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Water, skin and touch: migrant bathing assemblages

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Abstract

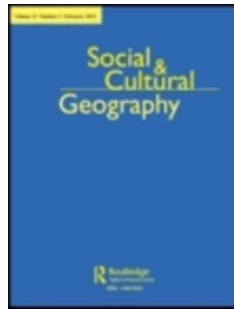
This paper offers a contribution to cultures of urban water research through household ethnographies conducted with 16 participants who migrated from Burma to Sydney, Australia. We draw on a strand of corporeal feminism and offer the concept of bathing assemblages to interpret how watery skin encounters provide clues to how participants washed themselves in their 'home' country may persist, transform or stop. Our analysis maps how dimensions of the self (ethical, gender, class, ethnic, national faith and others) are constituted by, and generative of, the felt intensities of watery encounters through different bathing assemblages. This paper illustrates how bathing practices are shaped as much by emotional and affective intensities as by reasoned activity. We show the utility of corporeal feminism not only for theorising subjectivity, but also for household sustainability politics.

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Water, skin and touch: migrant bathing assemblagesGordon Waittⁱ and Louisa Welland*School of Geography and Sustainable Communities, University of Wollongong, New South Wales, 2522, Australia*

This paper offers a contribution to cultures of urban water research through household ethnographies conducted with 16 participants who migrated from Burma to Sydney, Australia. Inspired by a strand of corporeal feminism that offers a notion of subjectivity engendered relationally through skin encounters, we offer the concept of bathing assemblages to interpret why how migrants washed themselves in their 'home' country may persist, transform or stop. Our analysis maps how dimensions of the self (ethical, gender, class, ethnic, national faith and others) are constituted by, and generative of, the felt intensities of watery encounters through different bathing assemblages. This paper illustrates how bathing practices are shaped as much by emotional and affective intensities as by reasoned activity. We show the utility of corporeal feminism not only for theorising subjectivity but also for household sustainability politics.

Keywords: feminism, corporeal, post-humanism, ethnography, Burmese, Sydney, Australia

Introduction

Questions around bathing as part of everyday urban lives in the Global North are increasingly a concern for critical sociologists, geographers and historians (Allon and Sofoulis 2006; Lawrence and McManus 2008; Sofoulis 2005; Davison 2008; Shove 2003; Kuijer et al 2013; Browne et al 2014). These questions correspond with evidence troubling the capacity of current metropolitan water catchments and reservoirs to ensure future resource security (Pullinger et al 2013). Scientific consensus is that current water consumption is not sustainable (Troy et al 2005; Sanford 2015). As metropolitan populations continue to grow, so will the intensity of environmental, economic and social problems. Against this backdrop, as strongly advocated in the cultures of urban water literature, a business-as-usual approach cannot continue.

The cultures of urban water literature prioritises conducting ethnographic work to better understand routine doings, rather than conducting qualitative or quantitative surveys that measure behaviour, attitudes and knowledge. The expanding cultures of urban water terrain are woven out of diverse theoretical and methodological threads. A short list includes Shove's (2003) reading of Andreas Reckwitz and Theodore Schatzki; Head and Muir's (2006) reading of Bruno Latour, Erik Swyngedouw and Sarah Whatmore; Day et al's (2016) reading of Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum; Pink et al's (2013) reading of Tim Ingold and Doreen Massey and Strengers et al's (2015) reading of the concept of 'muscle memory' in the biophysical sciences, amongst others. As Strengers et al (2015) argue, one potential for this work lies in new ways of thinking about sustainable futures when the site of intervention is shifted from individuals to socially shared practices.

In this burgeoning field, we draw on recent feminist thinking on skin encounters that is in dialogue with Deleuze and Guattari (1987) to offer an alternative thread. We follow the work of feminist philosophers Braidotti (2002) and Probyn (2000) to think about how the

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2
3 social categories that define us are made, remade and unmade relationally through the felt
4 intensities of watery bathing encounters conceived as assemblages. If we think of washing
5 skin in more affective terms, then the embodied histories of what water we allow to touch our
6 skin, or not, literally and metaphorically 'gets under the skin' to make possible, or close off,
7 modes of bathing. Beyond thinking of skin as a demarcation surface of inside and outside the
8 biological body, bathing assemblages are one way to think about the material and discursive
9 in theorising of self and world. Our central argument is that to conceive of bathing as an
10 assemblage it asks what are the social and material entities that constitute subjectivities. What
11 then becomes important are how we may seek out specific arrangements of watery
12 encounters to help human capacity for self-realisation; the ways in which affective intensities
13 move and circulate; and, how intensities register on bodies as a feeling. The presences of a
14 bath, shower or bucket points to the social norms that constitute watery encounters as a mode
15 of cleansing the body. Furthermore, the affective intensities of a splash of cold water droplets
16 on the skin can assign identify values by bringing up a reminder of a religious ideology, a
17 biographical moment, a painful or joyful collective past. Bathing assemblages are at work
18 when and where a person can detect who and what belongs, thereby making felt their
19 subjectivities. We offer the bathing assemblage to deepen our understandings of why certain
20 practices move, persist, transform or cease.

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43 The aim of this paper is to better appreciate bathing and subjectivities as a shifting,
44 dynamic relational arrangements through affective intensities that traverse situated watery
45 skin encounters. We do so by focusing on an ethnically diverse group of 16 first generation
46 migrants from Burmaⁱⁱ who consented to participate in domestic water ethnographies in
47 metropolitan Sydney, Australia. We are interested in the concept of assemblage to think how
48 our skin alongside ideas and things play a role in interpreting why these migrants' less
49 resource intensive practices of bucket bathing persist or diminish in Sydney, Australia. This
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3 meant asking participants to reflect upon their personal bathing biographies, and to show us
4
5 their current ways of washing skin. Following the lead of Ahmed and Stacey (2001),
6
7 thinking through skin enables feminist scholars to avoid privileging 'the body'. We
8
9 contribute to a burgeoning geographical literature that conceives skin as a fruitful mode of
10
11 inquiry into the relationship between spaces and subjectivities (Price 2012). We argue that, in
12
13 respect to environmental politics of urban water, the focus the affective intensities of watery
14
15 skin encounters provide us with an invitation to think about the decisions that build our lives
16
17 around specific modes of cleansing our skin. Our argument is divided into three sections.
18
19 First, we outline our conceptual framework. We ask the question: how does thinking through
20
21 watery skin encounters as bathing assemblages advance scholarship in relation to urban
22
23 water? Second, we offer an outline of how our methodology enabled us to focus on the pre-
24
25 and post-migration intimacies of washing skin *in situ*. Next, our analysis focuses on the
26
27 affective intensities of fleshy moments of bathing encounters that help constitute
28
29 subjectivities that work towards stopping, transforming or persisting with washing with a
30
31 scoop and bucket. It seems that the affective intensities of how the bucket bathing assemblage
32
33 brings together water, skin and social norms, participants come to know themselves as
34
35 Burmese and Buddhist. The bucket bathing assemblage becomes taken for granted amongst
36
37 those seeking to recreate a sense of themselves as Burmese in their adopted home country.
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39 We conclude by discussing potential avenues of how the affective intensities of watery skin
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41 encounters may offer new ways of imagining household sustainability policies.
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50 **Thinking through the skin**

