

ANNE BOYER

GARMENT  
AGAINST  
WOMEN

## NOT WRITING

When I am not writing I am not writing a novel called *1994* about a young woman in an office park in a provincial town who has a job cutting and pasting time. I am not writing a novel called *Nero* about the world's richest art star in space. I am not writing a book called *Kansas City Spleen*. I am not writing a sequel to *Kansas City Spleen* called *Bitch's Maldoror*. I am not writing a book of political philosophy called *Questions for Poets*. I am not writing a scandalous memoir. I am not writing a pathetic memoir. I am not writing a memoir about poetry or love. I am not writing a memoir about poverty, debt collection, or bankruptcy. I am not writing about family court. I am not writing a memoir because memoirs are for property owners and not writing a memoir about prohibitions of memoirs.

When I am not writing a memoir I am also not writing any kind of poetry not prose poems contemporary or otherwise, not poems made of fragments, not tightened and compressed poems, not loosened and conversational poems, not conceptual poems, not virtuosic poems employing many different types of euphonious devices, not poems with epiphanies and poems without, not documentary poems about recent political moments not poems heavy with allusions to critical theory and popular song.

I am not writing "Leaving the Atocha Station" by Anne Boyer and certainly not writing "Nadia" by Anne Boyer though would like to write "Detached" by Anne Boyer though am not writing also "The German Ideology" by Anne Boyer and not writing a screenplay called "Spartacists."

I am not writing an account of myself more miserable than Rousseau. I am not writing an account of myself more innocent than Blake.

I am not writing epic poetry although I like what Milton said about lyric poets drinking wine while epic poets should drink water from a wooden bowl. I would like to drink wine from a wooden bowl or to drink water from an emptied bottle of wine.

I am not writing a book about shopping, which is a woman shopping.

I am not writing accounts of dreams, not my own or anyone else's.

I am not writing historical re-enactments of any durational literature.

I am not writing anything that anyone has requested of me or is waiting on, not a poetics essay or any other sort of essay, not a roundtable response, not interview responses, not writing prompts for younger writers, not my thoughts about critical theory or popular songs.

I am not writing a new constitution for the republic of no history.

I am not writing a will or a medical report.

I am not writing Facebook status updates. I am not writing thank-you notes or apologies. I am not writing conference papers. I am not writing book reviews. I am not writing blurbs.

I am not writing about contemporary art. I am not writing accounts of my travels. I am not writing reviews for *The New Inquiry* and not writing pieces for *Triple Canopy* and not writing anything for *Fence*. I am not writing a daily accounting of my reading, activities, and ideas. I am not writing science fiction novels about the problem of the idea of the autonomy of art and science fiction novels about the problem of a society with only one law which is consent. I am not writing stories based on

Nathaniel Hawthorne's unwritten story ideas. I am not writing online dating profiles. I am not writing anonymous communiqués. I am not writing textbooks.

I am not writing a history of these times or of past times or of any future times and not even the history of these visions which are with me all day and all of the night.

## A WOMAN SHOPPING

with Facebook, with my body which wants to get in the swimming pool with my body which wants to turn brown in the sun with my body which wants to drink some tea with my body which wants to do shoulder presses which wants to join a gym which wants to take a shower and get cleaned up which wants a lover which mostly wants to swim and then there is "not writing." There is envy which is also mixed with repulsion at those who do not have a long list of not writing to do.

It is easy to imagine not writing, both accidentally and intentionally. It is easy because there have been years and months and days I have thought the way to live was not writing have known what writing consisted of and have thought "I do not want to do that" and "writing steals from my loved ones" and "writing steals from my life and gives me nothing but pain and worry and what I can't have" or "writing steals from my already empty bank account" or "writing gives me ideas I do not need or want" or "writing is the manufacture of impossible desire" or writing is like literature is like the world of monsters is the production of culture is I hate culture is the world of wealthy women and of men.

