



or, on being the other woman

SIMONE WHITE

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Love is contraband in hell.

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—SAIDIYA HARTMAN < ASSATA SHAKUR

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heaped therefore residually heaped
beside myself on the bed next
i fetch my son's pretzels, but prerogative
lingers upended could poweR's lengths
also belittle me between your visits am i
belittled am i less pure
semiologists pressed me toward
an apparent residue cRowning evident or
almost?
we go to the room for stories, nestled
lumped or thrown together we and things
for very little children Camden worrying a razed benefit engineered a loop a figure
eight an on-ramp a mother hacking for UbeR pink and pink and the tiny pitchfoRk
he and i discover in the side of some plastic grass an instrument's use bears a direct
relation to our activity in observing
its constructed unpile

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OR, ON BEING THE OTHER WOMAN / 1



monitoring a stink Bug's progress, or, beautiful random application of remorseless violence: there. my boy has begun to apprehend such concepts as affection, better identified as interested longing, does this one like me? maybe he doesn't like me? Look the Buug-h. windy undifferentiated consonants unsorted words please me so. one day i will tell how much time was there before he could evoke in me anything like interest. his thought interests me, i date from discussion of the need to use a pot or toilet for shit. in a few days i would fall into a rage on the street arguing with my mother on the telephone.

what makes me if her desire vibrates as pleading packed in insult

in my guise as woman work and insomnia
rumble through they are girders money
worries girding my whole body such job
interviews

saying intolerable

le

kinds of nothing about how all of it came

to pass

is this about money? my inability to pass into the moneyed upper-middle class to which i had been "raised" / projected? one thinks one has refused, i really hate liberals, i do not like to hear the troubles of middle-class persons fussing about their children's use of cell phones.

what if i misdirect or misuse what i now know about the feminine crucible? my boy inquires about my anger, somehow knows it is for / against something not him at all, just wants to know what. you don't like Eli? no, no, i like him, i'm sorry i . . . mostly i have

Been

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able to decide what aspects of my own potency my child will witness
when i break ties with men or refuse to keep with the tradition of fungibility
iNsofar as my action is a lump of mass action or it is insanity, such as to choose to act
precisely in emotional ways
the emotions are the cortex of reason
then my heart tells me the way
as there is no way
my boy and i rely on media to keep me strong enough to love

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i like science fiction because
Something terrible is going to happen
suppose it is “the ocean” under this Boeing belching white whatever you say, mommy, ok
okay
Oceanic will come over all these very rich their big boats, “houses,” and so on will come
over all this mess
see, “reality” instead turn over tones of words ending in *-ull* that lose their significance
and exactitude within seconds
a casualty of brain injury and exhaustion, both, is memory loss
you split open part of your head and for six months repeated words you had already said
but i didn't say
anything out of delicacy or tenderness or timidity
i didn't say why the fuck are you still working
what possible conditions could exist that require you to work without shelter while your
brain swells
who iS your wife
come home the terrible thing

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OR, ON BEING THE OTHER WOMAN / 5



Du BOis teaches radicalization is possible.
adolescent boys living temporarily in my home, one like my own child, my brother's son, these words might have meaning for someone reading, like my own child, regard it as an undifferentiated space in which to pile expensive junk reeking of petrochemical deodorizers,
losing track of devices they need all these power sources and stations to connect my need for certain kinds of privacy, tidiness, results in occasional inability to share personal space, surely related to believing that i am pursued or overrun by half-eaten food empty water glasses bits of poop lining the rim of the toilet seat (at some point, cleaning a toilet seat, i'm like, is pee corrosive?) unmatched socks of others i must compulsorily clean up
in early life among loud, not-gentle, numerous family of origin, later, the men with whom i shared my homes,
each deeply silent, somewhat still.
i'm not revolted by evidence of the lived lives of other people.
effective means of housekeeping categorically interest me.
the pleasures of a clean/orderly house . . . there are few absolute pleasures.
as my life gradually became too busy to properly clean my own home, i paid another woman to clean. Patricia cleans my house now, even while I am away, working in another town. she watches so the boys don't harm anything they have not been warned not to harm.
the fight with my mother about the boys' occupation.
i negotiated a decent rate of pay in a tenure-track job at the University of Pennsylvania.
more than one person in my family accused me of being "angry and frustrated" in the space of one week, but i feel saner and more fulfilled than ever. "height of my [emotional] power." for a week, i shared my bed with my son. we arranged for five days together in two cities, not New York, after many months. my ex-husband made taunting sounds at

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me in my house in front of my child while i kept eating a piece of pizza and waited for him to leave. i received the first copies of my new book.

don't try to explain that i have changed. i don't feel much when people call me names or the functional equivalent. miserable, delusional, immoral.

i have things a sense of things that belong to me that i have clung to such as an apartment. possessions, while they are not a mathematical index, can focus the instincts and point toward

what must be sacrificed.

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