves no time for all the actions to come before <i>GRC</i> pegs another date [see 3.20]).
446-47	it's early morning now. . . . [Slothrop] is just up from a dream	Haunted by his dream, Slothrop goes fishing again.
448-56		Episode 3.13: The Toiletship chapter: <i>GRC</i> dates this episode "still late July."

457-68		Episode 3.14: <i>GRC</i> gives no date for this episode.
457	They have set out by barge along the Spree-Oder Canal, headed at last for Swinemünde	Slothrop and Greta leave Berlin for Swinemünde; but the Havel-Oder Kanal would seem to be a more direct route than the Spree-Oder Kanal, which runs farther south and east before it links with the Oder River.
457	Stretches of the canal are still blocked	Implies slowness of the journey.
457	in the night Russian demolition crews can be heard blasting away the wrecks	Iterative?
457	Off and on it rains	Iterative?
457	The sky will begin to cloud up about noon . . . then wind . . . then rain that must be often at the edge of sleet	Iterative, but also a weather marker, sleet, that is at odds with the summer setting.
457	when the nights are clear	Iterative; confirms that earlier markers are iterative.
457	At midnight coils of fog rise	Iterative
457	These nights . . . are tranquil and good for sleep. The Berlin madness is behind	Iterative
457	But one afternoon, sliding down the long mild slope of the Oder toward the Baltic Sea, they catch sight of a little red and white resort town	After an indeterminate number of days, Slothrop and Greta are off the canal and on the river proper; the resort town is Bad Karma (<i>GRC</i> suggests the town of Bad Freienwald as a model; it is on the Alte Oder, just south of the point where the Havel-Oder Kanal flows into the Oder).
459	[Slothrop] keeps looking for [Greta] till the darkness is down	Evening of the same day in Bad Karma
459	nobody's on timetables any more	A hint about how not to tell/read time in <i>GR</i>
459	all summer it has been sailing these lowlands	Iterative reference to the <i>Anubis</i>
466	as if Greta is now releasing all the pain she's stored up over the past weeks	Fully or partially coincident with her time with Slothrop? The scene is focalized through Slothrop, so it is his frame of reference that counts the time as "weeks."
468	The sun is still hours away	First night on the <i>Anubis</i> , after the orgy

468-72		Episode 3.15: GRC dates this episode "still late July."
468	Sunlight filters down the hatches, so that must mean it's morning	Next morning on the <i>Anubis</i> : Slothrop and Bianca below decks
473-82		Episode 3.16 (continuous with 3.15)
479	The forenoon has gone dark	Still the morning of the second day aboard the <i>Anubis</i>
479	Well in a day or two we'll be in Swinemünde, right?	A clue to the <i>Anubis</i> 's location, or only Slothrop's wishful thinking?
480	I [Morituri] want only to be with Michiko and our girls, and . . . never to leave Hiroshima again	Coincident chronology? Hiroshima was bombed on 6 August.
482-88		Episode 3.17 (continuous with 3.16)
483	One recent night in Berlin. . . . There was frost	The "frost" in July is an incongruous detail in Greta's story. Lannark's tracking of the Berlin weather during July (RD) only notes 23 and 31 July as the coldest days; for much of the rest of the month, Berlin was unseasonably warm.
488	Time had lost meaning	Suggests how we should think about literary-realist time in relation to <i>GR</i> ?
488-91		Episode 3.18 (continuous with 3.17)
489	Inexplicably, the afternoon has been going on for longer than it should. Daylight has been declining for too many hours. . . . [T]he cloudy night goes white and loud	Still the second day aboard the <i>Anubis</i>
489	In the Zone, in these days, there is endless simulation	Another hint about time?
489	How probable is the <i>Anubis</i> in this estuary tonight? Its schedule has lapsed, fashionably, unavoidably: it should have been through Swinemünde weeks ago, but the Vistula was under Soviet interdiction	Dislocates the <i>Anubis</i> in time; locates it heading into the Oder Haff.
490	The second dog watch is about to come on. . . . evening routine	This watch is from 6 to 8 p.m.
491	The white ship . . . will slip by Stettin's great Ruin. . . . The Oder Haff will grow wider around the <i>Anubis</i>	A geographic marker