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52 To think *through* the body is fashionable among many feminist philosophers (Gallop 1988;
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54 Butler 1993; Grosz 1994, Braidotti 2002). Although these feminist philosophers have
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3 different views, it was a call to feminism to recognise how bodies take form, rather than if
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5 bodies are already pre-existing (as nature).
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8 Corporeal feminism acknowledges 'the body' not as a static 'thing-like' entity, but as
9
10 both fluid and multiple, made up of many bodies, movements and connections. No longer is
11
12 the figure of the body conceived as a container of social difference, but instead difference
13
14 emerges relationally through the connections and disconnections between social and material
15
16 entities. In making this shift, corporeal feminism recognises not only the politics of the
17
18 human that informs and produces knowledge, but also how bodies register forces of the
19
20 nonhuman as intensities of feeling and are understood as central to the constitution of social
21
22 life. Corporeal feminism provides critical geographers with a means to attend to the
23
24 relationality of social spatial life thinking through the body (see Slocum 2008, Colls and
25
26 Fannin 2013, Waitt and Stanes 2015).
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28

29
30 So, what of skin? How do we know skin? Skin can be understood in many ways (see
31
32 Cataldi 1993; Cheng 2011, Connor 2004, Segal 2009). Here we pay attention to literature
33
34 within feminist theory that thinks through skin to complicate universalism and pays attention
35
36 to how 'skins' come to be marked by difference (scars, tattoos, make-up) as well as a marker
37
38 of difference (ethnicity, gender and class). One strand understands how 'skins' are lived and
39
40 produced through how uneven geometries of discursive power hold bodies in place, or not.
41
42 For example, Ahmed (1998) offers an account of racial confrontation in suburban Adelaide to
43
44 illustrate only those figured as white had legitimacy to walk these streets. Johnston (2005)
45
46 reads the leisure practice of tanning skin on beaches in Aotearoa/New Zealand as the
47
48 enactment of gendered, sexed and racialized difference in relations to whiteness and
49
50 heteropatriarchy. Whereas Straughan (2010a) uses interviews with managers and employees
51
52 in beauty salons, alongside Foucault's concept of the clinic, to investigate the production of
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3 the skin surface as a problematic site through medical and health discourses of the clinical
4
5 gaze.
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8 Another strand attends to work that draws on Didier Anzieu's that offers a
9
10 psychoanalytic approach to thinking through 'skin as ego'. As Walkerdine (2010, 95) and
11
12 Pile (2009; 2001) argue 'skin ego' is an inherently spatial concept, given how sensations
13
14 connected to the skin are conceived to provide "an affective sense of our boundaries",
15
16 including a sense-of-self. For example, Adams-Hutcheson (2016) draws on Anzieu's (1990)
17
18 work to rethink how trauma experienced through the body during the 2014 Christchurch
19
20 earthquakes becomes embedded into and breaks the ontological security sustained by the
21
22 spatialising skin.
23

