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Tags: [intimacy](#), [water](#)

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1.

When young I was told to keep my options open, to learn, be free and spend my time making the possibilities I would be drawing on for the rest of my life. However, there comes a time when only pursuing the making (and not the taking) of options leads to a stagnation of desire, a stagnation of ability to focus or to commit to any major interest or passion in life.

Often I choose yes when yes is finite. Sometimes I don't. It's harder to choose yes if yes is ongoing, where yes cannot be turned later into fantasy or passing fad. Where yes won't leave you with the inevitable bittersweet goodbyes in doorways or train stations. Where smiling and tears aren't expected to mingle on the journey.

I'm an intensely curious person. This doesn't mean that people are particularly curious about me—in fact they are not. It means when I do something some may view as extreme it is often due to my curiosity about where the experience will take me and the ramifications of similar experiences for humanity more generally. Is being washed with soap made from the body of another human being aberrant behaviour? I guess it all depends...

2.

I was beyond exhausted, exhilarated and a little drunk by then. As they walked off I wondered why they didn't come back and see whether I was coming with them. I decided then that this was an experience I didn't want to miss. There was something about it, about the set-up, about these people, that made running after them irresistible. Being a bit drunk also helped. When I caught up with them I asked why they hadn't waited. They said that it was difficult to tell what people want. People say all sorts of things.

I said I was doing it to make up numbers—so that there would be as many Australians as there were people in Zagreb. It was this strange faux nationalistic agenda which I was able to explain away later. While not the real reason (just my own ironic play with notions of togetherness, separation and competition), it allowed me to answer the question without getting too personal. I was going through several thousand things right then.

I wanted to do it. I wanted to experience it. I wanted to go past the point from where there is no going back. I had chosen. This was a very finite yes. There would be no going back, no need for continuation after the event and the ramifications would be entirely personal and contained. I have wondered if this makes me someone who would choose to do other more extreme and

perhaps horrible things. I have wondered whether I'm obsessed with decision-making, my own curiosity or new experiences. I have wondered whether all this means nothing at all.

We'd gotten to, then through the door of the hotel room. They told me to go into the bathroom, take my clothes off and wash myself. They said they'd knock on the door before they came in.

I went into the bathroom and took all my clothes off. I turned on the shower and got in. I washed myself (without soap as there was none in the holder) and let my thoughts run. I felt perhaps a little nervous. I felt that now the whole thing was inevitable and that I had left decision-making way behind. I felt anticipation. I felt the warm water running over me, comforting me.

I stood in the shower, under the water, facing away from the shower wall and toward the door letting the water run down my back. The curtain had been pulled away, or perhaps removed entirely. They knocked on the door—entered and left the door open. Did I smile? I can't remember. The two women washed their hands at the sink with normal soap then showed me the human soap—a new one—and started lathering it. They washed my breasts, belly, and legs. I was still, knees unlocked, looking slightly upwards above where the horizon would be, but not at anything in particular.

I felt radiant in a way. Was it the alcohol? Would I have even been there if it wasn't for the alcohol? It doesn't matter. I was there.

There was a reverence between we three women—a communion between human beings. Similarity and difference ceased to exist.

3.

What happened to me that night was probably the most human experience I've had in my entire life, though in essence and residue it remains indescribable. The more I write the more I know that all this is both truth and lies, yet I know that that's not really the point.

Sometimes the greater human truth is made through the retelling, through the fictionalisation of a moment, through a lie, through the decision not to tell some parts, or the rest of something. Do you stop at the point of pain or exhilaration, or do you explain your way out? Do you explain how years later...

*Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Michelle Outram.*