

Relocation/Dislocation: Rocketman in Berlin

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One of the many attributes which make Pynchon's fiction so fascinating to the scholar, the book-lover and the novice is the enormous variety of subjects it touches and draws on—something for everyone. A life-long practicing astrologer, I sense that Pynchon has a deep affinity for astrology and that he uses astrological symbolism in the construction of character, plot and metaphor. He does not choose his astrological symbolism casually or at random. (Pynchon was born sometime in the morning of May 8, 1937, in Glen Cove, Long Island, New York—was born, that is, under a Sun-Uranus conjunction. This conjunction corresponds to the aspect of electricity, paranoia, genius/madness, outer space/other worlds—the rocket.)

Scholarly and amateur readers alike agree that well before the end of *Gravity's Rainbow* the character of Tyrone Slothrop is dispersed, dissolved, disintegrated, disassembled, disseminated, dissipated, or in some way or other disappears. How and when and, to a certain extent, where this *dis-* commences, evolves and is ultimately sealed—if it is sealed—remains open to *discussion*. Here I offer an astrological perspective on the matter of Slothrop's dis-location: not a physical dislocation such as a dislocated shoulder, but a psychic dislocation symbolized by his relocation to Berlin. That is, I offer a reading of Slothrop's relocation horoscope.

—Shit that's what I get, havin' a double Virgo fer a son. . . . (GR 699)

In a previous essay, on Slothrop's nativity (q.v.), I concluded that Tyrone Slothrop was born on August 31, 1918, at 7:15 a.m. EWT, in Mingeborough, Massachusetts, U.S.A. A double sign denotes a birth shortly before, just at or shortly after sunrise, with the Sun either in the assertive First House, on the Ascendant, or in the floundering Twelfth House—traditionally termed and still acknowledged today as "the house of self-undoing." Slothrop is a Twelfth-House double Virgo. The designation double Virgo already awakens a particular bias in the minds of most astrologers; a Twelfth-House double Virgo arouses more preconceptions, of which Pynchon's "Shit that's what I get" is a suitable example. Another rather sarcastic textual illustration is "Slothrop hasn't got 500 anything, unless it's worries" (261). Surely

aware of the special Virgo/Twelfth-House binary relation, Pynchon uses many such contradictory characteristics in depicting Slothrop. A double Virgo is also another V-2, like the novel itself.

Of all the twelve astrological double-sign combinations, Virgo, ruler of the Sixth House, is the only possible polarized Twelfth-House binary opposite, and is thus *a priori* dislocated—a messy Virgo. This constellation in itself already contains the seeds of an innate personality disorder. It is akin to the Hanged Man reversed, which is the Tarot card “telling of [Slothrop’s] secret hopes and fears” (738). However, any nativity can be either accentuated or alleviated through *relocation* to another place and time zone: the basic character designated in the nativity remains the same, but its mode of expression is radically altered by the adjusted implications of a given new location—in Slothrop’s case, Berlin, six time zones away.

Is it possible, during an extraordinary period of history, that a given geographical location itself can trigger a cataclysmic personality change in a labile individual sensitive to both the specific location and the historical epoch? Or how much is it a matter of the right person in the right place at the right time? Predestination or coincidence? A combination, a convergence, a synchrony?

The first direct textual reference in *Gravity’s Rainbow* to Slothrop’s *dis-* occurs while he and guidance-man Klaus Närrisch (another Fool) are approaching the “holy Center” (508), Prüfstand VII, at Peenemünde in August 1945 (but cf. Weisenburger 224–25), about a week after Slothrop and Greta Erdmann left Berlin: “Slothrop, as noted, at least as early as the *Anubis* era, has begun to thin, to scatter”; according to Mondaugen’s Law, “The more you dwell in the past and in the future, the thicker your bandwidth, the more solid your persona. But the narrower your sense of Now, the more tenuous you are” (GR 509). Where has what happened in the course of Slothrop’s odyssey to induce his scattering, his gradual fading away? The “necropolism” of “the City Sacramental,” Berlin, “is an inverse mapping of the white and geometric capital before the destruction[. . .] Inside is outside” (372–73).

In the summer of 1945, the cultured city of Berlin has been utterly distorted: parks, streets, *Plätze*, buildings, not to mention inhabitants, have been transformed nearly beyond recognition. Even the heavens over Berlin have been so distorted that “[i]t is possible [. . .] to make up your own constellations” (366), which Slothrop does—instigating his dislocated destiny. It seems a perfect setting for the fulfillment of a personality dislocation.