I will soon write a long, sad book called *A Woman Shopping*. It will be a book about what we are required to do and also a book about what we are hated for doing. It will be a book about envy and a book about barely visible things. This book would be a book also about the history of literature and literature's uses against women, also against literature and for it, also against shopping and for it. The flâneur is a poet is an agent free of purses, but a woman is not a woman without a strap over her shoulder or a clutch in her hand.

The back matter of the book will only say this: *If a woman has no purse, we will imagine one for her.*

These would be the chapters:

On a woman shopping

On men shopping, with and without women

On children with women as they shop

On the barely moving lips of the calculating and poor

On attempting to open doors for the elderly and in the process of this, touching their arms

On the acquiring of arms in action movies

On Daniel Defoe

On the time I saw a homeless man murdered for shoplifting

On whether it is better to want nothing or steal everything

On how many of my hours are gone now because I have had to shop

On how I wish I could shop for hours instead

## WHAT IS "NOT WRITING" ?

There are years, days, hours, minutes, weeks, moments, and other measures of time spent in the production of "not writing." Not writing is working, and when not working at paid work working at unpaid work like caring for others, and when not at unpaid work like caring, caring also for a human body, and when not caring for a human body many hours, weeks, years, and other measures of time spent caring for the mind in a way like reading or learning and when not reading and learning also making things (like garments, food, plants, artworks, decorative items) and when not reading and learning and working and making and caring and worrying also politics, and when not politics also the kind of medication which is consumption, of sex mostly or drunkenness, cigarettes, drugs, passionate love affairs, cultural products, the internet also, then time spent starting into space that is not a screen, also all the time spent driving, particularly here where it is very long to get anywhere, and then to work and back, to take her to school and back, too.

There is illness and injury which has produced a great deal of not writing. There is cynicism, disappointment, political outrage, heartbreak, resentment, and realistic thinking which has produced a great deal of not writing. There is reproduction which has been like illness and injury and taken up many hours with not writing. There is being anxious or depressed which takes up many hours though not very much once there is no belief in mental health. There is trauma which is fantastic in the way it is brief and clear and also the way it lingers around and emerges unpredictably as if it will forever. Trauma is always the indirect direct producer of so much not writing. It is like a mind which has a shadow and then is the shadow and then isn't a mind or its shadow but isn't at all.

There are some hours, though not very many, on airplanes, and times with friends spent in the production of not writing. There is talking which is like writing and which produces not writing in equal measure to producing writing. There is an amount of time not writing which is not wanting to actually have to talk to humans unless it is in order to get them to have sex or in order to convince them to leave. There is sleep, which is often dreams, which is closer to writing—dreams are more like writing than not writing in that they are not intruded upon in their moments by the necessities of all the paid work, care work, social expectations, romantic love or talking to people. There is sleep which is often about gossip, architecture, and modes of civic planning and in this is closer to writing than not writing. In the dreams there is always walking around, finding walls, follies, and not getting to one place or the next but it is often those I love but whom I do not get to see very much who walk with me. There are photographs one takes, of oneself and of other people and it is in these there is the production of not writing. There is dressing and undressing sometimes too much, particularly when things have run away, died, or one has to meet new people. There is shopping, which is a woman shopping.

There is in not writing not very much time spent on envy which is pang, mostly, which is motivating like getting a buzz from an outlet telling one to remove one's hand from the outlet, from the power source. There is the way that the lives of others seem so often unenviable and only enviable as they are "writing" when all this time is spent not writing like right now in the not writing in which I should be dealing with bill mail, laundry, my bedroom, months of emails from October onward even though it is now June, with my jobs, with care, with the contents of a refrigerator, with my flat tire, with the cat's litter box, with friends

There would be more: lavish descriptions of lavish descriptions of the perverse or decadently feminized marketplace, some long sentences concerning the shipping and distribution of alterity, an entire chapter about *Tender Buttons* in which each sentence is only a question. And from where did that mutton, that roast beef, that carafe come?

But who would publish this book and who, also, would shop for it? And how could it be literature if it is not coyly against literature, but sincerely against it, as it is also against ourselves?