24
25 Skin encounter is another important way in which feminist and other critical scholars
26
27 are rethinking lived embodiment. The notion of skin encounter allows us to think about
28
29 tactile sensations. Skin is no longer reducible to a container, surface, organ or racialized
30
31 border. Nor is the skin simply a textual surface that can be read for health or race. Instead, the
32
33 skin is tactile. Thinking through skin encounters brings to the fore haptic knowledge practices
34
35 (Paterson 2009; Dixon and Straughan 2010). For example, Hetherington (2003, 1399) draws
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37 on Josipovici's (1996) notion of 'praesentia', as a way of thinking about the way place is
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39 made through skin encounters of fingertips 'where the distinction between the experiencing
40
41 subject and experienced object dissolves'. Hence, to focus on haptic knowledges, is not to
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43 work within the binary of bodily inside/outside or to privilege textural qualities over other
44
45 sensual experience. For instance, Paterson (2009) uses the term 'somatic sensations' to argue
46
47 that tactile skin encounters are not reducible to 'touch' alone, but combine with the way in
48
49 which touch proceeds alongside other sensations through the body, felt as sensations of
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51 movements, balance, pain, temperature and muscular tension. For example, Sheller (2007),
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53 and Waitt and Harada (2016) explore the haptic and kinaesthetic geographies of becoming a
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3 car driver; while Spinney (2006) investigates those of becoming a bike-rider and Straughan
4
5 (2010b) those of becoming a scuba-diver.
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7
8 Recent Deleuze-inspired work under more-than-representational theory and corporeal
9
10 feminism turns to questions of touch as way of thinking about the relations between
11
12 discourses and material practices (see Paterson [2007] for a discussion of therapeutic touch).
13
14 This work builds off Merleau-Ponty (1968) and his notion of 'intercorporeality' that
15
16 considers the reversibility of touch. For Merleau-Ponty touch involves a multiplicity of sense
17
18 perceptions. Thus, the experience of embodiment is never a private affair but always made up
19
20 of multiple interactions with other bodies, both human and non-human that troubled the
21
22 Cartesian mind/body dualism. While more-than representational theory is framed around a
23
24 concern for 'embodiment', 'sensuousness' and the 'precognitive', as Hetherington argues
25
26 (2003,1937) touch offers us 'a way of knowing the world that is both inside and outside
27
28 knowledge as a set of representational practices'. For example, drawing on Thrift's more-
29
30 than-representational theory, Waitt and Cook (2007) illustrate that touch is never reducible to,
31
32 or outside of language. With a focus on moments of encounter, rather than representation,
33
34 they illustrate how the subject of ecotourism emerges from knowledge of how and where to
35
36 touch alongside the performative and generative knowledge of bodily touch. Likewise,
37
38 Obrador-Pons (2007) employs Thrift's (2004, 64) more-than-representational notion of affect
39
40 as 'a sense of push in the world', to provide 'a language to approach the unspeakable and
41
42 invisible sphere of life on which the practice of nudism draws'(Obrador-Pons 2007, 130).
43
44 While, Obrador-Pons (2007) encourages us to think about how subjectivities emerge through
45
46 encounters between skin, sand and sunlight, as noted by Johnston (2012) he overlooks the
47
48 racialized, gendered and sexualised politics of touch.
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54 A key strand of feminist geographical research on touch pivots around a critique of
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56 social difference as solely 'cultural'; that is, in terms of how discursive constructions,
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1
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3 performance, language and representation intermingle. For instance, recent feminist
4
5 geographical work on touch draws on Grosz (1994, 2005) to emphasise how gender, race and
6
7 ethnicity emerge through encounters as an embodied phenomenon. For example, working
8
9 through the material feminism of Grosz, Slocum's (2008) analysis of a Minneapolis farmers'
10
11 market illustrates how race is in part, made and remade, through both material (things,
12
13 objects) and expressive forces (ideas, affect, emotion, desire) that propel bodies to touch
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15 certain produce and not others. Likewise, Grosz's work is fruitful for Johnston (2012) to
16
17 investigate how gendered and sexed differences emerge through how bodies are always open
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19 to touching and being touched. Her work with drag queens illustrates how the visceral
20
21 experiences from the tactile encounters of touching, and being touched allow for the
22
23 resilience and rupturing of bodily and spatial boundaries associated with existing gendered
24
25 and sexed social classifications. Echoing the affective character of such skin encounters and
26
27 building on corporeal feminism that engages with matter and embodied subjects as engaged
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29 together in on-going process of transformation while embedded within social norms, we next
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31 outline our conceptual framework.
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36 We offer the concept of bathing assemblages to advance a conceptualisation of
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38 subjectivity understood as produced through watery skin encounters is an engagement with
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40 material and social worlds in which neither the space nor the subject are ontologically prior.
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42 We build on Braidotti's (2002) presented in *Metamorphoses* and those of Probyn's (2000)
43
44 ideas outlined in *Carnal Appetites*. After Braidotti (2002, 62) we conceive of subjectivity as
45
46 'embodied, embedded, assembled of agentic sub-materials within; and through encounters
47
48 with the material and more-than-human world'. Building on this point, we posit that washing
49
50 skin is an on-going process of identity-making. We conceive of how washing skin may
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52 transform, stop or continue, by how subjectivities emerge in part through powerfully effective
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54 encounters with ideas of purification or cleansing on the one hand, and with the material
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3 world on the other. The affective aspects of simultaneously touching, and being touched by
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5 water is conceived as an intensity: what happens to us when we sense the touch of water.
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7 Affect is not the meaning of washing with water, but the response it prompts. The sensations
8
9 from a splash of cold water on the skin may evoke fond memories, or to recoil in discomfort.
10
11 Before water can act as a signifier with meaning, such as ablution, cleanliness or health, there
12
13 must be an investment in the forms of intensive difference. Hence, rather than the practice of
14
15 bathing being understood as solely grounded in meaning, washing skin becomes an affective
16
17 force. After Deleuze and Guattari (1987), we consume in culture not the meanings invested in
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19 water, but rather the investment in intensities that may be felt as relaxation, invigoration,
20
21 freshness or cleanliness. Before water is signified with meaning, desire works to connect skin
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23 with water within a specific arrangement or working order. The skin is conceived here as a
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25 material and expressive force that assembles bodies again and again, opening-up new
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27 avenues or recalling with force existing categories of class, gender and nation.
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33 In focussing on the embodied, relational and affective dimensions of subjectivities we
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35 draw on the concept of assemblage. Building on the work of Probyn (2000) we conceive of
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37 assemblage as a relation, an ordering that work to achieve a set of expectations. To conceive
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39 of bathing as an assemblage means thinking how material things (or parts of things) and
40
41 expressive elements (discourse, affect, emotions) come together in a working order with one
42
43 another to achieve relaxation, purification or cleanliness. At its most basic, assemblage
44
45 thinking asks us to pay attention to the subjectivities that emerge through material, discursive,
46
47 emotional and affective dimensions of watery skin encounters of bathing. Here, we draw on
48
49 the idea of assemblage as a means of attending to how: 'bits of past and present practice,
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51 openings, attachments to parts of the social, closings and aversion to other parts' (Probyn
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53 2000, 18). After Probyn (2000), we are interested in the ways that we can detect an
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3 assemblage is at work when sorting processes are brought to the fore. In turn, these processes
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5 can provide insights to what and who belongs or not.
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8 Hence, informed by material feminist philosophy, we recognise that when people
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10 arrive in a new country, how they come to understand themselves is conceived as embodied,
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12 assembled of affective intensities, and through encounters with the material and social
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14 worlds. One way migrants come to know themselves is produced through the affective
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16 intensities that traverse the more-than-human bathing assemblages. Opportunities arise for
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18 migrant subjectivities to be made, remade and unmade through the felt intensities of the
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20 coming together of the material, cultural and social dimensions of bathing practices.
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23 24 **The study**