However aroused, can such a personality disjunction be the result of a manipulation of destiny since infancy, a preconditioned fate, a

nativity? Such is the case in *Gravity's Rainbow* of Lieutenant Slothrop, apparently the sole American assigned to a bottom-level Allied technical-intelligence office (ACHTUNG) in London in charge of gathering information on German V-2 rockets: "'Paranoia's ass. Something's up, a-and you know it!'" (192).

En route to Berlin, Slothrop spends two or three years in London ("these three years" being unlikely, actually, to include "the first Blitz" of 1940–1941 Slothrop supposedly "can remember" [21]), the next three to four months on the Côte d'Azur, an indeterminate number of days or weeks in Switzerland, and perhaps longer getting to and in the Harz. London itself has already been a traumatic relocation for this native of the Berkshires, surviving first the Blitz and then the buzz-bombs. Once the V-2s start striking, everything inside his mind starts getting disconnected and/or reconnected. Growing paranoid about the law of averages, Slothrop "become[s] obsessed with the idea of a rocket with his name written on it" (25), yet he does not have the faintest notion that within less than a year he himself will become Rocketman (359ff.). Slothrop's unique talent, innate or conditioned, for "[d]owsing Rockets" (490) has caught the attention of others in Allied intelligence. He is kept under observation, subjected to conventional and highly unconventional testing, and, finally, sent (with his only British friend) on an extended furlough to the Côte d'Azur for further experimentation and training. By the time he flees this set-up, a woman will have loosened a few more of his screws, his only friend will have been reported dead, he will have learned German and all there is to know about the rocket, and he will have cast his first "all-purpose" "spell": "'Fuck You'" (203).

Before fleeing southern France for Switzerland, Slothrop—having been clued in to "'what's going on,'" to his "'function'" (216), yet unconsciously acting in accord with prearranged patterns—gets the support of the underground, receives his first false identity, and is acknowledged as "'the man'" (246). Realizing that perhaps there will be no way back (257), he then takes the next steps (by way of Zürich and Geneva) in his dislocation, the first steps toward Rocketman. When he crosses the border into Germany, eight months have passed since the first V-2 strikes, and the war in Europe is now over. On one of many trains heading northeast, Slothrop experiences the dislocation of a collective displacement. He himself is soon to join the ranks of the DPs. With time to read the dossier on Laszlo Jamf he obtained in Zürich, Slothrop learns of the deal made for him at birth and the reason for his haunting ever since by the smell of Impiplex G. More than a simple displacement, this is a disembodiment. Yet he resists the torment of disillusionment by recalling Enzian's comforting words:

“We’re DPs, like everybody else. [. . .] But you are free. We all are” (288).

In the Harz mountains, Slothrop first experiences Zonal “arrangements.” “‘It’s so unorganized out here. There have to be arrangements.’ [. . .] He’ll find thousands of arrangements” in the Zone (290). Slothrop’s first such arrangement is a dalliance with Geli Tripping, the teenage novice witch, Soviet intelligence officer Tchitcherine’s mistress, who gives him a pair of Tchitcherine’s oversized boots. He investigates the rocket-assembly tunnels of the Mittelwerke, runs into his nemesis Marvy and meets two German scientists intent either on helping or on capturing him. He gets a close look at an A4, but the Schwarzgerät is nowhere in sight. He merely hears that it is for sale in Swinemünde. On the day Venus leaves her domicile in Taurus, with the heat on, off he flies to Berlin. Even though he does not “‘want to go to Berlin” (332), Berlin wants him to come. As of the first week of July 1945, all roads leading to battered Berlin are road-blocked by Allied forces. The only railroad still running is running east to Russia. Yet Slothrop, in a preballistic phase, carrying the forged identity papers of English correspondent Ian Scuffling, arrives before sundown on July 7 by hot-air balloon. Observing the earth’s shadow sweep westward and being told that it moves faster and faster “‘[t]he farther south you go,” Slothrop muses, “‘Southern France[. . .] Yeah. That’s where I broke through the speed of sound” (336).