491	the whipped white desolation that passes for the Oder Haff tonight	Slothrop goes overboard.
492-505		Episode 3.19 (continuous with 3.18)
492	Who (Frau Gnab) else would be out tonight, during a storm?	Same night as 3.18, though possibly after midnight (see below)
493	Slothrop falls asleep . . . gets in two or three hours. . . . He wakes to sunlight. . . . They are docked in Swinemünde	Next morning; Slothrop wakes from a Bianca dream.
493	Nice morning	Same day
500	There's a late time of day when all shadows are thrown along the same east-northeast bearing as the test rockets were always fired out to sea from Peenemünde. The exact clock time, which varies through the year, is known as Rocket Noon	Well after noon proper, if we read the shadow as a rocket sundial.
501	today's Rocket Noon	Evocative passage as Frau Gnab's boat approaches Peenemünde.
505-18		Episode 3.20 (continuous with 3.19): <i>GRC</i> dates this episode 30 July.
505-06	They come out into the last of the twilight. Just a sleepy summer evening in Peenemünde	Same day
506	Night is down	Same day
506	A sharp sickle of moon has risen	A possible marker? <i>GRC</i> argues "The moon entered its last quarter in late July [see V572.30n], and on July 30 a sickle-shaped moon would have risen near midnight, the 'twilight' of V505.37 having shown between nine and ten that evening."
518-25		Episode 3.21: Schwarzkommando at Jamf Olfabriken Werke AG: Contemporaneous with events in 3.20? <i>GRC</i> dates this episode "late July."
525-32		Episode 3.22 (continuous with 3.20): <i>GRC</i> dates this episode "around noon on July 31."
526	The sun is up	Slothrop wakes up the morning after rescuing Der Springer.

527	He and Springer arrange a date anyhow	The unspecified date when Slothrop's discharge will be delivered to him in Cuxhaven
527	this morning	Same day
530	three bells strike	Slothrop aboard the <i>Anubis</i> again around 1:30 p.m. (GRC)
532	As night comes down. . . . We'll put in at Stralsund. . . . At Stralsund . . . in the lamplight . . . they say good-by	Slothrop parts from Der Springer and Frau Gnabh.
532-36		Episode 3.23: Catching up on events in England: <i>GRC</i> argues, "time . . . is indistinct, but probably . . . contemporaneous with" 3.22.
537-48		Episode 3.24: Birth of the counterforce: "The Time is unspecified" (GRC).
549-57		Episode 3.25: <i>GRC</i> dates this episode "Sometime in early August."
549	last night's rain. . . . This morning	Slothrop heads out of town (Stralsund?) and catches a ride in a wagon; <i>GRC</i> has him heading toward Rostock (about 43 miles away). See 692 for two other towns Slothrop will visit.
551	When Slothrop has cigarettes he's an easy mark, when somebody has food they share it—sometimes a batch of vodka. . . . Slothrop drifts in and out of dozens of these quiet, hungry, scuffling migrations	Iterative: Slothrop moves aimlessly with various DP groups.
551	Much of the time he's alone. He'll come on farmhouses, deserted in the night, and will sleep in the hay, or if there's a mattress (not often) in a bed	Iterative
551-52	At a farmhouse in a river valley far south of Rostock, he comes in to shelter out of the midday rain, falls asleep in a rocking-chair on the porch, and dreams about Tantivy . . . who looks so <i>real</i> , so untouched by time	How many days has it taken to get here? How "far south of Rostock" is this (see 553 below)?
552	As he moves on he finds these farms haunted	Iterative activity

