

‘The Loops of Time’:
Spatio-Temporal Patterns in
‘Childe Harold’

BERNARD BLACKSTONE

EVEN the most perceptive of critics can be blinded by personal dyspathies, and Keats’s ‘Lord Byron cuts a figure — but he is not figurative’ may strike us as almost unbelievably inept. Blake knew better: ‘To Lord Byron in the Wilderness: What doest thou here, Elijah’ is deep calling to deep. Though genuinely in ‘The Wilderness’ by 1822 (the date of *The Ghost of Abel*) Byron continues his ‘figurative’ mission, his ἀνακεφαλαίωσις (Paul’s phrase in Ephesians) of the European complex in his own hero-victim, scapegoat-demiurge cybernetics, and ‘the Wilderness’ is but the last of his series of fields: Archipelago, Vortex, Abyss and Labyrinth, as I call them elsewhere.

Romantic poetry covers an enormous range of space-time patterns, from Keats’s deep-rooted blossoming through Wordsworth’s quiet pastures to Shelley’s dizzy balloon-trips. Byron’s is a poetry of trajectories, boomerang casts at self-knowledge, that most elusive of targets. We travel far afield, but always on a return ticket. *The Ancient Mariner*, not *Alastor*, is the paradigm of *Childe Harold*, *Lara*, *Mazeppa*, *Beppo*, *Don Juan*. A poetry of motion, conceived in motion — on shipboard, in the saddle, or ‘On the swift whirl of the new breaking wave Of river-stream, or ocean, in their flow’ (*Manfred*, II, ii, 67, 68): a poetry of free flight modulating, as we shift from pelagos to vortex, from vortex to abyss, into free fall; and later still, from abyss to labyrinth or ‘wilderness’, into vagrancy. Delicate but remarkably tough threads spin themselves out over the European-Mediterranean scene. This is the spider’s web, reticulating, trapping, geometrizing.

Or, in another and perhaps completer analogy, the jellyfish's wambling circuit of its plankton-rich water-world. Much of my thinking about Byron, over the years, has been done on a terrace in Southern Crete from which I have often followed the gyrations of these amiable medusae. 'Free-swimming coelenterates', so the dictionary describes them — and in their solvency, their quiet disregard of tenure, they have taught me (or so I have fancied) more of Byron than all the sages can. Galumphing hither and thither through their watery element, they propel themselves by expansion and retraction, by ingestion and regurgitation; as they move they feed, and feed on that in which they move. Admirable symbiosis! This was the thalassic analogue, I saw, of the space-time processes implicit in *Childe Harold* and the earlier lyrics. Though, even there, the 'vortical' cybernetics are already shaping themselves under powerful environmental and hereditary tensions (the Ossianic hero of 'Calmar and Orla' 'looks down from eddying tempests: he rolls his form in the whirlwind, and hovers on the blast of the mountain'). The Byronic hero is complete in Oscar of Alva. These are focal points for vortices — Byron's tough, dynamic nuclei. *Hours of Idleness* is composed of tough and tender, as the epigraphs from Homer and Horace proclaim, and the Virgil-Tibullus epitaph clinches. If the jellyfish is one emblem of Byron, the spider and the scorpion are others. But in the early verse there is more of coelenterate than arthropod. By 1816 the vortex takes over from the free swim, and we leave oceanography for nuclear physics and (in *Cain*) astronomy — which is not without its 'pulsars' too.

The pulsars of *Childe Harold*, I and II, are thematic (personal-universal, descriptive-reflective, present-past) and stylistic (a point I shall take up later). They are already felt in *Hours of Idleness* and the pre-tour lyrics. One of the most powerful of these, for all its surface flippancy, is the 1808 'Lines Inscribed Upon A Cup Formed From A Skull', an 'emblem' poem in which we move in and out of past-present-future, personal-human-cosmic, serious-humorous-ironic dimensions in thoroughly 'metaphysical' fashion:

I lived, I loved, I quaff'd, like thee;
 I died: let earth my bones resign:
 Fill up — thou canst not injure me;
 The worm hath fouler lips than thine.