Berlin is where Slothrop breaks through the barrier of time, from a distinct geographical space to mythical immortality. Berlin is the place, July 1945 the time. The summer is unseasonably hot, with the stench of decay from May still lingering over the city. It is the Chinese year of the Wood Rooster—a shredding woodpecker who is now chipping more than just paper. During the next three weeks Slothrop will undergo a shattering transformation in this city of eagles. The Rooster is astrologically associated with Berlin, a city founded in the year of the vigorous, inquisitive, authoritative Fire Rooster under the transubstantiating, willful and passionate fixed-water sign of Scorpio (also known as Phoenix, an eagle of sorts)—a fanatic combination, indeed. Yes, like individuals, nations and cities have nativities, are born (founded) under one of the twelve Signs of the Zodiac—and also under one of the sixty oriental combinations or Chinese Years. Scorpio, the eighth sign, governs the period from October 23 to November 22, the days of decay, deterioration and disintegration in the northern hemisphere—absolute autumn. Considered the most mysterious sign, Scorpio governs the reproductive organs and the sense of smell, and is regarded as the sign of birth, death and rebirth; annihilation and

resurrection; shadows and the occult. Besides the Dragon, the Rooster is the only Chinese sign which can fly, defy gravity. Berlin, the youngest European Capital, astrologically combining the liquid oxygen of Scorpio with the dynamic motivation of the Fire Rooster, seems predestined as the ideal geocosmic location for the rocket experiments of the *Verein für Raumschiffahrt*—both before and after the Nazi takeover.

Early during Slothrop's sojourn in Berlin, he falls ill from drinking polluted water. So much for the "American enlightenment" (359) he had meant to bring to benighted Berliners. On Monday, July 9, 1945, at 15:35 MESZ, there is a total eclipse of the Sun across northeastern Europe, culminating over Leningrad; but Berlin is overcast and muggy anyway. Besides, at best, sunlight only ever briefly visits the cellar where Slothrop, obscured himself, lies for days, befouled and delirious. Relocated in Berlin's ruins, on his own, "his country fading away" (360), finding no Holy Grail and even realizing that what he is pursuing isn't one, but too weak to do anything about it, Slothrop finds his dislocation beginning to clarify. With "nothing better to do," he even puts himself on somebody else's trip, starts playing somebody else's game, although he "know[s] that in some irreducible way it's an evil game" (364).

However, relocated as Slothrop is six time zones east to Berlin, the feeble Twelfth-House sunrise of his Massachusetts nativity is transformed into a blazing high-noon Virgo Sun directly on the celestial zenith—a transformation from self-undoing to higher consciousness. Last year's obliging subject of a psych(ic) experiment, Slothrop is converted into a flying laboratory (cf. GR 427), yet with none other than the ill-fated, venomous, accursed sign of Scorpio now on the Ascendant. Astrologically, the Ascendant symbolizes the Gate to the Outer World: personal expression, presentation and unfoldment in the environment, the social surroundings—the phenotype in contrast to the genotype. An outer world undergoing its own mutation faces him here in the rubble of Berlin, *die Skorpionstadt*. Countless splintered concrete eagles looming over gutted buildings beckon Slothrop back to life, preparing him for resurrection, a paperless rebirth—the first sign of Phoenix rising out of the ashes.

Actually, it is more a smell than a sign, the scent of a reefer. An elderly cat burglar and two gorgeous young women in charitable collaboration on a tree trunk at the Großer Stern share the remainder of what they are smoking with craving Slothrop, and roll another lush joint. High, happy and healed, he spots their stash of looted opera costumes (most likely from the demolished Kroll Opera on Königsplatz across from the Reichstag). An instant birth, a ceremonial rebirthing is

about to occur. Magda offers, Slothrop bashfully refuses, Säure Bummer insists. Under the *Siegessäule* at the Großer Stern in the middle of the Tiergarten, Säure places the dehorned Wagnerian helmet on Slothrop's head, and Magda and Trudi drape a green velvet full cape over his shoulders; he himself imagines a "big, scarlet, capital R" on the back of the cape (366). So on Monday, July 16, 1945, at 22:29 MESZ, with Uranus directly at the nadir (*die Bodenplatte*), research and development completed, Rocketman is born—or at least he is so christened by Säure. The narrator remarks, "Names by themselves may be empty, but the *act of naming*. . . ." (366; cf. 322).