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26 Our paper is based on a larger place-based project investigating the environmental knowledge
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28 of ethnic minorities. We follow the lead of Maller (2011) and Klocker and Head (2013) who
29
30 argued that strategies for more sustainable cities could glean important insights from the
31
32 cultural capacities of diverse migrants. Our project design focussed on enabling a group of
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34 first-generation migrants from Burma to share their relations with water; that is, talking about
35
36 water, thinking about water, ingesting water and how washing dishes, clothes and bodies is
37
38 done. Each participant had experienced water insecurity in their country of origin. Since
39
40 2010, Burma is one of the largest 'non-traditional' source countries of new immigrants to
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42 Australia. In 2015, there were approximately 23,500 registered Burma born migrants in
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44 Australia. Approximately half were granted Australian permanent residence in the past five
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46 years, primarily through humanitarian visa programs (ABS 2016).
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51 Both of us are 'white' Australian British migrants. Mindful of the work of Avis
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53 (2002) and Falconer Al Hindi (1997) we understand that the notion of white British visiting
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55 the home of minority ethnic participants and asking about intimate practices of washing
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57 oneself requires critical reflection. Hence, our project embraced the notion of the co-
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3 production of knowledge; that is researchers and participants working collaboratively. The
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5 appointment of two research assistants, or cultural liaisons, assisted with actioning this
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7 collaboration within the project design, recruitment and delivery. Mya is female, from
8
9 Burma, and migrated to Australia in 2014; and, Min Si is male, from Burma, and migrated to
10
11 Australia in 2014. Our own experiences of bathing, and that of our cultural liaisons, shaped
12
13 interviews and we shared stories of washing our skin in the United Kingdom.
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16
17 Recruitment occurred through various refugee support networks, Burmese associations
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19 and the social networks of our cultural liaisons in metropolitan Sydney. Participant
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21 Information Sheets and Consent Forms were translated into Burmese. A total of 16 people
22
23 (11 households) consented to share insights on the different ways water was important to
24
25 them in and around their domestic living environment. All participants spoke English, but
26
27 Burmese was normally the first language spoken at home. None of our participants intended
28
29 to ‘waste’ water. They shared an understanding of water as ‘precious.’ As first-generation
30
31 migrants, they had experienced different systems of household water provision than in
32
33 metropolitan Sydney including rivers, wells, rainwater-tanks and mains water. For those with
34
35 mains water in Burma, disruptions were frequent, particularly during summer droughts.
36
37 Participants clearly differentiated bathing by ‘the Western way’ and ‘the Burmese way’. Most
38
39 participants understood showering bodies alone, indoors and in private as a ‘Western’
40
41 practice, whereas scooping cold water from a bucket normally collected from a well or river,
42
43 outdoors together with others, was understood as ‘Burmese style’. Only four had lived in
44
45 Australia for more than five years. Six participants were men. Ten participants were women.
46
47 Within the sample there was diversity of socio-economic status, migrant histories, ages,
48
49 religious beliefs, employment and ethnicities. Six of our participants migrated to Australia as
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51 refugees. Ten arrived in Australia with either a student, family or skilled migration permanent
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53 visa. They ranged in age from mid-20 to early 70 years-of-age. Nine claimed a Burman
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3 ethnic nationality, three a Chin, two a Karen, two a Shan and only one a Chinese-Burman
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5 ethnic nationality. Four of the participants were full-time students, three were full-time
6
7 mothers and one worked part-time. Six were in full-time paid employment, and two were
8
9 retired. If bathing is conceived as an assemblage where subjectivities emerge through water
10
11 skin encounters then we required a method alive to the swirling of things, ideas, affect,
12
13 emotions and memories embedded in place. Semi-structured interviews and home insights
14
15 offered a mixed-method approach to engage with understanding research participants'
16
17 embodied knowledge of the intensities (soft and hard, short and long) of how water 'gets
18
19 under the skin'. Conducted in January-February 2015, the aim of the semi-structured
20
21 interview was to enable a collaborative process of sharing knowledge around water. Hence,
22
23 the semi-structured interview was divided into two sections. The first section focused upon
24
25 getting to know participants and the ways in which their bodies are disciplined through water.
26
27 Questions in this section asked about living in Burma, migrating to Australia and making
28
29 Australia home. Bathing is not just representational. Bathing involves skin, soap, water, taps,
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31 buckets, scoops, pipes, textures, taste, smells; feeling clean, fresh, invigorated or fit; and the
32
33 longing to be 'in place'. Hence, the second section was structured to facilitate the sharing of
34
35 participants' and researchers' embodied knowledge of bathing. The aim of the home insights
36
37 was to access affective intensities, conveyed through body language, tone and speech, as
38
39 participants showed us around their house, re-enacting everyday routines (including bathing)
40
41 and answered conversational ad hoc questions. The home insights provided possibilities of
42
43 documenting the more indeterminate affective dispositions and responses from human bodies
44
45 encountering water in different rooms, including bathing.
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51
52 To prevent insights from visiting participants' homes becoming intimidating, on all
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54 occasions just the cultural liaison and one researcher visited. When we arrived at a
55
56 participant's house we normally were guided to the family room. Here we explained the
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1
2
3 research aim and methods. Participants were first asked: How long have you lived in
4
5 Australia? Where did you live before? After getting to know the participant we then asked
6
7 more specific questions about water such as: What does water mean to you? When have you
8
9 talked about water before? While this paper focuses on bathing, we asked participants to
10
11 share narratives of drinking water, washing-up dishes, laundry, gardening and toilets. With
12
13 participants' consent, we then moved to the kitchen, bathroom, laundry and garden. Each
14
15 room provided provocation to ask follow-up questions. Overall, participants appeared more
16
17 tense and embarrassed when asked to talk about, and show us, their toilets. Echoing the
18
19 arguments of Young (1990) and Longhurst (2001), sharing stories about the use of toilets that
20
21 involved bodily fluids was understood as taboo. In contrast, participants appeared more
22
23 relaxed as they spoke and often re-enacted the movements they used to wash themselves.
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28 The semi-structured interviews and home insights were conducted in English and
29
30 Burmese. English translations were provided by the cultural liaison. The terms 'home',
31
32 'showering' and 'bathroom' were continually 'troubled' by both the researchers and
33
34 participants during the semi-structured interviews and home tours. We did not want to take
35
36 for granted that the participants would necessarily wash themselves by showering in a
37
38 bathroom or have a singular understanding of home. Both the talking and showing sessions
39
40 were recorded and transcribed, lasting between 60 – 120 minutes.
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44 Our analysis employed Deleuze and Guattari's (1983) rhizomatic cartography or
45
46 rhizoanalysis. While mapping provides an indication as to terrain that is to be travelled, the
47
48 way in which is travelled is open to possibilities. Hence, rather than attending to thematic
49
50 codes or meanings, our rhizoanalysis attends to the possibilities of the unfolding felt
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52 intensities, ideas and materialities of washing skin. We acknowledge the methodological
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54 challenges in not only how to represent the unspeakable and unquantifiable affective
55
56 intensities, but how to locate the indeterminate and emergent within daily life. To guide our
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3 analytical task of rhizoanalysis we paid attention to four interconnected registers: materials
4
5 (including water, buckets, showers and baths), skin, bathing social norms and conventions,
6
7 the spatial and the affective (articulated as pleasure and sadness, bodily gestures or tone of
8
9 voice). Our analysis began with repeated listening of the interviews, mapping the different
10
11 social and material elements that comprise different bathing assemblages. Our mapping
12
13 moved beyond, behind and beneath representational registers of thought, revealing how
14
15 subjectivities emerge within the shower and bucket bathing assemblages that enhance or
16
17 diminish participants' capacity to belong. The next section presents our rhizoanalysis. Our
18
19 finding suggest that the sensuous watery encounters of bathing is a process determines who
20
21 and what belongs, and thereby which subjectivities emerge. Our interpretation illustrated how
22
23 participants organised material and social elements to wash their bodies in different ways that
24
25 facilitated different lives. Despite inconveniences, bucket bathing in Australia was retained
26
27 by those building lives in Australia to retain a sense of themselves as Burman and/or
28
29 Buddhist. Likewise, the choice of showering reflects decisions about their sense of self as
30
31 professional and Australian, alongside the felt comfort and convenience of showering.
32
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40 **The bucket bathing assemblage that struggles to come into being in Australia**

