It is strange.

No-one knows how to present a worldview; where to start, what to say, where to stop.

The Big Book of Worldviews is a collection of failures. In each section the writing slips away.

They say that when writing slips away it leaves the process stranded on the surface of the sentences like ghosts.

When I open the book I find bookmarks and food wrappers, grocery receipts and other bits of paper, elements of the transactional frames that oriented previous readings.

Sometimes I use them to block out words. Other times I arrange them across the floor into a path: I imagine my carpet a swamp and jump across it; one, two, three.

But I do not go anywhere.

There is nowhere to go.

I never lose myself in The Big Book of Worldviews. I’m always of aware of hanging in the air looking at worlds as if I am not in one. The longer I stay there the less I exist.

Nordicum-Mediterraneum. Icelandic E-Journal of Nordicum and Mediterranean Studies (CC BY 4.0) (DOI code, author's name and issue details are available on the journal's website)

There was a time we would find cars stopped in the road. Each was sealed up tight.

People gathered to look at the occupants suspended inside, their hair and clothing drifting about like seaweed.

I would say: The crisis poured through the radio and drowned them. Someone else would say: There is no crisis.

And we would go back to silent looking.

Sometimes there were one or two; others an entire neighborhood.

We never knew what happened.

After a while, we got used to it.

3

When people finally rose up, they swapped foreground and background. The security apparatus took control. They put the former leadership on trial. They defined enemies and disappeared them.

They appointed a nice man to represent them. The nice man came on television and told the people that he loved them.

The people wanted to believe him.

The people were wrung out.

The people wanted normal.
The revolution disappeared into archives, works of art that migrated to galleries and film festivals, reference points for popular songs and a fashion of being photographed in the same clothes and poses as before.
Everything is as it had been. No-one has what they wanted. Every overlap of realities is thrust and parry. Everyone watches everyone and waits for a mistake.

The Leader

The Leader sits in a chair. The Leader looks out a window.

That morning The Leader had been summoned to a meeting with the military high command. He was surprised to see them in dress uniforms.

One said: Those powers you granted yourself? We don't think so.
You can't talk to me like that. I am commander-in-chief.
Another: No you aren't.

Later, the speech he gives will be the same speech as every other: democracy; enemies; emergency.

The crowd will be an orchestration based on the latest demographic information. Camera men and technicians will have compared angles and breadth of field against the event design. The way the crowd fills the screen will say: You, the nation, are watching: they, the others, are on the streets.

While the lighting designers make their final adjustments The Leader will rehearse the

choreography of expansiveness and determination above an empty square.

A cue card will sit on the podium: Wait for the applause. Stand back. Let it sink in.

Another night, the Leader watched himself on television.

Maintaining balance requires the temporary suspension of the pretenses of democracy until we can fashion an adequate framework for their return.

We are caught in Amorphousness.

Events hurtle forward.

We cannot act. We cannot fail to act.

As he watched the footage, the Event Choreographer gave him notes.

Now the Leader sits in a chair. None of this was supposed to happen

The Leader’s mind drifts.

Every afternoon, he passed by where she lived and every afternoon she was there. They looked at each other through windows.

He wanted to stop and speak with her. But she made his mind go blank.

Rounding the corner he would imagine an alternate possibility.

I am here with nothing to say.

That would not be good: at least not at first.

He kept walking.

Geography

The nation watches TV. It says everything is grand but in ways that show something has changed.

Legitimacy is a machine that spins: its motion is easy to maintain but difficult to restart.

The Leader is indecisive in a shifting situation. The deep state does not care what the direction is, only that there is one. The military tries to remain invisible. But it is waiting.

The perimeters of power are complexes of metal barriers and riot police.

Beyond them, when the people inhale they become one: when they exhale they scatter again. The hive mind that links them is buzzing. What will happen if we do not lose?

It is hard to imagine beyond what exists so what exists becomes the horizon.

Once magical workers created revolution in factories and each top-down party claimed to understand that better than anyone else. But no-one believed them.

There is always something you cannot see and something you make up to replace it.

The Leader

The head of the Leader is between her legs when the news begins.

He hears his name and constitution then he hesitates: she pushes his head closer and sighs.

There is an announcement of a referendum her movements intensify clips edited from his speeches she lifts herself from the sofa.

He no longer controls his image.

O how he tries to not think about that.

She pulls his head up by the hair like John the Baptist.

Seriously? she says, pushing him back.

It’s important he says as she is standing up.

Wait for sports as she is walking away.