Dates by themselves may also be empty, but the act of timing. . . . Nine hours earlier and eight time zones away, at 5:29 MST—sunrise—on July 16, 1945, in Alamogordo, New Mexico, the first atomic bomb was successfully tested—one day before the Potsdam Conference began. During the previous thirty-six hours, Stalin, Churchill and Truman had arrived in Berlin, and at about the time of the A-bomb detonation, Churchill and Truman were touring the Tiergarten and what was left of the inner city. Rocketman and the Atomic Age were born under the same thirteenth sign of the Zodiac (cf. GR 302), separated in Universal Time by a single sunset in two hemispheres.

Säure leads Rocketman through Berlin's rubble toward the Chicago Bar along the Zelten Allee and Dorotheen Straße to Friedrichstraße in the Russian sector. The Alley of Tents and Dorothy Street lie directly south of the ravaged Reichstag building, which Slothrop mistakes for a "'giant ape'" "squatting down, [. . .] taking a shit, right in the street" (368)—just one of many apparitions Berlin has in store for Rocketman. Now after midnight on July 17, the Moon is setting in sociable Libra. Friedrichstraße, in the center of Berlin, has been noted since the Prussian era for its bars, theaters, cabarets and cinemas. It is the main amusement strip in Berlin for all levels of entertainment, from the stuffy snobbish to the brashly vulgar. The Chicago Bar is most likely located between Bahnhof Friedrichstraße and the intersection of Friedrichstraße and Unter den Linden, where Rathenau's AEG erected the first electric traffic light in Europe. On this night in July 1945, Friedrichstraße has not yet returned to its former glory; military patrols have taken over traffic control. Inside, Rocketman is being prepared for his first flight: a mission to pick up six kilos of hashish in Neubabelsberg, Germany's Hollywood, with the promise of a kilo for himself and "a million nearly-real marks" (371).

Rocketman: comicbook figure, would-be movie star, dope dealer, or truly a flying laboratory? "The man" to Blodgett Waxwing, back in the spring at Raoul's place on the Côte d'Azur, Slothrop in occupied Berlin appears to Säure and an initially skeptical Seaman Bodine (that

“freckleface kid” from the Minnesota prairie [710]) to be the true Rocketman, who can ensure “[t]he happiness of a thousand customers” (376). Provided with forged papers and money printed on the spot in the middle of the night in Säure’s cellar hideout (perhaps in the bombed-out bank which currently serves as the fashionable Berlin Techno/Raver NightClub Tresor, near the Wilhelmplatz, across from Hitler’s Reichskanzlei—though neither the *Platz* nor the *Kanzlei* exists any longer), Slothrop, unsure of himself but wheedled and beguiled, does not think until later “that what he should have said [. . .] was, ‘But I wasn’t Rocketman, until just a couple hours ago’” (371).

The next morning, before Slothrop flies off on his mission, Säure escorts him down Friedrichstraße to the northeastern edge of the American sector, where they spend the Evil Hour in a café. In the same hour Truman and Stalin are meeting for the first time, having lunch and informally discussing the division not only of Germany but of the whole world as well. The café is likely located near the intersection that later became famous as Checkpoint Charlie, in Berlin’s publishing quarter, analogous to London’s Fleet Street. The day’s news to Slothrop—but not in the *Tägliche Rundschau*, a Soviet-oriented four-paged daily without a weather report (a State secret?)—is that FDR, “his president, the only president he’d known,” had “died back in the Spring” (374, 373), and nobody had told him. Slothrop asks about the Schwarzgerät, and Säure tells him about der Springer. Rocketman and the Chess Knight, a splendid pair, will eventually meet, but in Swinemünde, not Berlin; however, this very night, Slothrop will meet Tchitcherine, a man more metal than flesh (337). Der Springer will let him down, but Tchitcherine will not.