552	Trees, now—Slothrop's intensely alert to trees, finally. When he comes in among trees he will spend time touching them, studying them, sitting very quietly near them and understanding that each tree is a creature	Iterative activity, but it also indicates time spent not moving toward Cuxhaven.
553	Well, Ludwig. Slothrop finds him one morning by the shore of some blue anonymous lake [the Plauer See?]	This transition is initiated by Slothrop's last of several wishes on evening stars, the next to last of which refers to his heading toward Lübeck. He meets Ludwig between Rostock and Pritzwalk (about 80 miles south of Rostock [GRC]).
554	[Ludwig] is apt to drag Slothrop up out of sleep in the middle of the night, waking half the DP encampment . . . absolutely sure that Ursula is out there	Iterative searching for Ursula: at the very least the night after Slothrop finds Ludwig
556	[Slothrop] loses the fat young lunatic in a village near the sea. . . . Streets curve on into town, foreshortening too fast—it's wideangle, smalltown space here	GRC does not locate this town, but Slothrop and Ludwig have had to travel north to get back to the coast (at least 45 miles); the Einsteinian allusion to relativity, and the cinema reference are interesting touches.
557-63		Episode 3.26 (continuous with 3.25): GRC dates this episode "Still early August."
557	Just in time for some o' Duane Marvy's Atomic Chili!	Same day (afternoon?)
561	[Slothrop gets] a lift back into town, where [Marvy and Chiclitz] pick up a couple of those Eager Fräuleins and go roistering off into the sunset	Evening, same day
561	Takes [Slothrop] an hour to get out to the [Schwarzkommando] camp on foot . . . the sun nearly down	Evening, same day; Marvy had revealed that the raid was scheduled for "about midnight."
563	a spell against Marvy tonight	Evening, same day
563-66		Episode 3.27 (continuous, after a brief update on Närrisch, with 3.26): GRC dates this episode "Later that evening," but the time is presumably near or after midnight.
564	even now the black may be looking in out of the night	Tchitcherine with Marvy and Chiclitz after the failed midnight raid

567-77		Episode 3.28: GRC dates this episode "Thursday and Friday, August 2-3."
567	To Cuxhaven, the summer in deceleration	Past the midpoint of summer, at least the second week of August?
567	So Slothrop is borne, afloat on the water-leas. Like signals set out for lost travelers, shapes keep repeating for him, Zonal shapes he will allow to enter but won't interpret, not any more. Just as well, probably. The most persistent of these, which seem to show up at the least real times of day, are the stairstep gables	Iterative actions
567	At nightfall the children roam the streets . . . singing good-by to another summer. In a coastal town, near Wismar, as he's falling to sleep in a little park, they surround Slothrop and tell him the story of Plechazunga. . . . Every summer since [the 10th century], a Thursday has been set aside to celebrate the town's deliverance	How many days since 3.26? GRC puts the location "15 miles southeast of Rostock," but that cannot be right if the town is "near Wismar," which is 30-35 miles from Rostock to the west-southwest.
568	Be Plechazunga tomorrow	Slothrop agrees to help; if tomorrow is Thursday, 2 August, according to GRC, then today must be Wednesday, 1 August.
568	next morning	The <i>Schweineheldfest</i> , always held on a Thursday: GRC argues for 2 August.
569	A peaceful, drunken day. . . . midday tranquillities	Same day
572	In the streets loudspeakers . . . are proclaiming an early curfew tonight. . . . part of this unrecoverable summer. . . . There's no moon	Still Thursday; GRC says "the moon entered its last quarter on July 31 (see V506.37n); by August 2 the thin sliver of a moon did not rise over Europe until after 1:00 a.m. Earlier in the evening, as here, one would see 'no moon.'"
573	the clock in the Peterskirche strikes nine	Still Thursday evening
573	[Slothrop] keeps to open country, sleeping when he's too tired to walk, straw and velvet insulating him from the cold	Iterative