Much later, the Leader lay in bed watching Conestogas and other characters from dime store novels move through a series of Los Angeles canyons and justifications of genocide and thinks: Those people played the game correctly.

Referent

Then a team killed the referent. The war should be over. The corpse was moved in hurried secrecy to an air base and flown from there to the capital. The order originated somewhere as if bureaucracy itself was acting on its own.

When it arrives a group of high military officials enters the hum of the cooling system and neon buzz. They gather around a table in the center of the white cube and looked at the puffy bruised face poking out from the top of a strange green plastic bag.

The refrigerated interior feels like the end of an era.

Finally, one of the officials speaks. There was a time when the head of the enemy on the end of a pike would be paraded through the capital in triumph.

We have already had too much trouble due to breakdowns in packaging.

This will not play well on TV.

Gentlemen, we have reached a pass where achieving an objective is a mistake. A good objective must always race just ahead of us. This situation can only be seen as an operational failure. Our activities exceeded their ambit and have put us in an awkward position.

Later as a television story unfolds of surveillance technology and weapon systems, the strange green bag follows a ship’s anchor down and down through the depths of the ocean. The order had originated somewhere as if bureaucracy itself was acting on its own.

8

This was our paradox: no course of action could be determined by a rule because any course of action can be made out to accord with the rule. The answer was: if any action can be made out to accord with the rule, then it can also be made out to conflict with it. And so there would be neither accord nor conflict here.

It can be seen that there is a misunderstanding here from the mere fact that in the course of our argument we give one interpretation after another; as if each one contented us at least for moment until we thought of yet another standing behind it. What this shows is that there is a way of grasping a rule which is not an interpretation, but which is exhibited in what we call “obeying a rule” and “going against it” in actual cases.

Hence there is an inclination to say: every action according to the rule is an interpretation. But we ought to restrict the term “interpretation” to the substitution of one expression of the rule for another.

The Splice

Sometimes the film breaks and the actors and actresses find themselves in the projection booth or wandering the hallway by the popcorn machine.

I herd them back toward the booth and tell them that if they stay put, I can get them back to their plotlines.

I admit that I may look at an actress and think that I would be just as open to physical expressions of gratitude as the next guy…but they look so bewildered and vulnerable.

Even I have limits.

I make the splice and rethread the film. As the projector starts up again, I look away because getting absorbed in a loop is an intimacy not easily shared with a stranger.

Balloon

The television broadcasts game shows for their rules given in advance, commercials because you do not burn down the store if you do not like a dress, programs about the Leader for how it makes him sad to see his children unhappy and brief reports of clashes and casualties.

Beyond TV the streets go pop pop pop.

Paramilitaries move through neighborhoods.

Everywhere the teetering is palpable.

The Leader feels weightless as a balloon.

11

Do not look be fooled by shiny young things.

Do not be taken in by their promises.

They are dreamers.

They do not know.

The Leader loves you.

Drone Operator

When I put on the goggles I become a god who watches over people in distant places. I get to know them through their patterns. I feel close. I do not want them to disappoint. My vengeance is implacable when they do.

On the way home I stop at the supermarket. The cashier asks me how my day has been. I do not know what to say. This morning I killed some people. So I smile.

I am quite apart.

When I need to get away I drive up into the mountains to the series of names that mark the edge of the world. Every time I stop I see snipers. They wave at me. I wonder who they are and where they come from.

I dream in infra-red.

Infrared

In my dreams I sense my extension.

I am subject and object, predator and prey.

I am a meteor that shatters bodies and buildings.
I am the hell from war movies.

I am superimposed layers of time.

I am an infrared space of blood and spatter.

I am an anglerfish in an oscilloscope among maps of waveforms.

I am body parts that reassemble and dance.

I hear them howling into storms of noise.

I hang in the air and look at the world as if I am not in it.

The longer I stay the less I exist.

I see everything there is flickering infrared.

I see the incantations of time.

I see the capital flows and voices that bounce between the satellites.

I see the mass dream, the spaces in which it is open and where it is policed.

I see city streets and moving cars, geographies of fracture and pain.

I see the transient gardens that teargas makes as it drifts through the air.

I see the neighborhood I am from flickering infrared.

Drone Operator

I watch barometric pressures form into aerial equations.

I adjust the tin foil on the rabbit ears.

Through intermittent squalls I monitor the arrangements of share prices.

Everything is lining up.

The electricity cuts out so I go walking.

The ground beneath my feet is peeling skin.

