

on PUPPETS and PLOT TWISTS

n.b. for the duration of this scene, I was on crutches. there was one person I saw in a wheelchair. everyone else i saw walked on two legs.

The really good puppets were upstairs. I was floating between two poles. On crutches. From here I'll call them sticks¹. I was suspended between the two sticks. Despite the exactness of my location, I felt a little lost. The resting state of a marionette is *marooned* - not *at rest*.

But I was in charge. I changed my arrangement by leaning one stick against the wall. Whopping freedom! use of another hand! The puppets were taking it easy in the center of the room, waiting to be animated.

They were stone-still. I had some range. These understudies for my legs (see first footnote)- I commanded them. I was plotting my moves in detail. Just as you would plan a puppet's moves, as you might use a string to precisely lift and slightly bend, as you might slice the puppet open and lay the halves on a paddle, and flap them. It all depends!

The dummies weren't discarded. Simply holding place. I fielded love from a couple friends.

I should say I didn't go far in that house, could but didn't, retained a spot of carpet, and conversation came to me. I received it like a lucky queen. There was a puppet show going on upstairs, said someone, a man and his mother performed together - had done a beautiful elaborate thing - I couldn't migrate up, couldn't float up like others, a casual, cool tagalong, on a wave; I was dangling a leg, a tripod of a biped. I decided to miss it. I could have gone and didn't. All three limbs would have had to go together, slowly, up the stairs. Words made my ears busy, bipeds peded up and down these stairs, two flights as I recall, or just surmised. Do I dramatize my stillness? Perhaps a bit.

No, I was taking my time. The plot ripened around me.

Several hours later, the crowd drifted back to the main zone where me and the dead-ones loitered.

I was squared up against a wall. Music selected. Time to play the puppets. Time to move their limbs around. Limb refer to limb. The trick to architecting a good puppet is a real understanding of proprioceptive coalition. The inclusion of a jaw will allow speech. Legs will give them a walk or run, to jump, defray, assail. Inclusion of extra joints expands the narrative possibilities, combinations multiply. You break its legs? The plot broadens.

They will follow you. Their action is your choice. Being dum dums. The room, sleepy and drunk, stirred. This will be the simplest form, I thought, of puppetry. Rudimentary. And I had only *heard* about upstairs! Something impressive upstairs. Meanwhile on floor one, the dance slowed to nothing, was awkward, was insane - wasn't insane, was *in the house of safe expression*, was awkward, pooh, not fun. Perhaps, I mused, we might want a richer sense of setting? Again, I could only imagine this puppet theater upstairs. They had gone the whole nine yards.

¹ I'll do this because this is how I regarded them. Not as tools, innovations, *another way*, but limitations that hemmed me in. It's possible that this is a wrong interpretation. Still -

on PUPPETS and PLOT TWISTS

There is a lot of art, I'm seeing it, I could be more specific², but let's not interrupt. What I'm saying is dummies and mannequins, puppets and stand-ins. Their limbs are *fashioned for action*, plot points writ by bald mechanics. Isn't it said somewhere? A clubfoot will only get you so far, if it is a footrace you are running.
Form compels action.

There is no moment in this or any story, that goes: "Oh, but when I tell you, how I healed and broke free, and dropt my walking sticks, and pointed myself, where was I going? but I insist I ran, loose and indeterminate."³ Or - no joke - there is, and it is ableist.

However, this emphasis on limbs, on things that spell out motion in such mechanics-of-semantics, seems so architect, so tight. Constrained. To flatten the spectrum of motion - I mean, the marionette's arm can only swing one way. I am struck by the thought, "*now is not the time for fiction.*" Or is it time, I mean really time, for fiction at its elaborat-est?

²A quick scan of contemporary art blogs reveals: Ola Vasiljeva, Veit Laurent Kurz, I Surrender, Dear at Salzburger Kunstverein, Louisa Gagliardi prints, paintings by Tschabalala Self, paintings by Julien Nguyen, Alex Ito's most recent exhibition... *Need I mention* the mannequin challenge?

To corral these artists to my point is reductive and dismissive. I'd rather not have done it. My point about puppets is foremost here, the images of these artists' works meant for a kind of contextual atmosphere.

³ There's one that *looks* like this, in the New Testament of the Christian Bible. But the story of miraculous cure is told from the point of view of Jesus, the miraculous, (a bit of a do-gooder idiot).