41
42 For some participants, on migrating to Australia the 'Burmese way' of bathing from a bucket
43
44 no longer felt right and either stopped or became transformed. For example, Tin spoke of her
45
46 embodied pleasures of showering rather than bucket bathing in Australia. Tin, is aged in her
47
48 30s, had a wealthier background in Burma, and migrated to Australia in 2007 as a skilled
49
50 migrant. In Burma, Tin bathed by scooping cold rainwater water from a bucket, replenished
51
52 by a rainwater tank at the start and end of the day. In Australia, the affect of touching and
53
54 being touched by warm flowing mains shower-water made comfort and convenience
55
56 tangible:
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60

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4
5 [In Burma] we use water from the tank, so the tanks are going to your wash room but
6
7 they do that using not shower. We used with a tank and small bucket. So, this one [a
8
9 shower] is very comfortable here, you know, over there [in Burma] you use, you have
10
11 to think about, you need to save your water. So... showering, here is much better.
12
13 Much more comfortable. I really enjoy that one [the shower] ... Here water is more
14
15 comfortable, you don't need to think about, it's just easy, everything easy, you don't
16
17 need to think about shortage, everything's just so much different. Much easier now
18
19 and much more comfortable and then you can enjoy the water. Over there ... But
20
21 anyway, when I go back, I don't mind.
22
23
24

25
26 Consistent with previous research Tin's practice of washing skin changed when she migrated
27
28 to Australia through the ready availability of mains water, showers and water-heaters (Maller
29
30 2011). As argued by Allon and Soufalis (2006) the socio-technological regime shields Tin
31
32 from water scarcity and becoming a 'waster'. Instead, the routine skin encounter with the
33
34 physical sensation of warm flowing shower-water felt as comfort confirms Tin's ideas of
35
36 Australian mains water being in a seemingly endless supply. Tin reminds us how comfort
37
38 may be conceived as an affective force that circulates through both bodies and water (see
39
40 Bissell 2008). Such an anticipatory sense of comfort enables Australians to bypass questions
41
42 of water scarcity, by disconnecting people from subjectivities, experience and practices that
43
44 respond to rainfall, seasons and water flow through river systems. Likewise, Tin illustrates
45
46 how an anticipatory sense of comfort offered by showering the frequency and duration may
47
48 change in Australia when exposed to new cultural conventions around self-presentation and
49
50 body odour.
51
52
53

54
55 Most of the winter season is only once [per day in Burma]. Summer it's twice. ... [In
56
57 Australia] I always like to shower before I go out again, like if I've done uni and then
58
59
60

1
2
3 I'm going out to meet friends I'll have a shower again. I don't spend much because of
4
5 the, how will I say, I just normally, five to ten minutes, that's it clean and
6
7 refreshed.
8
9

10 As Hand et al (2005) argue, showering is integral to the sequencing, coordinating and
11
12 personal scheduling. For Tin, showering is a transitioning practice between different parts of
13
14 her life. When thought in these terms, showering comes with sets of requirements for
15
16 meaningful engagement, which has consequences for the time required to shower. The
17
18 shower assemblage enables Tin a particular kind of life that involves her moving quickly
19
20 between different subjectivities – as a student, professional carer, sister and friend. The
21
22 concept of assemblage enables us to offer an interpretation of how the affective force
23
24 attached to the shower, and expressed as comfort and convenience, makes frequent showering
25
26 appear legitimate, despite being resources intensive. Like, Tin, Khin explains how the
27
28 affective intensities of showering operate as an assemblage that are connected to feelings of
29
30 being 'clean' and 'at home' in Australia. Khin illustrates how bathing when conceived as an
31
32 assemblage, watery encounters provides insights to the emergence of gendered and
33
34 responsible subjects. Khin is aged in her twenties and was granted asylum in Australia in
35
36 2013, having been forced to migrate from Chin State, Burma, because of teaching
37
38 Christianity. Khin articulated a preference for showering in Australia. She spoke of bucket
39
40 bathing outdoors in Burma that helped constitute responsible subjectivities.
41
42
43
44
45

46 Sometimes yes, we [women] carry water at home, to home and then we just pour, we
47
48 scoop water and pour on our body. So, it is really, we save water but sometimes we
49
50 can, we can go to the river and take a bath. We have a bowl and a cup, so we scoop
51
52 and then pour it on our bodies. Some people throw on their back when they hurry, so
53
54 people will say: 'Oh, you are wasting water!' So, you have to pour on your body so
55
56 that you will not waste water. That's how we save water....
57
58
59
60

1
2
3 Khin understood a river system in Burma through the embodied knowledge of collecting
4 water over her life-course. Khin reveals those who wash skin quickly by throwing bucket-
5 water collect daily become wasters. Normalised practices of pouring water not only serve
6 pragmatic ends – keeping bodies clean and limiting bucket water use – but help to constitute
7 responsible subjects. Yet, Khin went on to illustrate that bucket bathing is not without its
8 constraints.
9

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16
17 Outside, it is outside. No privacy! So, we use our longyi [a sarong-like tube of fabric]
18 and we covered it up. Yes, we wrap around here. For men, they can just wear the
19 undie ... to avoid getting cold, so they just pour from knee to their legs, and then their
20 arms ... we don't have bathroom in our house; it's outside you know, so when we pour
21 water on our body, so the wind comes and our skins crack ... it's painful. Sometimes,
22 heels crack and blood came out.
23
24
25
26
27
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30
31 While advocating a responsibility to care for water, Khin's account illustrates the how the
32 physical and affective intensities of bathing outdoors in Chin State diminished her capacity to
33 belong; specifically when semi-naked skin is exposed to cold winter weather, alongside
34 gendered surveillance.
35
36
37
38

39
40 In contrast, Khin's illustrates how the affective intensities of the shower assemblage
41 increased her capacity to belong through feelings of bodily comfort. Khin replied when asked
42 how she went about washing herself in Australia:
43
44
45

46 I just take a shower. Normally once a day, twice in summer. If I wash my hair it takes
47 15-20 minutes. If it just shower, it's maybe 7 minutes. It's totally different. I can't use
48 cold water here. Even in summer I feel a bit cold, so I mix warm water.
49
50
51
52

53 Khin makes a choice how to shower, and the choice to shower at least once daily with warm
54 water reflects decisions about body odour and her sense of self as belonging in Australia. In
55 Australia, the pipes and reservoirs shield her from the physical intensity of gathering water.
56
57
58
59
60

1
2
3 The shower cubicle guards her from the unpleasant affective intensities of cold weather, and
4
5 gendered gaze. For Khin, the shower assemblage is an ordering that sets up expectations of
6
7 bodily comfort based on discourses of privacy and warmth sensations. At the same time, the
8
9 shower assemblage disconnects her from how water flows through the Sydney catchment
10
11 system.