I stop by Asbestos Mountain to watch the wind, filigreed & black.

The sound of every passing tanker is a swirl of devils.

I pull my scarf around my face.

When Christmas lights repeat my house I go inside.

I pour a shot of whiskey and turn on the TV.

There is nothing on except game shows and war.

Billboard

The Leader loves you from a billboard over a locomotive of cylinders, rods and diamonds with open metal spinning flower wheels that shudders a plane of smoke and indeterminacy through a network of electrical cables, cracking towers and tongues of fire. The Leader’s love is dense with tags. Here I am.

Geography

The Leader’s actions inadvertently revealed that power is held by the state: appointees control continuity; change is superficial.

That was not what the people wanted. It brought them onto the streets.

Now the perimeter of power is in the shifting battles among the barriers and tear gas.

The police break unauthorized cameras and observers.

The Nation watches official footage stream from their TVs.

Both People and Nation make themselves within circulations of images. Each image moves through a climate that aligns it with premises. The world is made from derived conclusions. The city intertwines them into accidental arrangements.

Everywhere is the sense that something is slipping away. Everywhere is an image that circulates through particular spaces. Everywhere is ineffable.

17

Everyday life is walked across a net. The ground on which the net was laid is dissolving. Everyone continues their routines. The net pulls around them. They struggle to get out but their thinking is circular. No-one has a plan.

Journal of Failed Institutions
English Abstracts

An analysis of the implosion of traditional (Marxian) revolutionary theory by the withdrawal of consent in the context of overlapping top-down repetition based media environments. A description of how this rendered largely invisible the crumbling Marxist Imaginary. How this enabled such indications as did surface to be contained in the language of loss of faith. The implosion, which had multiple centers and which was spread over a considerable duration, crystallized at certain moments as something that had already happened. There follows a brief consideration of the implications of a collapse of a sense of horizons that lay beyond the immediate. The question is posed of beginning again. The author has no sense of who he is talking to. The considerations are vague.

This critical piece outlines the problem of analytic writing in a situation of ideological paralysis. The position of the reader as one hanging outside the world affected by paralysis, reading sentences that assimilate it back into a meta-register that is not affected is discussed, along with the problem of how that register assimilates everything back into a version the same. The more vexing question of how to proceed in the face of the above is outlined. But awareness of the contradiction between that project and the stated problem of analysis progressively undermines the writing and grinds the paper to a halt.

A second piece by the same author takes up the problems of writing in a situation of ideological paralysis using less self-undermining premises. The earlier position regarding analysis is retained as a structuring assumption. The project then moves through a series of spaces shot through with interference. The results are indeterminate as to genre. The argument, if there is one, amounts to: this is a mapping of paralysis. But a map is subject to interpretation, and the work of interpretation recapitulates the problem of analysis. Perhaps the rejection of analysis is self-blinding. No good alternatives present themselves. The paper breaks off.

Geography

In the beginning claims they made were ethical. We will bring the greatest good. We will bring prosperity. We will make you safe. These claims cannot be falsified. They are a tone of voice that invites you to survey a landscape of wreckage and see it as other than it is.

Event Choreographer

Q. How do you see your role as event choreographer?

For a major political event, the multitude that fills the screen is a composition based on the

latest demographic information. The Nation sees itself watching. The Leader is a television Charlemagne.

In the control booth I conduct a symphony of video feeds and sound. My crew is most responsive. My movements, made continuous and unbroken, become the movement that links the many to the one to their destiny.

Of course, the importance of event design cannot be overstated: the set design and positioning of cameras, the hiring of the caterers and the small amounts of tranquilizers that we give spectators so they feel content during the expositions, don't fidget about or show impatience, while allowing them to still get excited at the appropriate moments.

So we are meticulous in our preparations. Then we improvise.

It's all about rhythmic continuity. We do not impose it. We couldn't if we wanted to. We find it. We bathe in it. The rhythm comes from the cycling of electricity and the pulses that move liquids through pipelines. These regularities are knit into the cadences of peoples' speech.

People—communities—nations—-are figures spread out in time. These figures are rooted shared rhythms.

We merely condense and heighten them.
We do not exercise power. Power exercised is power made fragile.

We organize the dance of consent.

Q. What do you think of the current unrest?

I do not watch events.

Q. Would you care to clarify?

We are not concerned with details. We do not provide messages. We leave that to the private sector.

We encourage the multiplicity of positions. We encourage debate. At times that debate spills into the streets. This does not perturb.

