



## DIGITAL RECEPTACLE

By

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*"Perhaps there is no correlation between textual  
references to a concept and the transformative role  
of that concept" – (Lily Cho 2024, 161)*

diminutive bin into which all is draggable i  
contemplated ditching what i had only surface-  
read as feminism:

blue pools dead locked like the house  
wives i leave  
in moore park, oak bay, vaucroft

i induced vomiting, caused a scene, learned how to say "pray  
in a closet" in aramaic, cooed it in my "christy" voice, the one used  
to wait tables when men ordered the wrong thing and needed someone  
else to apologize for it

war-markings like a linebacker's, images  
course: wwii beachheads, stonewall riots, but here the cause is some  
how only myself.  
lipstick sears my mouth together, zippers restrain myself inside me, reading court  
ship patterns in binary fight or flight: a food shortage, inflation, penile  
vascularization, a tainted scent in the air before a gale-  
force onset.  
getting hyped like a welterweight at the mgm grand only to come  
to in droves of expunged  
passion and those costumed  
pieces, forcing them into a shared washing machine

it was a hotel elevator, winnipeg, 2016, cusp-#metoo.  
usually my terminator glasses would just register "old  
man" when the entity got on at a different floor, but this was an academic conference so "old  
man" could mean "tenured expert i must supplicate to."  
he delivered his injunction with  
out a prefatory greeting: i was to smile at him.  
i remembered Mari Ruti (may she rest in power) teaching me Sara Ahmed (2017): *"What is at  
stake here is not so much which feelings bring us to action but how to respond to 'the injunction'  
to feel a certain way."*  
i sucked  
dead air, "tired," was what came out. i stared  
hard enough at the swirls on the carpet to animate them.  
sure enough, he sat there glaring at me throughout the entire duration of my talk the next day.  
he will be sure to cockblock my next job application

it was an office building, the bmo tower in the FiDi, toronto, 2018.  
the piece of mail, which i retrieved from a downtown-  
abbey underground via a servants' elevator, had the man's  
name on it. i handed it to him once i re-  
ascended to the glossy-desked offices.  
he handed it back, "you're probably better at opening this than me."  
in my head i quit the job. *it's an envelope*, i reeled into  
the recesses of my prefrontal cortex. i had three  
degrees at the time, i was pregnant with my first child

it was a subway station, there was a fire, i had a stroller with a baby in it. there were many exits  
but all were staircases; there was only one accessible ramp, and it was laden with men in suits with  
little beans in their ears, eyes transfixed on their phones. they were late for drinks, or squash. i  
had one baby with me, the other uptown, which i would have to run to get now (uphill with a stroll-  
er with a baby in it), what with the fire; the daycare closes at 5:45, they charge you a late fee for  
every minute after, the women of colour who work there need to pick up their own children, and *i*  
*am never late*. my older one lives with some spectrum rigidity – i can *never be late* or there will be  
more soothing required than the well of my body holds, long into the night, and i still have to work  
later, after i get them fed and read to and down. the baby felt my anxiety, started to rise in pitch. i  
said "excuse me" to the men occupying the ramp. i said it again. i said it again. i began to turn up  
my own volume. i began to tap arms, "can you please let us use the ramp?" my knob quivered and  
rose again. the man three men ahead noticed, "watch out there's a hysterical woman." i thought of  
Judith Herman (1992): "*hysteria was 'a dramatic medical metaphor for everything that men found  
mysterious or unmanageable in the opposite sex'*" (10). my rage and anxiety blooming, i began to  
move forwards, i wheeled at a few of them, nipping their ankles

it was a family event. i was called out for not hugging an older male in-law upon arrival. was the  
curtsy not implied? how many dependents and their various accoutrements must i be carrying to  
be rendered visible as *hands full*? i was 36 and a half years old, an almost mother of two. it was a  
global pandemic

## References

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Herman, Judith. 1992. *Trauma and Recovery*.