12
13
14 Nevertheless, Khin volunteers a preference for bucket bathing during an Australian
15
16 summer:

17
18 I still want to scoop water and I, I feel something you know, when I pour water on my
19
20 body, especially when it is hot. I prefer those things to scoop water and then pour it on
21
22 my body instead of using the shower when it is hot.
23

24
25 In summer, Khin tried to circulate the sensation of comfort by reproduce the bucket
26
27 assemblage during hot weather by standing in the shower and scooping cold water over her
28
29 body. Khin points to how bathing practices need to be understood in relation to the
30
31 arrangements of social and material entities we put together to enable particular lives. For
32
33 Khin, the affective intensities attached to bucket bathing is only made legitimate in summer,
34
35 by enabling her to derive a certain kind of bodily comfort derived from the pleasant appeal of
36
37 cold watery skin encounters.
38
39

40
41 Likewise, Chit only showered in Australia, but incorporated habitual bodily movements
42
43 from bucket bathing in Burma. Chit is 21 years of age and a student. In Burma, domestic
44
45 water was supplied by a well in the grounds of his parents' home. He arrived in Australia in
46
47 2013 on a student visa. Chit grew up in Rangoon, thinks of himself as Burmese, and is from a
48
49 relatively affluent and highly educated family. When Louisa asked Chit about how he washed
50
51 himself in Burma, he replied:

52
53
54 We didn't have like the shower tap, so we used like a cup and you know... Yeah, we
55
56 had a bucket and we throw the water there and we used the cup to shower. 20 scoops,
57
58
59
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1
2
3 30 in summer... When I was like fifteen. So, like we started having a shower tap. ...
4
5 Prefer the bucket. Majority still prefer the scoop. It's like, you can feel that the water
6
7 goes into your body and you feel fresh! ... And, also, because, weather is hot right, so
8
9 you can really feel your body heat. So, one, we scoop from here, left side, left leg and
10
11 then the right leg, left body, right arms and then from the head. So, like the heat comes
12
13 off slowly and out of your body. ... Whereas if you just shower here the heat is hidden
14
15 somewhere and it affects your body ... You know, in my country, in my home, they
16
17 still practice that way even though we have like a shower. Feels like the best way for
18
19 you to clean yourself.
20
21

22
23 If bucket bathing is to be understood as an assemblage, Chit illustrates how to wash is an
24
25 ongoing process comprised of both materials (water, seasons, weather, technology, bodies)
26
27 and expressive forces (comfort, freshness and cleanliness). For Chit, watery skin encounters
28
29 of bucket bathing register not only as affective intensities but also an ethical form of bathing;
30
31 that is how one ought to wash skin. In his words 'feels like the best way you to clean
32
33 yourself.' Chit unsettles the contemporary Western dominant assumption of cleanliness
34
35 aligned with medicalised risks of and responses to pathogens. Instead, his understanding of
36
37 cleanliness has a particular spatial logic connected to the climate and social relations in
38
39 Burma. Again, in Chit's words '20 scoops, 30 in summer?'. Yet, Chit went onto explain how
40
41 the material design of showers often worked against creating a domestic bathing space that
42
43 felt 'best' to his migrant body. When asked how he washed in Australia, Chit replied that:
44
45
46

47
48 No choice – the shower. ... It's too small for me. ... I can't scoop the water, it's
49
50 impossible here. Let it flow here, then on the right side and the left. Then you to the
51
52 right. You move; your body manually.
53
54

55
56 The design logic of the shower disrupted the ritualised movements of bucket bathing. Chit
57
58 provides one example of how migrants are resourceful and adaptive in finding ways to
59
60

1
2
3 resituate the ethical migrant subject by how affective ties with ‘best practice’ are created by
4
5 the movement of his body in the flow of shower water touching his skin. When explaining
6
7 that he often showered more than once a day Chit said: ‘I did an internship at the city so I
8
9 don’t want to smell like a pig.’ Chit illustrates Waitt and Stane’s (2015) argument that
10
11 washed skin helps constitute the public domain in the Global North, positioning the
12
13 unwashed as cultural outsiders (pigs). Chit reminds us that the smells of unwashed bodies
14
15 turning up to work can trigger shared moral sentiments of what people think of as ‘good’ in
16
17 relation to health, gender, class and ethnicity. Yet, unlike Tin, Khin and Chit, some persisted
18
19 to wash skin in Australia following the cultural conventions of the ‘Burmese style’, despite
20
21 the enabling materials infrastructure, new regulations and new shared ideas.
22
23
24
25
26

27 **Bucket bathing assemblages that work in Australia**

28
29
30 Some participants reported fluctuating post-migration between ‘the Western way’ and
31
32 ‘Burmese way’. Those participants who shared narratives of persisting to wash skin with a
33
34 scoop and bucket in Australia illustrate how bathing histories become lodged under the skin.
35
36 Participants who continued to exercise the frugality and constraint of bucket bathing shared
37
38 biographical moments including childhood memories of familial relationships in Burma. For
39
40 example, Mynit illustrates how family histories and places in Burma can surface from the
41
42 affective intensities of the touch of water poured from a scoop and bucket. Mynit is aged in
43
44 her forties and spoke of a relatively affluent family background living in Rangoon. She
45
46 arrived on a family reunion visa in 2010 and lived with her extended family in a privately-
47
48 owned house. When we asked about washing herself the affective intensities lodged in her
49
50 body from bathing in Burma surfaced. These were conveyed through our cultural liaison Min
51
52
53
54
55 Si,
56
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1
2
3 So, when she would stay at old [grandma's] place, they use the well. And they bucket
4 it [water] from the well. And take the water and shower. Scoop it. ..., start from the
5 knees to the lower parts and to the upper parts of body. ... It's like a river shower. No
6
7 bathroom. ... Whereas in big city they shower like Western style ... She likes the
8
9 traditional way.
10
11
12

