The Human Slouch Towards Narrative

Brendan Hughes

I went to theater school and you go to school with the brain you have. I think thatâ€™s what Donald Rumsfeld would have said. I went to theater school and I was gonna make a big difference I was going change the face of theater as we know it, nay entertainment, perhaps the third dimension; but no sooner do you arrive at theater school then you realize I will never have an original thought about theater, because they were all had already, in Russia, in the 1920s, by Vsevolod Meyerhold. Then the theme of the first year becomes I am fraud; and the theme of year two is, my classmates are frauds; and the theme of year three is, theater is fraud. Then you graduate and you think, I could have bought a boat. But instead you march hopefully out into the tundra of American nonprofit arts, which are a gold mine.

So my first day of directing class I show up very eager my Saturn hadnâ€™t returned yet, if you know what I mean, and we walk in all the lights are out, extremely dramatic, my professor sits at a desk kind of like this, sheâ€™s got a pen, she has a pad, a book, half moon glasses and classical music is playing and nothing happens for like five minutes and I was like this is fucking genius. She sits there and then all start to go into, kinda get lulled into a trance and Iâ€™m thinking to myself these people already know Iâ€™m a fraud I havenâ€™t even opened my mouth And then eventually she was like, â€˜What did you see?â€™, and then the lights come on, really like ahhhhhhhh!, because weâ€™re all terrified she says what do you see, my hand shoots up very eager, going to change the third dimension, you were a substitute teacher and were trying figure out the subject for tomorrow and you donâ€™t know it very well and she was like, â€˜What did you see?â€™ Another hand shoots up, perhaps mine. Youâ€™re a doctor and found a disease thatâ€™s going to wipe out a continent's worth of people and she was like, â€˜What did you see?â€™, a had played right into her hands, I had succumbed to the human slouch towards narrative. I had taken all the visual information and told myself a story to make sense of the whole thing.

Then once I learned this I became obsessed with narrative and itâ€™s everywhere itâ€™s like carbon, itâ€™s in every The human slouch toward narrative has five layers and they surround us all the time and they are the lens thru which we see the world. Letâ€™s go on a tour, shall we? The innermost ring inside of everything is the story you tell yourself about about you; this is your mirror face, I choose to smolder. Birds do not suffer from this. Birds see themselves in the mirror and theyâ€™re like I fucking hate that guy; many have met their demise were theyâ€™re like Iâ€™m not turning this time you son of a bitch *kplllow*. But how wonderful that they have that lack of self awareness, there just must be such a joy to not be surrounded by the five layers of narrative.

The next layer is the story you tell the world about you; this is how you choose to dress; how you choose to drive; and your photo face. I have a friend whoâ€™s a Canadian actor, he took me aside when we were at a wedding and with all these picture being taken he like, â€˜Dude, roll the orange.â€™, pretend thereâ€™s an orange under your n and it gets rid of the waddle; perfect for men in their 30s who like nachos. So thatâ€™s it, that's the story you tell the world about you; look world Iâ€™m the type of guy who loves to eat the tops off of muffins, thatâ€™s who I am, thatâ how I do things.

Then there is the story the world tells you about you; this is profoundly insidious; all billboards; all movies you see; and all television shows. In 2004 there was a social scientist who put together a study where he had every single broadcast bit of television in 2004 and watched the whole thing and did a study on like what the

overarching message was, and the overarching message was you are the center of the universe and youâ€™re gonna need equipment, like toothpaste.

Then thereâ€™s the story the world tells itself about you; this is gossip; and your credit score. And then thereâ€™s a story you tell the world about the world; this is the art you make; your carbon footprint; and good deeds you do that no one ever finds out about. And so I had to graph it out - this is the human slouch toward narrative and it took me two days in Adobe InDesign to get the goddamn text to go in circles. *applause* Thank you, and itâ€™s still not perfect, I can only see where I fucked it upâ€¦

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