Cranium loquitur: and in six ingenious quatrains we move through the whole gamut of spatio-temporal considerations (skull in grave moving upwards to skull on table, flesh-covered skull at table drinking from fleshless skull, flesh-covered skull moving forward in time, downward and upward in space to become fleshless skull subject to the same fate) and rhetorical devices (questions, commands, shifts from grave to gay, from wine to worm) which 'net the dreamless head' in fibres of dramatic control. (For it is an essentially dramatic imagination which is working here, linking backward to *Hamlet*, forward to the Olympeium scene in *Childe Harold*, II, and the Coliseum climax in *Childe Harold*, IV, establishing co-ordinates for the *Manfred-Werner* cycle.)

Yet it is lyrical too; and before moving on to the pilgrimage patterns of 1809-11, which expand the dramatic-declamatory radius of 'Lines Inscribed . . .' we may well consider this 1813 poem; out of chronological context, yes — but Byron is not a poet who develops: he expands and he rejects, he is prepared to limit and even castrate himself, but the Byron of London and Missolonghi is still the Byron of Newstead and Trinity:

When, from the heart where Sorrow sits,
 Her dusky shadow mounts too high,
 And o'er the changing aspect flits,
 And clouds the brow, or fills the eye;
 Heed not that gloom, which soon shall sink:
 My thoughts their dungeon know too well;
 Back to my breast the wanderers shrink,
 And droop within their silent cell.

That, in its classical perfection, projects the internal dimension of the systole-diastole pulse, the medusan rhythm, which expands the Newstead skull from cranium to temple, and again contracts it from temple to burning-glass and lens, in the *Childe Harold*, II stanzas we shall consider later. In *Childe Harold*, IV, cxxviii-cxlv, the two come together — lyric and dramatic, internal and external — and the Coliseum is both lens and drum, focusing and resonating 'into (and from) the ages of ages'.

On his outward trajectory from England to Athens, from now to Now, in July–September 1809, the first of his adult liaisons (with ‘fair Florence’, a Malta amour) focused personal and historical stresses into a faultless quatrain.

Through cloudless skies, in silvery sheen,
 Full beams the moon on Actium’s coast;
 And on these waves, for Egypt’s queen,
 The ancient world was won and lost.

It is enough — but Byron goes on to spoil it with four feeble stanzas more. Take it as a complete statement, an epigram with all the command of epigram Byron has already shown in *Hours of Idleness*, and it is a hinge-poem: on it, Byron pivots from adolescence to maturity, from egocentricity to cosmic awareness; and English letters, from insularity to a European role. For this, surely, is the moment at which Byron passes on instinctively to his destiny. We move into cosmic, historic dimensions, but also into rippling thalassic actualities. The jellyfish merges with his medium yet dominates it. The majestic, arched vistas of *Childe Harold*, II, Byron’s masterpiece, open here; Cambridge cloisters, London squares and brothels fall away; the present merges with the past. From the moving *Spider* (a no-place) he looks out at space (Actium’s coast). Yet it is not just ‘Actium’s coast’, for under the solvent magic of the moon it recedes into history, and space and time are one. Formidable space–time co-ordinates criss-cross from the *Spider*’s deck into those moonlit solitudes of the Ambracian gulf. Shortly, when he has rooted himself in the polygonal Choric Monument of Lysicrates below the Acropolis, they are to weave themselves into a web which will compass the Hellenic world and, finally, Europe itself. The beginnings are slow: he moves from polygony to polygony in widening circles — first to the ‘fragrant fortress’ of the ‘blithe bee’ on Hymettan slopes, thence to structures smoothing down from the polygonal to the circular — the Pantheon, the ‘stern round tower of other days’, the Coliseum, St Peter’s. (In the Tower of the Winds in Athens, in Byron’s time a *tekke* of the whirling dervishes, polygony was subdued to circularity in the mystic dance.)

The same moon shines down on the Antony–Cleopatra and the Byron–Florence idylls and passes the same ironic judgement. This is the world of Venice anticipated, of ‘So We’ll Go No

More A Roving', the jellyfish's transparent tri-dimensional schema, pulsing through past-present, ship-landscape, sorrow personal-universal:

Infinite passion, and the pain
Of finite hearts that yearn.

The highly complex spatio-temporal structure of *Childe Harold* is in process of formation.