573	One morning he wakes. . . . it is sunrise and bitter cold, and there seems to be a warm tongue licking roughly at his face	Slothrop meets Frieda, but how many days after the pig festival? "One morning" is indeterminate; <i>GRC</i> chronology would require that this be 3 August (but see 3.29).
574	It would be worth something to sit day and night, in and out, listening to these sounds of water and cobbles unfold	A Heraclitian metaphor for time, and reading?
574	About a mile farther on they pause, for Slothrop's breakfast	Slothrop and Frieda begin their journey.
574	Soon they have begun to angle toward the sea	To reach Zwölfkinder they have to —but how fast can a pig walk?
575	By nightfall they have entered a wooded stretch. . . . settled down to sleep	Same day
575	Next day, about noon, they enter . . . Zwölfkinder	The next day, according to <i>GRC</i> chronology, would apparently have to be Saturday, 4 August (but see 3.29); Slothrop meets Pökler. The precise location of Zwölfkinder is never specified; however, we are told in episode 3.14 that the distance Pökler and Ilse travel from Peenemünde to Zwölfkinder is 280 kilometers (419). <i>GRC</i> notes that Zwölfkinder "sits somewhere north ('up,' at V398.32) from Lübeck and that from it one sees Denmark across the Baltic Sea (V398.36)." Thus one possible site is near Puttgarden, which is only 11 miles across the Fehmarnbelt from Denmark and approximately 280 kilometers overland from Peenemünde. Gossel and Vanderbeke argue for a site "east of Glücksburg," some 290 kilometers from Peenemünde measured as the rocket flies. ⁸
577-80		Episode 3.29 (continuous with 3.28): <i>GRC</i> dates this episode "Friday, August 3, 1945"; Pökler tells about Jamf and about German movies.

580-91		Episode 3.30: The Lyle Bland chapter. <i>GRC</i> identifies this episode as a "flashback."
588	We must also never forget famous Missouri Mason Harry Truman: sitting by virtue of death in office, this very August 1945, with his control-finger poised right on Miss Enola Gay's atomic clit, making ready to tickle 100,000 little yellow folks into what will come down as a fine vapor-deposit of fat-cracklings wrinkled into the fused rubble of their city on the Inland Sea	<i>GRC</i> 's gloss: "On August 3, having just departed Europe from the Potsdam Conference, Truman issued orders to send Col. Paul Tibbets aloft on the night of August 5. Tibbets's plane, the <i>Enola Gay</i> , was named for his mother. If Truman's finger is 'poised,' this must be during the period of August 3-5, and probably the fifth, because Truman was capable of rescinding the mission down to the last hours." The question for readers of <i>GR</i> is how to interpret the relation of this inset in a flashback about Lyle Bland (which can be pegged at 1935) to the Slothrop chronology for reaching Cuxhaven.
591-610		Episode 3.31: <i>GRC</i> dates the opening of this episode "around 10:15 p.m. on Sunday, August 5, 1945 At precisely this moment, in a different time zone near Japan, the <i>Enola Gay</i> is winging its way to Hiroshima, delivering the 'Cosmic Bomb' anticipated in <i>GR</i> for some time."
591	A windy night. . . here in benighted Cuxhaven	How long would it take Slothrop, still wearing the pig costume, to travel the minimum of 70 miles (crossing the Elbe River as well) from Zwölfkinder to Cuxhaven?
592	How quickly history passes these days	A warning to the reader about binding this text too closely to history?
592	Slothrop . . . yes yes the Yank in the, the pig suit. Well, he's in and out all the time	How long has Slothrop been there to create the impression of iterative presence?
594-95	Midnight	The time Bodine has promised to meet Marvy at Putzi's