We do not want to dominate. Domination is inefficient. We simply maintain boundaries.

Rumor of Arbitrary Disappearances

He was moving among the exploding snakes of tear gas when they came.

He was pushed into the back of a car.

A rag was stuffed over his face.

When he awoke was blindfolded.

He could feel handcuffs and leg irons.

When they stood him up, they removed the blindfold.

Someone said: The decision taken here will be immediately carried out.

Now he has been walked to a gathering by a fire.

Standing on a beach watching shadows huddle around a table, he imagines himself feeling his way along the end of this dreamtime until he finds a seam and climbs through it to the space occupied by the story with respect to itself and becomes one with the narrator who sees without himself being seen.

He looks toward the edge of a black plastic sea.

A call will arrive: they will say “Keep an eye on him” and drive away in their cars. In the confusion he will use the key George Washington gave him to unlock the irons and slip away, running until he hits the edge of continuity like a bird hitting mirrored glass.

He stands flanked by two men with another behind him.

One of the people by the table turns and addresses him.

You have been chosen by lot.

It does not matter who you are.

He watches the mouth of the Other move.

He can no longer speak their language.

Tranquility courses through him.

Perhaps he has already escaped.

He cannot move his arms or legs.

He looks up into a night full of waver.

Geography

Everywhere you look you see Bartleby blocking traffic, Bartleby obstructing trade, Bartleby violating the prerogatives of private property, Bartleby inconveniencing with his I would prefer not to, Bartleby who does not want anything except to embarrass the regime.

The State of Emergency Show

The set design and reddish-brown lighting gives the theater the feel of a tavern scene from a Pieter Breughel painting.

The actors sit around a table, drinking and playing cards.
Soon an actor stands and moves to the foreground. He says:

The State of Emergency Show started long ago and there is no end in sight.

We have reached the end of one cycle. Here another begins.

As you can see, we sit around a table playing a game of cards. Who speaks and what they say is determined by the game.

We are a map of the world. We restate what everyone knows using an ontology particular to ourselves.

Security representations exclude security: we map security back in.

The military writes itself into the landscape: we erase the landscapes around them.

We are a state of exception: we are coterminous with everyday life.

Feel free to come and stay as long as you like. Or go do other things and return.

We will still be here.

If you feel inclined to come up on stage, we will deal you in.

That is how we grow and change.

There are rumors that we drink heavily throughout our performance.

I assure you those rumors are greatly overstated.

The actor smiles and holds up a tankard in a toast.

Welcome.

The actor sits at the table.

The card game continues.

Soon another stands, obviously drunk. The other wears a general’s hat. He says:

We are the nervous system of the nation-state.

Our activity is the container within which social being unfolds.

We are the present that monitors the present.

Because the enemy is probabilistic we hold up algorithmic mirrors.

We wait for the enemy to appear.
We are continuous war.

Elsewhere

Elsewhere is a low-rise facility in which the new invisible proletariat moves metal tubes through work stations, cutting them to spec and bending them a few degrees to the left. Elsewhere is a resort where she lay on a chaise lounge watching walls of water move like solids until the surface tensions fracture and the wave collapses into a clap, each followed by another message to decipher as you reach for your mojito and look the length of her legs, your lingering on an arrangement of moles accompanied by a clap of collapse and she turns to look at you from behind sunglasses that erase her eyes and replace them with holes.

Elsewhere is the containers that arrive for famine relief filled with left plastic stiletto heeled shoes and millions of razor blades because you know how easy it is to break a heel in a drought and a gentleman needs to shave.
Elsewhere is an arrangement of people wearing business suits who sit in lotus position along a low-tide line, eyes closed, jackets and ties adrift in the rising water, waiting for something to occur to them.

The Leader

Before The Leader was The Leader, he looked and looked for something until he forgot what that something might have been.

But he continued to search for this thing that he had forgotten and emptied himself out in the doing. He made himself a function. Now situations define him. He becomes what you want to see.

But I feel The Leader dissolving. Consent will not be orchestrated. There was a referendum and no-one voted. Such stubbornness and ingratitude after all I've done.

Geographer

We look for what is hidden in plain sight like those drone operators who find themselves in front of the infrared exoskeletons of the world they are from searching for the points where a bureaucratic reality intersects with the enemy's horizontal surfaces.

There are no secrets.

Consider the national security state. We know that it is sphere whose center is everywhere and circumference nowhere. We could map its extension, but the map would be endless. We could say what it costs, but the tally would be infinite. So there is no interest in knowing.