13
14 Assemblages that form Mynit's experience of bathing in Australia highlight the importance
15 of bodies, materials, representations and aesthetic registers to individual and collective
16 geographies of washing oneself. Mynit said that although she showers in Australia, she
17 persists with scooping water over her body so: "I don't forget my country. I miss the well, my
18 grandfather." Mynit's words suggest that the affective intensity of the touch of water scooped
19 on her skin connect her to family, her faith and places in Burma. Min Si conveyed the intense
20 pleasure that emerged from bucket bathing in Australia:
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30 She feels very pleasant throwing the water. So, it was taught by parents and
31 grandparents to offer the cold, clean and chilled water, to Buddha because ... that kind
32 of Buddhist teaching embedded in the heart. ... water, it's kind of like visualising, so
33 whenever she has a hard time, by offering it [water] represents clean and also wash
34 away the greed, hatred, impurities, mind impurities and then she do the chanting and
35 pray for the others.
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44 Mynit illustrate how pleasure is attached to water and how the touch of droplets of water
45 from splashing fosters an intensification of emotion and affects. Following Ahmed (2004,
46 26), Mynit illustrates how bucket-bathing emotions and affects can be argued to align
47 individuals with collectives - or bodily spaces with social space – through 'the very intensity
48 of their attachments'. For Mynit, the touch of cold water splashed on her skin by scooping is
49 about helping reconstitute and situate the migrant subject; it is about reconnecting with
50 family, Buddhism and Burma. Bucket bathing can thus be understood as bound up with
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3 embodiment, affects and emotions that are ‘performative; they both repeat past associations
4 as well as generating their object’ (Ahmed 2004. 32) Such theorisation helps interpret
5 Mynit’s reasons to bucket bathe in Australia as way to connect with the past, ideas, family
6 and Burma. According to Buddhist principles, water represents the aspiration to achieve the
7 virtues of Buddhist enlightenment; calmness, clarity, compassion, generosity and purify the
8 inner person (Sponsel. and Natadecha 2003). The touch of cool clean water being splashed
9 over her skin, often in a systematic pattern taught by her grandparents, revealed a sense of
10 embodied knowledge generated through hands-on experience. Mynit points to how
11 performing bodily acts of washing by scooping, and throwing water, rather than showering
12 provide a means to heighten calm along with social and shared affective belongings to Burma
13 and connective to family. The intense affective character of these watery skin encounters and
14 how they may alter existing moods is echoed in work examining the therapeutic qualities of
15 touch (Paterson 2007, Straughan 2010b). Like dance, the rhythmic and repetitive movements
16 of washing skin can be thought of as a performance of the nation (Nash 2000); and a way of
17 making the absent present (DeSilvey and Edensor 2013). We suggest the bucket-bathing
18 assemblage that forms Mynit’s embodied experiences of the self and the world is pertinent as
19 a performativity of events she employs to takes on the everyday challenges of living in
20 Australia. For Mynit, bucket bathing facilitated ‘ethical’ interactions of belonging,
21 spirituality and an important space-time for reflection.
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45 Like Mynit, Soe persisted with bucket bathing in Australia. Like Mynit, bucket
46 bathing enabled Soe to live in Australia, by how he arranged baths, buckets, scoops, mains
47 water, his body and ideas in his Sydney apartment. Soe is aged in his forties and grew up in a
48 relatively privileged family in Rangoon, and was employed as a teacher. He was forced to
49 leave Burma following the military coup. He secured asylum in Australia in 1988. Soe
50 reports on the challenges of performing bodily washing following the Burmese way in
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3 Australian bathrooms. The bucket assemblage did not translate easily into the design logic of
4
5 the Australian bathroom. The bucket assemblage struggled to come into being in Australia
6
7 because of how bathrooms are stratified for particular kinds of watery engagements,
8
9 favouring those with restricted movement below a shower-head. The built form of the shower
10
11 anticipates standing bodies that barely move. Soe sits in the bath to scoop water over his
12
13 skin.
14

15
16 For Soe, the bucket bathing assemblage, including, the rhythms, frequency and
17
18 duration of washing, was an important way for him to stay connected with Burma. When we
19
20 asked Soe how often he washes himself, he replied: 'Not everyday, maybe two days, once a
21
22 time ... only 2-3 minutes. That's it.' In these terms, Soe is particularly helpful in highlight
23
24 how the bucket bathing assemblage facilitates suspension of 'Australian' social norms of
25
26 cleanliness. He then went on to explain the differential frequency of washing his body in
27
28 comparison to others:
29
30

31
32 It depends on the country. Because here you know the Australian people, they use to
33
34 eat the raw meat or something like that as you know. ... Not too much sweat—
35
36 Burmese; more sweat and smelly Australians. My point of view is most of the
37
38 Australia I should not say all, mostly a lot of raw meat. ... Too much they eat. And all
39
40 the raw meat is more when they coming out sweat from their body. More smelly and
41
42 they need more showers. In our countries are not like here.
43
44

45
46 Soe's opinions about Australian diet as relating to bodily odour makes frequent showering
47
48 more appropriate. Soe actively created a 'sense' of difference through the sweaty aromas of
49
50 bodies. Like Chit, Soe notes how the smell of sweat must be eradicated from bodies to enable
51
52 particular working lives in the city. Bodily odours can prompt strong affective reactions that
53
54 function to often mark people as negatively 'different'. People have 'bodily ways of judging'
55
56 (Hayes Conroy and Hayes Conroy 2008). This comment was not said with any malevolence.
57
58
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60

1
2
3 Indeed, the participant is a supporter of ‘multiculturalism’. Yet, it does indicate as Pink
4
5 (2004) suggests that olfactory conventions are deeply embedded in cultures. The quotation
6
7 illustrates the ways that power works through bodily sensations, through the affective and
8
9 emotional. As Longhurst et al (2009) argued, embodied experiences, including smell, cannot
10
11 be ignored when attempting to understand political divides. Soe suggests how the affective
12
13 intensities of bodily smells and bathing can create a sense of difference and enables
14
15 belonging to collective situations. Soe had many intensely painful memories of loss of his
16
17 home in Burma. Perhaps for this reason, to maintain a body that smelt familiar and remained
18
19 affectively and emotionally connected to Burma, Soe retained the arrangements of bucket
20
21 bathing in Australia. Whatever the case, for our participants bathing arrangements offers a
22
23 sense of ‘belonging’ and allows relations with religion, strangers, colleagues and nations.
24
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28