An observation of scorpions, jellyfish and spiders forms a sound basis for the understanding of Byron. Some acquaintance with Eastern thought is helpful too. When Dogen, in thirteenth-century Japan, tells us that we must not 'regard time as merely flying away' he is anticipating Byron's deep sense of all time as eternally present:

For time to fly away [Dogen says] there would have to be a separation between it and things. Because you imagine that time only passes, you do not learn the truth of being-time. In a world, every being in the entire world is a separate time in one continuum. And since being is time, I am my being-time.

If I am my being-time, a separate event in a continuum of being-time, and regret my separateness I shall do well to re-insert myself in that continuum. Byron delighted in circular figures — the 'peculiar diadem' crowning the hill at Annesley where he parted with Mary Chaworth, the Pantheon, the Coliseum — which emblemize the inclusion in time of an eternity-dimension: Dogen as a Zen master¹ did not think in terms of this dichotomy. More than any of his contemporaries, Byron was handicapped in his search for identity by a narrow Christianity: May Gray's early masturbations and indoctrinations constituting a formidable, if absurd, barrier to self-knowledge. We may view his attraction to Islam (with its realistic moral attitudes) as a movement towards escape from moral-legalistic restrictions. Athens when he entered it on that Christmas Day of 1809 was a Turkish village; it was also the stamping ground of Plato and Epicurus. Both philosophers were, in their different ways, expansive or permissive. The opening stanzas of *Childe Harold*, II, constitute an extraordinary expansion-contraction exercise. On the surface a lament for ancient glory, they convey a personal gusto. Byron is liberated

¹ My quotations are taken with thanks from Kapleau's *The Four Pillars of Zen*.

through enslavement, vitalized *by* decay. This is not to say that his sympathy with the Greeks is factitious — very far from it. But the Turks are *there* — have been there for centuries. As *The Curse of Minerva* witnesses, he accepts the Turk-Greek scene as an existent being-time. His task, as he came to see it, was to act as the medium, the human funnel, through which one being-time could pass into another; and, in so doing, could link up with an ancient world which was still living in its monuments and the natural scene in which they existed.

For, as Dogen says in this same *Shobogenzo*,

Man disposes himself and construes this disposition as the world. You must recognize that every thing, every being in this entire world is time. No object obstructs another, just as no time obstructs another . . .

But it's very hard to recognize this. Just as, despite Copernicus, we still see the sun moving from East to West in its circuit of our earth, so our unregenerate vision insists on the separateness of times and events. Byron's power, above all the other poets of his time, was to break down these partitions: he achieved in the world of action what Blake compassed in his mythological universe. Blake's recognition of this is explicit in his 'What doest thou here, Elijah?' For the function of John the Baptist (regarded as the reincarnation of Elijah) was precisely this junction of being-times — of the Old with the New Dispensation, of the Old with the New Adam — and, for Byron, of 'the vanished ages' with 'our phantom shore'. Man has always been the great divider: separating himself off from the natural world, conquering mountains, seas; exploiting his planet. Yet at the same time he is inevitably one with his world; every wound he inflicts on the environment is a wound to his own body. This was magnificently expressed by Coleridge, in the seminal poem of the age. What Coleridge was saying against divisiveness in an allegorical medium close to Blake's mythological synthesis, Byron worked out in his own instinctive life-patterns.

These are bound up with the classical past and the Islamic present. Byron loved them both. Escaping from the unreal time-structures of Regency England, he is confronted with a panorama of broken stone, sunlight, 'light Greeks' and 'grave Moslems', Maids of Athens and Ali Pasha, and the enormous, brooding

presence of the past. It's all indubitably *there*, and he need strike no attitudes in going out to meet it. On this Christmas Day of 1809 as he sits on a fallen column in the Olympeium and looks up to the Acropolis, down to the 'scatter'd heaps' of bones at his feet, his eminently synoptic imagination connects past and present — links three ages, three world-pictures as his mind roves back from the skull he now holds in his hand to the monkish skull he drank wine from in the old days at Newstead. (So too, fusing two mythologies in *The Island*:

... Lock-na-gar with Ida look'd o'er Troy,
Mix'd celtic memories with the Phrygian mount,
And Highland linns with Castalie's clear fount . . .)