Concealment is needless expenditure.

The state allocates funds for our use, so we make the geography of institutions.

We gather data from e-book readers and cell phones to construct maps of the ways ideas move around.

At first we said: We know who reads what and where. We have abstracted figures and made them actionable. If X performs the movements that associate him or her with an idea dangerous to the state, X becomes a target.

But Ideological Forensics declared that an outmoded approach.

Now I maintain the database on my own: I chart the dances of activation and forgetting, sedimentation and variation and watch the world being made and remade there.

Square

The presidential palace is a network of barriers, a grove of antennae, a backdrop for broadcasts, a bristle of weapons systems, a knot of transmissions, a skein of referrals.

The presidential palace is simultaneous press conferences, gatherings of courtiers, images that were to be sent to mobile editing rooms replaced with the pre-packaged interactions provided by the helpful persons of the Press Office a real time saver, they say, we know how busy you are with all that breaking information and the doorways you must stand near in case the Important walks through.

The central square is jammed with people in the swelter and traffic and dust and the messages that transform it from one kind of space to another, from circulation to liberation, continuity to refusal by a reversal of polarities.

She is drawn to the swirling energies. A radiant moth she relays slogans. She moves discussion to discussion. She takes it all in. She works her way to the front lines of confrontation with the police. She looks around for informants. She thinks: Half of these people work for the FBI.

Detail View

Like all of us he finds himself in an environment of video feeds, tracking signals and monitored written communications all packaged as benign concern. It’s for your own good. You’ll never go missing.

He is shaped by economic conditions and adaptation toward the elimination of what is unnecessary. The restriction of his movements is accompanied by increasing pressure.

Late at night over a bottle of bourbon he plays a game of Russian roulette. When he loses, no electronic devices will signal: no-one will be notified; no search parties sent out. He will become details spattered about a room, invisible as the corporate persons who hide among the tax havens.

The Secret Lives of Generals

Accompanied by a wave of silence and another of flashbulbs, The Leader enters the press conference.

The prepared statement he reads is the same as every other: democracy; enemies; emergency.

The networks had preceded the event with grainy photographs by swimming pools and chains of compromising text messages.

The reporters want to know about the secret lives of generals.

The Leader talks about strides forward how we are all in this together.

But the secret lives of generals will not go away.

He adheres to the strategic line of not dignifying with a direct response

Inwardly, The Leader is pleased.

The press conference is being carried live.

What offended were not the indiscretions but their banality.

Risking everything should be beyond vanilla sex and protestations of undying love with interns who treat their situation like a Cotillion.

The Generals should be more something: more imaginative; more intelligent; more ruthless; more amoral.

That would justify the arrangements.

But The Generals did the same thing The Leader would have done.

It ran against his sense of hierarchy.

Advertisement

The Leader in a series of business suits steps down from a series of helicopters.

The Leader is a lifestyle.

He is in demand.

The Leader is the guest of honor at parties.

He is the center of attention.

The Leader makes friends and influences people.

He elicits the yes yes response.

The Leader reads Machiavelli on the weekend.

He drives a little red corvette.

The Leader is modest about his accomplishments.

He struggles with golf.

The Leader is different because he loves you.

The Leader loves you because he is you.

Tract

The Empire talks of freedom but relies on debt peonage to force open markets for agricultural overproduction. So freedom means freedom from necessity for shareholders in the corporations that benefit from this arrangement. The Empire is built on weapons sales. When a war breaks out involving those weapons, The Empire dispatches negotiators most attentive to detail and process to broker a slow end to hostilities. These negotiators act as if they know nothing of how the weapons systems used by the combatants came to be in that place.The Empire is a maze of bounded rationalities within which well-intentioned people carry out well-intentioned policies to the exclusion of feedback loops that would connect them to

outcomes. The Empire is spaces made of mirrors.The Empire devotes most of its resources to the elimination of The Enemy. The Enemy is the consequence of the Empire’s actions. The Enemy will never be eliminated. The Empire is a war on itself.

The Empire does not record its deterioration. It leaves that to the servants who archive things.

Interior Ministry Note:

This tract was found on the streets in front of the Presidential Palace.
We have it on reasonable authority that it was written by one of our people.

Outline of Fading Empire

In the waning days the old stories do not hold. In the waning days language becomes thin and ghostly. In the waning days none of this registers. In the waning days people cling to routines.

In the waning days, trapped inside obsolete maps that distinguish up from down and figure from ground people see the world as given in advance as what is slipping away.