29 **Conclusion**

30
31 Australia is comprised of ethnically diverse migrant households who hold valuable
32
33 environmental knowledge. We draw on material feminism to attend to the embodied water
34
35 knowledge of first-generation migrants from Burma living in Sydney, Australia. After
36
37 Ahmed and Stacey (2001), Probyn (2000) and Braidotti (2002) we think through bathing
38
39 assemblages and watery encounters to bring a feminist perspective to conceive of the
40
41 arrangements of material and social entities that are put in place enable particular kinds of
42
43 lives. Following this provocative theoretical proposition, subjectivities emerge out of forces,
44
45 connections and reciprocity; that is how the skin registers and ‘remembers’ intensities of a
46
47 feeling within material and discursive environments. We illustrate the potential of paying
48
49 attention to the affective realm and how skin, water, buckets, scoops, showers and other
50
51 actors and actants come together as assemblages to constitute bathing and subjectivities has
52
53 the potential to better understand the persistence, transformation and stopping of practices
54
55
56
57
58 Such evidence directs attention to the individual embodied experience of different forms of
59
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1
2
3 bathing at different times and different places, and how they are affected by embodied
4 identities (age, ethnicity, gender and faith), materials (buckets, showers, scoops, alongside
5 temperature, hardness and clarity of water) and the physical layout of spaces to wash
6 (opportunities to move, stand or sit). To conclude, examples are provided of how affect,
7 embodiment and emotion can help household sustainability politics.
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9

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13
14 Participants talk in detail about the ways in which washing skin offer both a sense of
15 'belonging' and allows connections with family, colleagues and strangers. The sensation of
16 how water contacts the skin becomes an expressive and material force in a myriad of
17 assemblages, where gendered, classed, ethnic, religious and national bodies are made and
18 remade over again. For those participants who stopped bucket bathing the flow of shower
19 water on the skin sustained the intensities of a feeling articulated as 'comfort' and 'relaxing'.
20 The affective geographies of showering are bound up with ideas of water security, and the
21 experiences of the shower becomes a device to help constitute professional identities and
22 public selves, alongside managing hectic schedules and spatially fragmented lives. This
23 experience positions those who shower daily as part of 'the public', enabling them to interact
24 with people and place in ways that are intimately connected to 'Australian' social norms. For
25 those who persist with bucket bathing the intensities of pouring cool water on the skin opened
26 possibilities of affective ties enabling migrants to connect with Burma, grandparents and
27 religious beliefs. For these participants scooping water from a bucket to wash their skin
28 helped to maintain an embodied sense of themselves as not only 'fresher' and 'cleaner' than
29 showering but also as ethical through a recognition of the mutual interdependence with water.
30 The watery skin encounter with a scoop and bucket offered possibilities to build affective,
31 emotional and material connections between Burma and Australia through a very sensory
32 geography. Our participants illustrate how the everyday sensuous watery skin encounters of
33 bathing are employed to manipulate affective, emotional and embodied experiences, and
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3 while these experiences vary between individuals, nevertheless fashion collective body-
4
5 worlds.
6

7
8 Given these results, how can thinking through the skin become a focus of household
9
10 sustainable politics? Shove and Spurling (2013) and Strenger et al. (2015) provide valuable
11
12 insights to how practice theories challenge education intervention strategies which have come
13
14 to inform policy programmes. Educating people about saving water measured in litres is out
15
16 of line with people's embodied knowledge of bathing and urban life. For example, Kuijter et
17
18 al. (2013) identifies the potential energy and water savings in Kilojoules and litres of a
19
20 cultural shift of bathing practices reliant upon the flowing water of the shower to 'splashing'
21
22 from the contained water of the bucket bath. We argue that while water security must be
23
24 addressed, our findings suggest that efforts to connect with people should not stigmatise those
25
26 with showers as 'wasters', but rather offer more salient campaigns that relate to the ways that
27
28 people already conceive of bathing. Our research makes evident that bathing is never 'just
29
30 washing'. We argue what becomes important is how the concept of assemblage can help
31
32 understand how the water, skin, ideas and things are organised are always contingent and are
33
34 arranged or rearranged to enable particular kinds of lives. Thinking through the bathing
35
36 assemblages, our rhizomatic framework can help inform intervention policies by helping us
37
38 better understand how subjectivities are assembled in different contexts. For many people the
39
40 scenario of washing skin from the touch of cool water splashed from a bucket, rather than the
41
42 flow of warm water for a shower, may raise a series of alarm bells precisely because it
43
44 challenges habits and routines of deeply embedded racialised, classed, aged, gendered and
45
46 ethical norms that stabilise white, healthy, classed bodies and western public spaces as
47
48 showered daily and therefore deodorised.
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Everyday watery skin encounters illustrate the capacities of sensuous bodies to affect
and be affected by water, combining and coalescing different ideas, embodied histories and

1
2
3 bodily judgements; thereby making, unmaking and redoing bathing assemblages. To inform
4
5 household sustainability policy we also need to understand how the experiences associated
6
7 with practices - being touched by water, touching water and feelings associated the touch of
8
9 water - are important components of ethnic, gendered and religious subjectivities and places.
10
11 Clues to different ways of bathing with water are perhaps found in the myriad of relations
12
13 that help constitute a multitude of subjectivities from the touch of water on the skin that are
14
15 embedded materially and historically in earth process. Our findings could assist policy-
16
17 makers by encouraging others to rethink social conventions about showering that are
18
19 presently configured around notions of abundance that spiral us closer to systemic
20
21 breakdown. Following the social media success of the Ice Bucket Challenge, that generated
22
23 awareness of Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS), people could be invited to bathe by
24
25 scooping water from a bucket rather than shower. The Bathing Bucket Challenge is
26
27 necessary to open debate on the unsustainable urban water culture of showering that is
28
29 ontologically and materially disconnected from earth processes. The felt intensity of the
30
31 Bucket Bathing Challenge may provide productive moments in the politics of sustainability
32
33 to encourage people to reflect on social norms of bathing excess and our connections with
34
35 river systems. Bound up in the bodily and affective intensities of washing skin are
36
37 possibilities for people to experience, negotiate and perform ongoing subjectivities and
38
39 emotions tied to frugality and constraint. Understanding more about the embodied knowledge
40
41 and the affective intensities and how they operate in both individual and collective
42
43 experiences is an important research agenda for geography and the politics of household
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45 ⁱⁱ In 1989, the military government of the Union of Burma changed the official name to the Union of Myanmar
46 to better reflect the ethnic diversity and sever from the British colonial past. The United Nations accepted the
47 name change, although those opposed to the military government questioned the imposed changes. At the
48 same time, many of the geographic names were changed from English to confirm with Burmese spelling, for
49 example Rangoon to Yangon. Mindful that the act of naming is always political, this paper reflects the
50 participants' use of the terms 'Burmese', 'Burma' and English geographic names
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