The American sector extends along a southwesterly diagonal from Checkpoint Charlie in Kreuzberg to a Russian control point on the Autobahn. Slothrop walks, and probably also rides tram #48—one of the few trams back on track—the fourteen miles “through [the districts of Tiergarten, Schöneberg, Steglitz and] Zehlendorf by midafternoon” (377). The Russians are waiting for him, perhaps expecting him. His Rocketman attire and Max Schlepzig shtick do not impress the guards; he has forgotten about Tchitcherine’s boots he is wearing. With no route of escape, a frozen dislocation, he envisions in the sky over Berlin his SNAFU-captioned photograph in *Life* magazine. “Barely off the ground” (377), Rocketman is forsaken by Providence . . . but not by the Russians, who let him pass after confiscating his last joint. Come evening, he has to cross the Autobahn, but finds he can “[leap] broad highways in a single bound!” screaming, “Hauptstufe,” his second all-purpose spell and “the Rocketman war-cry” (380). He arrives in Neubabelsberg to discover that the address of his pick-up, Kaiserstraße

2 (now Karl Marx Straße 2), is the temporary White House. *Quelle* dislocation: The White House in a Hollywood-like suburb of Berlin. Lots of entertainment going on too, celebrities everywhere, a (last?) chance here for amnesty, fame and fortune—mercy; but not quite yet for Rocketman, who ambles away, digs up the stash, eyeballs Mickey Rooney (who does not say a word, but appears on the cover of the first reissued *Rocketman* comicbook) and scampers away, only to be intercepted by Tchitcherine and given another dose of truth serum.

When Slothrop wakes up the next morning (or is it the day after that?), he finds himself in a deserted Ufa studio just down the road from the Kaiserstraße, still dressed as Rocketman, Max Schlepzig ID in his pocket, but with a slice of the hashish missing. Tchitcherine, discovering what a dislocated loner Slothrop is, has shown compassion and taken “‘only [. . .] what his freedom is worth to him” (390). An aging movie actress, not Rocketgirl but Earth(wo)man, also takes a liking to him and asks that he play the role suggested by his forged identity. In the coming weeks she will take more from him than just his freedom; nevertheless, Rocketman will soar to legendary heights, and she will wither back down under the earth, to mud. Margherita Erdmann (her screen name) is a Seventh-House Scorpio with Taurus rising (most probably born, I calculate, November 10, 1902, at 16:05 MEZ, in Berlin). Female European sunset meets male American sunrise here in Neubabelsberg, and the Tropics are reversed. Slothrop, who has never declined an erotic opportunity, starts playing Greta’s unhealthy game. But he cannot claim to be entirely on somebody else’s trip from now on, and he knows it: “he still says ‘their,’ but he knows better. [. . . H]is own cruelty” (396). He will experience that very special dislocated singularity which inevitably leads to ten thousand Slothrops “scattered all over the Zone” (624, 712).

Berlin–Neubabelsberg–Berlin, July 17–20, 1945, is the decisive setting for Slothrop’s German initiation. What is left of greater Berlin suffers under a heat wave, creating, among other things, a beer shortage for the locals, but not for delegates to the Potsdam Conference. The Moon, in Apogee, enters the transformative realm of Scorpio on July 17, at 20:29 MESZ, the eve of Slothrop’s *stirb und werde*, and departs on July 20, at 8:35 MESZ, the day Greta and Slothrop arrive back in Berlin at a shack on the Spree in the Russian sector and the first day of rain in ten days. Since the S-Bahn has been dismantled, they may travel by the VIP shuttle bus for journalists and film crews, but more likely walk. For the record, there was “a terrific thunderstorm” (433) on this day.

The house on the river, their home for the next ten days, is near the Monbijoupark in the Scheunenviertel between Friedrichstraße and

Alexanderplatz—the traditional orthodox Jewish quarter of Berlin. The first evening Slothrop realizes that he has lost track of his quest for the Schwarzgerät, of why he is going where, and even of time; indeed, “Slothrop perceives that he is losing his mind” (434). Isolated within himself, he drifts into the state of “anti-paranoia, where nothing is connected to anything.” Even Rocketman cannot “bear for long” (434) this being completely dislocated in time and space. Slothrop does have five kilos of prime hashish to deliver, though—the stuff of Zonal “folklore” (596)—so around midnight he heads out to find Säure—and to add to the legend of Rocketman.

