

STACY MAKISHI

Italics

The text I wrote for Writing Space was to be performed as a personal ritual. It was a response to the many conversations, experiences and ideas shared throughout the week.

Two days before Writing Space, my grandmother passed away. It wasn't until much later that I realized that the grieving space is much like my writing space. Grief has a way of making you look for signs. It makes you want to find a way to close the gap between where you are and where they are.

For me, writing is also prompted by a desire to close the gap.

When I am in my writing space, I am actively listening and searching. I look for messages everywhere: from a bumblebee crossing a path to a white feather caught in a woman's braided hair.

During Writing Space, the writers had a lot to say. Their words had a different kind of weight. They seemed to talk in *italics*. My ritual was written in *italics*.

Notice how when you are filled with love, your head tilts to one side?

There were many messages to collect. The words and images were dripping like sap from a maple. I stood there with a bucket, trying hard not to miss a drop. Don't get me wrong, it wasn't answers that were pouring out, but questions. rather.

When your head drops into your heart to ask a question, it answers in italics.

The questions were framed in pop culture, foreign films, Fluxus and swans. But no matter what the questions were or what form they took, they all brought me

back to this one thought: writing is like grieving; it hurts . . . and the more the beauty and love that come into your life, the more the heartbreak.

The ritual that I wrote was not something to experience over and over again, like a play.

It was a *satori* experience, a gate to pass through once, in order to arrive in another place.

ITALICS

(She sets up the ritual.

Cutting board, knife, can of shaving cream, bandages.)

Last month I was invited to a writing group in Winchester.

My contribution was to propose a ritual. I made everyone create a ritual for someone, but I didn't have one for myself. I offer you a ritual of remembering and forsaking.

(Bandages over eyes.)

During the weekend, we talked about writing, narratives and how the purpose of art is to deepen the mystery.

She said 'I need a narrative that's already been told.

I said, 'If I know the story, the story is already dead'.

She said, 'I want to do a performance about shaving my legs; can you clear it with health and safety?'

She said, 'Don't get me wrong, I'm really a swan. A swan with its legs in the air and head below water'.

(Rolling up trouser legs)

The last show I wrote, I incorporated nylon stockings just to conceal my legs. I didn't want to show you this rash on my legs. It's called psoriasis, and it's incurable. It's an autoimmune disease which means I'm the source of my own illness. That means I'm always fighting against myself.

How do I talk about the weekend and everything we experienced without betraying it? I'm afraid I can't even begin.

He began by offering conversation about Geri Halliwell. Fail to prepare and prepare to fail. And I thought here is a friend. A friend I haven't even met before. And I experienced the feeling of *Satori*: that is, I will never be the same.

And her friendship was so important.

And his opinion of me mattered so much.

And she . . . if she likes me then I like me.

Don't blow it. Don't show them who you really are. For once, just keep your mouth shut.

He offered *Winter Light* by Ingmar Bergman. There's a pastor whose faith has gone cold. There's a woman who is in love with the pastor. She suffers

from a disfiguring rash on her hands. In one scene she takes off her bandages to show him her affliction. He does not love her back.

The hunchback asked the pastor about Christ's sufferings. He thought that the worst part of Jesus' suffering was when he cried, 'My God why hast thou forsaken me?' And I thought, but wasn't Jesus God? And did God find Jesus's humanity so repellent that he had to turn his back to him?

(Push the cream out with the knife.)

The seventeenth-century surgeon Wilhelm Hilden had an interesting theory about healing. He developed a medicinal salve that he applied not to the wound itself but rather to the weapon that inflicted it.

Did you know that the word for hell and the word for death in the Bible has the same Greek origin? The word is 'separation'.

(Scrape the shaving cream on the blade of the knife and put cream on legs.)

The first time I shaved my legs I was shocked by how suddenly I could feel everything. Everything that touched me felt like I was touched for the first time. There was no separation between me and my experiences.

(Put hands together in binding. And place the knife in hands and then flip hands.)

This ritual is for you to retrieve a part of you that you have forsaken. For you to remember to promise that you will never forsake yourself for your humanness. Or for all the times you wanted to express something or offer something but felt that you had fallen short somehow.

At dinner that night, I remember, they liked me. I was making friends with people that I felt I've always known but have only just met. And then I did that thing that I always do. I became my own worst enemy, my own disease. It happens just when I think they accept me . . . I begin to show them how flawed and human I am. I showed him my hands. I wouldn't stop until I saw his eyes look at me differently. And then I said to him, 'Don't look at me like that'. He said, 'What? I'm not looking at you'.

And I said, 'Come back'.

Why do I do it? Why do I say what I don't want people to know . . . And then I said . . .

(The knife goes into my mouth . . .)

(I shave my legs.)

End.



Stacy Makishi in Italics.
Photo: William Richardson.