Dirty Word Substitution

By Edmond Chibeau

Rationale

The purpose of substituting creative expressions for dirty words is not a misplaced sense of modesty, but to develop the creativity of writers.

Most of the words for body parts or bodily activities that we use in everyday life are substitutes for “very,” “good” or “bad.” When we use those words, we are falling back on clichéd expressions. It is a test of our ability as writers when we task ourselves to find expressions that force us to be creative.

Some writers have used course language in a creative and/or poetic way. George Carlin, Jenni Fagan, Allen Ginsberg, Anais Nin, Henry Miller, David Mamet, James Joyce, and Geoffrey Chaucer are among them.

They and others have also discussed the same body parts or activities but used humorous or sophisticated phrases to enhance the suggestion of impropriety.

In our struggle to write well, and it is indeed a struggle, we should not let profanity of language be a substitute for profundity of feeling.
The Exercise

Create a Dirty Word Substitution Script - Euphemisms replace vulgar expressions. Written for the stage. (NOT film, TV, animation, radio)

10 pages minimum (You may need more) (Eliminate or elaborate the requirements as needed.)

One of the characters must use lots of euphemisms that s/he substitutes for obscene words.

Examples:

- “Gul durn it,” I am angry.
- Don’t give me that “shinola.”
- That is a load of “bull-hockey.”
- “Shut the front door,” you must be kidding.

Be creative in making up euphemisms for the dirty words (Look up the word “euphemism”)

Nobody in the piece uses dirty words.

Party:
It takes place while the characters are getting ready for a birthday party.

- Whose birthday?
- Is the person for whom the party is being held even in the room?
- Where is the party taking place?
- What are the relationships among the people?
Action = Plot:

2 people are talking (getting ready for the party?) A 3rd person enters
Something illegal happens that changes things Maybe a 4th person enters.
There must be at least 3 or 4 people, but not more than 4.
By the time the play is over one person must no longer be there.

- Why is that person no longer there? (died) (got angry and left) (taken to outer space in a ship) (went out to get more food)

Unities: Must follow Aristotle’s three unities: Time, Place, Action
Time: During continuous time
Place: Must take place in one location
Action: Have one strong storyline

Edmond Chibeau is a performance writer and poet. He writes for Screen, stage, art galleries, Museums, and alternative art spaces.
In the 1980s, he was associated with The Rivington Street School as well as several Fluxus artists. He was an editor at EAR Magazine. He served his teenage apprenticeship in the Off Off Broadway movement at LaMama, Café Cino, and Joe Papp’s Shakespeare in the park. He received a video fellowship from the New York State Council of the Arts.
In 2014, he received a grant from the Connecticut Humanities Council to write a stage play about Connecticut’s participation in WWI. His work has been performed at Lincoln Center, The Knitting Factory, NoSeNo, and The Ear Inn, as well as in various clubs and other performance venues throughout New York City.
He has also been published in Gallery Works, Red Weather, The Nation and The World, in addition to hosting Overnight TV from Midnight to 3 A.M. on the Time Inc. cable system in Manhattan. He has worked with John Cage, Alison Knowles, Allen Ginsberg, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Kenneth Rexroth and Charles Bernstein among others.
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