This is a mind which is not content to function 'in divided and distinguished worlds'; of succeeding writers, Byron would best have satisfied Browne's concept of 'the great amphibium'. And the development of the skull 'conceit' (II, v, vi) from the Christian-personal ('Know ye not that ye are the temple of God . . .?) to the Classical-universal:

Is that a temple where a God may dwell?
Why, ev'n the worm at last disdains her shatter'd cell!
Look on its broken arch, its ruin'd wall,
Its chambers desolate, and portals foul:
Yes, this was once Ambitions' airy hall,
The dome of Thought, the palace of the soul . . .

belongs to a 'Metaphysical' tradition. Donne's compasses bisect the Attic scene, and Marvell's marble vault echoes from here to the opening of *The Age of Bronze*, with its extraordinarily Brownesque:

The urn may shine, the ashes will not glow,
Though Cleopatra's mummy cross the sea . . .

and its fusion of historical, personal and metaphysical estimates of the Napoleonic age. Byron's 'tough' tradition is woven of many strands, including Donne's 'spider love, which trans-substantiates all' as well as the suicidal scorpion he lifted from *The Life of Johnson* (1768).

But the time has come to computerize. Embarking upon *Childe Harold* (though the limits set for this essay will not permit of too extensive a voyage) we need a compass, and our findings so far

give us the raw materials for constructing one. Here it is, a blatant pinax:

i. Earth & Fire	Historic present/ personal present	Destruction
ii. Earth & Water	Historic past/ personal present	Dissolution
iii. Fire & Water	Historic present/ personal past	Passion
iv. Water & Air	Historic past/ personal past	Transformation

A monstrous regiment of nouns abstract and concrete, and we must not take it too seriously, but it does sum up a complex of insights. Column two is central and most important. As being-time, Byron moves through the four cantos (the vertical i, ii, iii and iv) in a medusan rhythm in relation to his environment. The environment, geographical and elemental, is given in column one (Canto i: Spain and Portugal, earth 'dying into' fire; ii, the Ottoman dominions, water dissolving earth; iii, Central Europe, water threading fire; iv, Italy, water 'dying into' air, and finally the resolution into water of the remaining elements). Column three offers even more tentative assessments; the reader may well find better ways of summing up the ethos of each of the cantos.

'Dying into' strikes a Heraclitan note and *Childe Harold* is a Heraclitan poem.¹ Modern physics breaks existence down into patterns of probabilities, 'a prodigious inter-weaving of flux and wave, an incalculable structure of vibratory levels, so that in the strict meaning of the word all that we grasp in the universe is movement superimposed on movement...' (Professor Edouard Le Roy, *L'Exigence Idéaliste*). We respond to our environment by resonances, 'deep calleth unto deep with the noise of thy waterspouts' or the roar of thy volcanoes; the measure of a poet is the adequacy of his vibration in response to these elemental pulsations. 'With earth, we behold earth', says Heraclitus, 'with fire, fire; with the ether in ourselves we behold the divine Ether; with love we behold love and with hatred,

¹ The present essay relies on, and expands, the findings of my first *Writers and Their Work* pamphlet.

mournful hate'. So with the present we behold the past, with the universal the personal. It is all summed up in *East Coker*:

Home is where one starts from. As we grow older
 The world becomes stranger, the pattern more complicated
 Of dead and living. Not the intense moment
 Isolated, with no before and after,
 But a lifetime burning in every moment
 And not the lifetime of one man only
 But of old stones that cannot be deciphered.

In *Childe Harold* Byron relives his compulsions through this being-time of old stones rooted in their historic context (not isolated in museums), indecipherable in linguistic terms but capable of reintegration, with their context, into the non-temporal dimension which is art. And more than that. As the representative man which he was by virtue of his insertion into the space-time pattern at this particular moment of history, he gathers up into himself 'the scatter'd portions of man's immortal body' as they lie dispersed in space and time. 'I can repeople with the past', one of his better-known statements, is often carelessly read, as though Byron had written 'I can repeople the past', but the 'with' is important — not just 'I can describe past scenes, with their human bustle, as though they were present', but 'I can reinsert the "past" into the space-time continuum which includes, for us, the "present", in a living synthesis'. So the Sestos-Abydos swimming exploit, so often referred to and so often misrepresented by the commentators, is important as a work of salvage, a reinsertion through *gesture* of a portion of the past into the present. At Geneva he relives the Rousseau idyll (expansion of his personal life-pattern into Rousseau's) just as he reinserts it in the spatio-temporal dimension from which it issued (retraction into the cosmic context) in the crucial stanzas lxxvi-xc of Canto III.¹ We need constantly to readjust our focus. His 'con-sideration' of the past is literally a 'working with the stars', a penetration through the 'loops of time' (*Childe Harold*, IV, cxliv) of the eternity-dimension into the physical. Plodding across the Forum he finds himself 'stumbling o'er recollections' as well as broken

¹ And compare Shelley's letter to Peacock of 12 July 1816, no doubt an echo of Byron's talk.

columns; the distinction between inner and outer obstacles is eliminated.

