

Ordeal for One: The Art of Telling the Truth

You are to imagine an event from your past which didn't really happen. In other words, relate some piece of your history which is plausible given your life and situation...but not actually true; you will relate it to the audience as if it is true. Don't go over three minutes.

Your task is to describe the experience so that the audience can get as close to the reality as possible. Stick with description; try to avoid planning an emotional display. Emotion is cheap; every streetcorner hustler is able to tell a tearful tale. Immerse yourself in the act of description and see what emotions arise. Don't force anything. Surprise yourself and the audience.

When you describe, you are encouraged to explore all of the existential categories: time, space, body, objects, and intersubjectivity. Attend to each of them as you create your monologue and your storytelling power will develop and take you in some unexpected directions. Three of the categories have familiar names—time, space, body—and mean what you think they mean. “Objects” seems familiar but can be tricky—even thoughts can be objects or contain objects. Intersubjectivity means your experience with others—recognition, communication, relations, rivalry, love, etc.

Be aware that your performance of the monologue will also exist within these same categories. The way these two sets of fundamental categories intersect and diverge within the story and through the way the act of telling unfolds is the stuff of art. Go forth and create.