Slothrop is refused entry at the Chicago Bar by two unprepossessing kid guards, who are nevertheless no match for Rocketman. “‘Fickt nicht mit der [sic] Raketemensch!’” he screams, “so they’ll remember, kind of a hiyo Silver here” (435). With the “Custodian of the Night” (434) watching over his wandering through a surrealistic *Saturday Evening Post* nightmare version of devastated Berlin (it is now July 21, a Saturday), “[I]t takes [Slothrop] an hour to find Säure’s cellar” (435). The place has been trashed, but he eventually finds a message and a map to Jacobistrasse 12, 3er Hof, number 7, in the British sector (shortly to become known as *Der Platz*—a fantastic dislocation). Although most of the names Pynchon uses for streets, squares, districts and buildings in Berlin are factual, Jacobistrasse is a fantasy address. (There was and still is an Alte Jacobstraße that becomes Neue Jacobstraße (now spelled with a *k*), but in an area whose geographical and architectural details do not correspond to Pynchon’s.) If we take the prolonged, heated debate at Säure’s about composers as indicative, we may imagine this street somewhere between Richard Wagner Platz and the Deutsches Opernhaus in Charlottenburg, a neighborhood with back courtyards even to this day, close to a tram depot and not far from the Kurfürstendamm.

It takes Slothrop until the early morning hours to reach the third courtyard of Jacobistrasse 12, but once inside Säure’s apartment he has one of Rocketman’s finest mythical moments, a moment of grace. Far more than just fulfilling his mission, he not only delivers the hashish but also forgives Säure for renegeing on part of the payment: “‘You aren’t angry. You really aren’t.’ // ‘Rocketman is above all that shit, Emil!’” (438). On his way to Jacobistrasse, Slothrop (or the narrator) has imagined Rocketman making a thirtieth-century tour of Berlin’s ruins—a thousand years after the thousand-year Reich. So if, taking that cue, we cast the nativity for Slothrop in 2918 using the same date, time and place as in 1918, the constellation is remarkably similar. Moreover, the Twelfth House has been undone: this is the chart of a spiritual Rocketman.

Rocketman experiences an erotic dislocation with Trudi—the soothing sensation of a penetrated woman—unlike anything Greta will ever give him. When he awakes, it is still July 21, a rainy Saturday morning (albeit the Evil Hour), with the Moon in snug Sagittarius. But he flees Säure’s (sub)cultural oasis when it is raided. In no real hurry to get back to Greta, he takes the round-about way via the Kurfürstendamm, Berlin’s cosmopolitan boulevard struggling to regain its former elegance after being turned into a muddy cattle trail by Soviet cowboys. Adjusting to their relocation, the Russians are making the most of the situation while, prohibited from fraternizing, all the GIs have to offer is “God Bless America” and “This Is the Army, Mr. Jones” (443). Dislocated Rocketman feels neither blessed nor any longer part of the Army, but rather paranoiac, and trapped in the grasp of the Earthwoman, who greets him by throwing a tantrum. ““Oh boy, what a sad story, listen cunt, you ain’t the only one’s ever suffered—you been out *there* lately?” (445).

Home or not, over the next ten days in Berlin, playing her game, Slothrop becomes psychically more and more dislocated in the aura of this distorted, disgusting, distressful woman. For the first days, during the Full Moon phase of July 22–25, they stay inside together. The weather is lousy: one cold front after another, with showers and gusty northwesterly winds, passes over Berlin. Rocketman is grounded, and frightened, stuck in an unwanted relationship, yet somehow he feels responsible for the obviously psychotic Greta. Is this Slothrop’s “fatal flaw” (676), an inability to love? On July 23, the first day of Leo, Mars, the God of War, enters Gemini, the sign of duality. Mutual love is not at hand, only sex and strife—torment, pain, humiliation. Things turn even uglier, more hopeless, more violent in the days after the Full Moon. The weather warms up again, but this is not “the warm, romantic summer of ‘45” (445) for Rocketman. Once, shy Slothrop—an American college-boy type in uniform, telling stories about fireflies to innumerable English girls—scored almost without trying. But now, “[w]hatever it is with [Greta], he’s catching it” (446), and finds himself lying, brutal, cynical, even sexually disinclined, while Greta continues to provoke him.