Contemporaries (including that devout Wordsworthian, De Quincey) spoke of Byron's 'intellectual splendour'. We think of intellect nowadays as a property of 'intellectuals', of dons or sub-Stracheyan journalists skilled in the manipulation of concepts (its original Greek form, *nous*, has suffered the same collapse from wisdom to shrewdness), but for Aquinas, Milton and Blake it was the intuitive as distinguished from the discursive 'reason', a function of the whole man who is the universal man, Adam Kadmon. Self-knowledge (the theme of *Childe Harold*, II) is world-knowledge. Inner and outer worlds pulsate in an identical rhythm. The lonely man in quest of identity is also the magus integrated into a cosmic structure:

I made
 Mine eyes familiar with Eternity,
 Such as, before me, did the Magi, and
 He who from out their fountain dwellings raised
 Eros, and Anteros, at Gadara,
 As I do thee — and with my knowledge grew
 The thirst of knowledge, and the power and joy
 Of this most bright intelligence . . .

(*Manfred*, II, ii, 89-96)

This belongs to a later aeon (the vortex descending into the abyss) than our present field of discourse contemplates; nevertheless the tone is not alien to the opening stanzas of *Childe Harold*, II, with their pathetic, almost filial invocation of the goddess of wisdom, their evocation of the gray 'shade of power' flitting across the 'broken, crumbling battlements' (a conflation of Byron and Yeats seems inevitable in these contexts), their delicate balance of architectural mass with metaphysical subtlety. 'Time stand still here', Mrs Ramsay's and Mr Weston's magian gesture, arrests the phantom centuries: we become what we behold.

To return to our pinax. The Heraclitean 'dying' of element into element of column one I have explained elsewhere, linking it with the *Four Quartets*. Column two may need some exegesis. The elemental woof of column one, extended in space, is crossed by a twofold temporal warp (Byron's 'loops of time') plaited from the personal and historical dimensions. The fascination of *Childe*

Harold lies here: in it we watch Byron living his personal present in the historic present and the historic past, and his personal past in the historic past and the historic present. By 'historic (or historical — I prefer the shorter form, since what survives from the past for Byron *is* historic) past' I mean antiquity, the ancient world, Greece and Rome; by 'historic present' I mean the modern world, 'our phantom shore', the ages since the Fall of Rome in which Byron felt himself to be living but which are phantoms *in so far as* they are cut off from 'the vanished ages'. By 'personal present' I mean the now of the poem, the present Byron is living while he writes about it, and by 'personal past' I mean experience, the memory of the poet's own actions and sufferings. The Byron of Cantos I and II lives in a personal present: he has a past, but it is insignificant in view of the enormous panorama which opens before him. The Byron of Cantos III and IV lives in a personal past, the traumatic Augusta-Annabella complex which holds him in its grip, and which tinges the artefacts of this later period.

Column three represents the intercourse of the elements with time within the human situation. The terms I have chosen express emotional values, but we must beware of stressing these. The distancing achieved in *Don Juan* by deliberate irony and farce is here managed through a stressing of the elemental impersonality, and human values are subsumed in the gnawing wave and the crumbling column. What I have called 'ideograms' in my first *Writers and Their Work* essay function along these man-nature lines, moving like the Chinese characters between the elemental and the human worlds. Byron's personal ideogram, the vortex which is 'a whirling gulf of phantasy and flame' (Canto III, vi) concentrates the fiery and the liquid essences of the canto: water, the 'springs of life', is poisoned and, boiling, dies into fire. So the fiery essence of the bull in Canto I dies into earth in the bull-ring, reversing but not annulling the general sense of this canto where the tortured earth of Spain dies into fire in the crucible of war:

On yon long, level plain, at distance crown'd
 With crags, whereon those Moorish turrets rest,
 Wide scatter'd hoof-marks dint the wounded ground;
 And, scathed by fire, the greensward's darken'd vest
 Tells that the foe was Andalusia's guest . . .