602	Now this happens to be the very delivery date for that discharge they arranged sailing in with Frau Gnahn to Stralsund [see 527]. And tonight, of all nights, after a week of not bothering him, the police decide to come after Slothrop	The last time noted in the text that the police were after Slothrop was the day of the pig festival (570–72), which <i>GRC</i> dates only 3 days earlier, and those were local and/or Russian-military police; the reference here is to British MPs (596).
609	Plenty of time. . . . We're catching the C-47 at one. . . . Back at Putzi's, Slothrop curls in a wide crisp-sheeted bed beside Solange, asleep and dreaming	Marvy is castrated, and Slothrop sleeps with the other mother of a shadow child, Solange/Leni, completing the cycle begun in Potsdam with Greta.
692–94		From Episode 4.6: "Streets": The date must be after 6 August if still "early August" (see below).
692–93	It could have been the Semlower Strasse, in Stralsund. . . . no . . . it was in Greifswald. . . . Hafenstrasse in Greifswald. . . . it could be the Slüterstrasse in the old part of Rostock . . . or the Wandfärberstrasse in Lüneburg. . . . In one of these streets . . . is a scrap of newspaper headline, with a wirephoto of a giant white cock, dangling in the sky straight downward out of a white pubic bush. The letters MB DRO ROSHI	The first two towns are on Slothrop's north-German itinerary after he parts from Der Springer and Frau Gnahn (see above); Greifswald is not mentioned in part 3, but is mentioned earlier in episode 4.6: "The Hafenstraße in Greifswald, where Slothrop in early August may see a particular newspaper photo" (681); and Lüneburg, the mystic site for rockets 00000 and 00001, closer to Cuxhaven—a direction of Slothrop's post-Putzi's wandering?

Notes

¹Brontë fans will argue that the ruin called Top Withens, some three miles from Haworth, was the house Emily had in mind, but even then readers have to admit that the house in the text is something other than any house one could imagine from those ruins.

²I have shared earlier versions of this essay with Steven Weisenburger, who recently observed in his "Response to Carol Schaechterle Loranger" that what I am "point[ing] out, and rightly, is that textual evidence for the real-world chronology behind *GR*'s fictional-event sequences is not always consistent, and that my presentation of that evidence in the *Companion* overlooked some textual ambiguities" (R 170). Weisenburger's project is ongoing (a second edition is in the works), so my efforts here are in the spirit of contributing to that project even if my rhetoric may suggest I am taking him to task.

³We should remember that, when he takes on the identity of Scuffling, he has already lost all the documentation of his identity as Tyrone Slothrop, and throughout most of part 2 has been impersonating a British officer in one of Teddy Bloat's spare uniforms.

⁴When, in June 2000, the authors of the essays in this collection traveled to a number of the sites in Germany represented in *Gravity's Rainbow*, the trip from Nordhausen to the Brocken took approximately one hour by car to Schierke and then approximately forty-five minutes by steam train up the Brocken to its summit. It is hard to imagine the logistics in postwar Germany for Slothrop and Geli to get there in time for their sunrise frolic.

⁵At the Pynchon conference Site-Specific, Douglas Lannark presented a paper titled "Relocation/Dislocation: Rocketman in Berlin" in which he uses both astrological readings and weather reports to account for Slothrop's time in Berlin. He concludes that Slothrop and Greta spend ten days in Berlin before leaving on July 31. For Lannark the significant ultimate chronological marker is not the bombing of Hiroshima but, instead, what he infers from astrological evidence to be Slothrop's birth date, 31 August 1918 (see also Lannark, "Paperware to Vaporware"). An anniversary of such obvious personal significance to Slothrop (if Lannark's calculations are accurate), and one that coincides with the end of the month, would seem like a plausible date for Slothrop to set for an important event like receiving the forged discharge papers from Springer.

⁶Any attempt to follow this journey on an actual map is problematic because mixed with the actual geographical markers in the text are purely fictional locales. Nevertheless, if one uses those geographical markers that can be traced, one sees that Slothrop's journey does not follow any sort of straight line. Moreover, traveling in this part of Germany today, one quickly sees that traveling in straight lines would not even have been possible, especially for

someone who wanted to avoid attracting attention. An old geographer's saying comes to mind: "The map is not the terrain."

⁷This launch is paralleled in part 4 by the Schwarzkommando's final preparations for the late-summer or early-autumn launch of rocket 00001.

⁸In the early plans for our tour of the Zone, we were to travel from Greifswald to Cuxhaven. But even if we had been able to complete this last leg of the journey, we would not likely have discovered an original for Zwölfkinder—though with time we might have eliminated some sites. Gossel and Vanderbeke's approximate location of somewhere east of Glücksburg would make Slothrop's journey with Frieda, and then on to Cuxhaven, longer and even more indirect.

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