Insatiable, or merely provocative, Greta leaves him for days, seeking more extreme forms of satisfaction (or only tales of them) out in the depravity of Berlin. During these days, July 26–29, Mercury returns home to Virgo, and the waxing Moon wanders from amoral Aquarius to dissolving Pisces. And yes, schemes are brewing back at Twelfth House to expedite not early surrender but early sacrifice: Rocketman’s sacrifice. Disfigured Berlin itself, the disarranged ruins, the dislodged population, starts getting to Slothrop. He fantasizes, hallucinates,

dreams, has visions, is plagued by omens. Out at Wannsee, on Sunday, July 29, he has to use Rocketman's "Hauptstufe" again (though murmured rather than screamed this time) to escape a gang of children who have schemes of their own for his sacrifice. The Moon has moved into choleric Aries, starting a new cycle and preparing to slaughter the lamb. Signs appear: warplanes overhead, increasing gunfire in the streets, Tchitcherine faces, the Schwarzkommando's KEZVH mandala over Alexanderplatz (where it can still be seen today), and "[a]cross the façade of the Titaniapalast, in red neon," an announcement of the upcoming performance of *Die, Slothrop* (446). Slothrop knows enough German vocabulary and English punctuation to distinguish between "The Slothrop" and "DIE, SLOTHROP." It is all getting too much, this ghostly city and that beastly woman. Time to move on.

On the last day of July 1945, Slothrop (dislocated but not totally disassembled) and Greta leave Berlin by canal barge, heading for Swinemünde. The Moon has passed into tranquil Taurus, yet a blustery tailwind thrusts them toward Bad Karma. Slothrop is about to shed his Rocketman attire, though not the vestiges of his Rocketman identity. On the Quay at Bad Karma, just missing the boat, he plummets into the river and has to get rid of helmet and cape to keep from drowning. The elegant young wife of the *Anubis's* owner rescues him and provides him with his next costume, perfectly fitting evening clothes.

Berlin is mostly behind him now (except for his flickering reappearances later at *Der Platz* and the Chicago Bar), and Greta soon will be. With his dislocated psyche, Slothrop begins to thin and scatter, but Rocketman's legend is alive and well. If Slothrop is still on someone else's journey, Rocketman is now his own entity. And (for Slothrop as well as Ilse) "there is also help when least looked for from the strangers of the day, and [. . .] a few small chances for mercy" (610). In a tight spot in Peenemünde, Slothrop runs into Tchitcherine again, who greets him as "'Rocketman'" and compliments him on his "'fantastic'" "'timing.'" The two swap clothes—Tchitcherine getting the tuxedo ("'a Fascist uniform'" [512]) and Slothrop the Red Army officer's uniform; both apparently fit perfectly. Slothrop changes outfits again in the next week or so, into a pig costume (which also "seems to fit perfectly. Hmm" [568]), and is still recognizable as Rocketman, the "glory" (596) of the Zone, by Seaman Bodine in Cuxhaven: "'Rocketman, holy shit, it really is'" (598).

Although Slothrop receives no discharge papers, no papers at all, Rocketman is rescued once again. Bodine comes through in the clutch, helping him survive in the unofficial spaces of the Raketen-Stadt or in the terrain outside it. Solange sends him off with balsam of her own. It is early Virgo; another birthday approaches, one Slothrop will

celebrate alone. Meanwhile, whether or not by his own doing, his insignia and his message spread across the Zone: "ROCKETMAN WAS HERE" (624). Scattered, fragmented, dispersed, but no longer geographically dislocated, Rocketman returns to Berlin. He and Bodine meet again, at Säure's and in the Chicago Bar. Benevolent Bodine holds on as long as he can, furthering both the legend and the spirit behind it: "'grace'" (741).

The mandala still hovers over Alexanderplatz, visible to all yet seldom perceived. The cross is best viewed in the afternoon from the top of the Siegessäule, looking eastward at the transmission tower. This is no longer a dislocation, but a clear sign from the other world—a spiritual Medium in the center of Berlin. Dimmed by decades, Rocketman's graffito is difficult to spot, reserved for the elect. A faded Slothrop tag or two can be seen on certain benches in the Tiergarten, on the subway sidings at Moritzplatz, and underneath Unter den Linden in the unfinished tunnels of U5—the chancellor line. It may be years before this subway connecting Alexanderplatz with the *Kanzleramt* is completed, and who can say when the vacant lot on the northeast corner of Unter den Linden and Friedrichstraße, Berlin's most expensive location, will be rebuilt and the Chicago Bar open for legendary business? Hearsay has it, though, that an underground of its own is flourishing. Third-generation Rocketman offshoots—now in their teens, reunited with their Zonal siblings, and conscious of their personal rockets—are already gathering in Berlin. A Rocketman resurgence is in the making on the principle "live forever, in a clean, honest, purified Electroworld" (699). Slothrop truly was, and is, more than just "a 'pretext'" (738).

—Berlin

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