(I, xlix)

Here Byron is very much 'présent au présent': there is no 'romanticism', the clues are Sherlockianly discerned. This is Byron the war correspondent, moving between holocausts. In the later bullfighting stanzas we are spared no physical horrors but the pageantry of the occasion is also given its due: another way of achieving dispassion. The dying gladiator stanzas of Canto iv employ various techniques of 'distancing'. We have moved from Byron's personal present and Iberia's historic present into a double past: for the gladiator, the tide of ages has washed over his sufferings, for Byron, he too has faced 'a Roman holiday'. The gladiator's future — 'Arise, ye Goths, and glut your ire!' — is in Byron's historic past; Byron's personal future, the prospect of revenge, is deliberately renounced in homage to the Coliseum's eternity-present, its Now: 'Among thy mightier offerings, here are mine!', and the curse becomes forgiveness (cxxxv). The Byron-Gladiator syndrome is an ideogram within a greater ideogram, the Coliseum, which brings to an ultimate focus all the scattered rays from minor lenses in his observatory. The architectural rhetoric which is Byron's main contribution to Romantic iconography absorbs the individual pathos of the butchered gladiator, without in any way minimizing it; identifying himself with the gladiator (the 'young barbarians' and 'their Dacian mother' are projections of Ada and Annabella) he invokes the 'dread power' which pervades the 'magic circle' (cxliv) as a spatio-temporal solvent, restoring him to the impersonal magian stance.

Architecture hardly figures in Cantos i and iii, where the historic present reigns supreme, though lived through widely separated Byronic avatars. Here the present in a sense *is* fire, consuming the past,¹ living from the death of the past; its projection in terms of dramatic agons both personal and historic, modes of the Byron/Harold 'gulf of phantasy and flare' into Roderick, Julian, Wellington, Napoleon, Rhineland barons.² In the non-fiery avatars of Cantos ii and iv the human figure sinks into the background, lost in airy and watery spectra, rainbows, waterfalls, mistbows, sunset and sunrise effects. Nature

¹ Plotinus,

² 'Historic present', for Byron, means the post-classical centuries: for the young lord of Newstead the Gothic centuries are contemporary. Even 'Saxon times, which we are wont to call Ancient' (iv, cxlv) fail to impress him.

takes over, as it were, from a humanity proved unworthy of her benisons, to 'humanize' a scene rapidly degenerating into the subhuman (*The Giaour*, 46-67). Nature and architecture blend in these Cantos in forms which spatialize the time-eternity dimension: domes, round towers, crumbling columns. Earth is dissolved in water, water rears itself into air. The inclusive ideogram of Canto II is inscribed nowhere:

Save where some solitary column mourns
 Above its prostrate brethren of the cave,
 Save where Tritonia's airy shrine adorns
 Colonna's cliff, and gleams along the wave;
 Save o'er some warrior's half-forgotten grave,
 Where the gray stones, and unmolested grass
 Ages, but not oblivion, feebly brave . . .

(II, lxxxvi)

But in Canto IV, more exultingly:

Arches on arches! as it were that Rome,
 Collecting the chief trophies of her line,
 Would build up all her triumphs in one dome,
 Her Coliseum stands . . .

(IV, cxxviii)

The magnificent opening stanzas of the Canto, celebrating Venice and too well known to quote, project this same architectural grid over the human condition in a vast panorama of towers, churches, palaces, prisons, dungeons, bridges, squares, canals, alleys. Wordsworth assesses man by his relation to the 'Nature' he did not make and from which he has emerged with a good deal of fuss and little joy. Byron assumes nothing, takes man as he is, deflates him, reinserts him in his historical context, sees him (increasingly, as the nineteenth century and his art develops) as a city dweller, a political animal dedicated to his own destruction. The palace-dungeon paradox asserted here dominates the dramas and *Don Juan*. Man, the prisoner of his own constructs, had already made the fatal option out of the natural into the mechanical context which has so affected our planet and which no praise of idiot boys and moralistic tinkers could reverse. Wordsworth's flight to the Lakes, Keats's bosky snoozings in the Vale of Health, Shelley's perfectionism, struck this clear-sighted son of Pope as pitiful irrelevancies in the total, frightening, apocalyptic picture.