

Essays from Sitara Abuzar Ghaznawi Solo Exhibition 'Bookshelf 3', 2020, School, Vienna.

Texts by Sophia Rohwetter, Olamiju Fajemisin, Samuel Lala and Michael Zimmermann, Ser Serpas, Nils Amadeus

BOOKSHELF 3 (EMPTY, FRAGILE)
Sophia Rohwetter

Throughout the poetry collection *Garments Against Women* (2015), poet and writer Anne Boyer unfolds the idea of 'not writing'. In the eponymous prose poem, she lists books, poems, essays, memoirs, notes and other forms of writing she is *not writing* – "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". In the following poem, she defines *not writing* as the time spent working (in paid and unpaid jobs), caring for others (and their bodies), caring for one's own mind (by reading and learning or making things like garments), driving, "the kind of medication that is consumption" (of sex, passion or culture), injury, affects like heartbreak and political outrage, mental states like anxiety and depression, social commitments and expectations like talking to people.

Writing, then, is what remains after all this working and worrying, caring and consuming, talking and feeling, is done. And rather than standing apart from this array of labor as sublimated art, writing exists alongside it. For Anne Boyer, poetic production, writing, is always tied to other types of production, to not-writing, to all the other bullet points on her to-do list, that is long, because it includes reproductive labor like child care and cooking and recovering from illness: "There is envy which is also mixed with repulsion at those who do not have a long list of not writing to do". Writing becomes a fraction of the neoliberal labor scape that condenses life into one working day with little breathers of 'quality' and 'free' time.

Sitara's empty bookshelf reminds me of all the books not produced in the production of not writing, not written in the time spent working and worrying and surviving under capitalist conditions of value and life extraction. Of all the stories and novels and poems unwritten because of work, reproduction and trauma: "Trauma is always the indirect direct producer of so much not writing". The shape of an unwritten book might materialise as a hole in a bookshelf, and the years and hours spent in the production of not writing, on working for money and working for free and caring for others and, if time, for oneself, might find its visual analogy in an empty bookshelf.

But, more than to *not writing*, *Bookshelf 3 (empty, fragile)* alludes to *not reading*, or not having read,

or not being 'well read', or not displaying one's literacy as a form of self-assurance and intellectual superiority. If writing is conditioned by life and work under contemporary global capital, so is the consumption and display of it. Anne Boyer concludes: "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".

As a display, the bookshelf is the interior of cultural capital and bourgeois consumer culture, is the time to read, embodied. The interpretation of a lockdown amidst a global pandemic as a carefree and infinite time to read yet another weighty tome from the Eurocentric canon – *The Decameron* or *Das Kapital* were popular 'corona projects' – epitomises the uneven distribution of reading, a distribution structured by historical continuities of racial, economic, and gender inequalities.

When stacked up with the works of 'world literature' – which is a world presuming Europe at its center and a literature figuring the enlightened cosmopolitan *homme du monde* as its protagonist – the bookshelf is the living room version of white bourgeois navel-gazing. As a background in video conferences, the carefully curated wall-length bookshelf has, at least according to a New York Times article, become "quarantine's hottest accessory" – a design object that radiates credibility, criticality and intellectual authority. The decision to present oneself in front of piled up hard and soft cover cultural capital is a political gesture. One consonant with western bourgeois ideals of education, knowledge and 'good taste', and one Sitara's sculpture *Bookshelf 3 (empty, fragile)* counters with an equally grand gesture.

The collected works of the western literary canon are pushed off the shelves and the absence of 'The Great Books' gives way to a large pattern with a flower motif used in previous works – as wallpaper in a series of *Showcases (Flowers)*, an advert in an art magazine, a letterhead on writing paper, a dress for a friend's birthday – and which operates as a form of trademark or self-branding. The empty bookshelf, not unlike the showcases or Sitara's stage-like and rose-framed work *Untitled (Plaza)*, imitates the gesture of displaying culture and knowledge in bougie homes and white institutions, and refuses to follow its aesthetic codes. Without its books and with its structure disclosed, the bookshelf can only adjust to the flamboyant flower pattern and therewith, become part of a new narrative.

UNTITLED
Ser Serpas

They can't get listed as works in the catalogue
Make EXACT text that can be used on the wall
and in the catalogue

The next two square pieces need to be landscape pics

Idea

Signage, sleek black, scattered around exhibition space

Raised edges interiors responding to format of communication

- text boxes in Gmail
- letters
- things said irl in meetings
- official invitations
- quotes on website
- official rules
- very sleek grey or black scale
-

The signs can be lawn signage anchored down by two thin metal rods

TEMPEST (TEXT)

cool, ill tell her, c u soon.

Tempest rests her phone on her bare knee. She flushes the toilet.

EXT. BROADWAY - NIGHT -
CONTINUOUS

Tempest and Sarai walk up the street with transparent plastic bags in hand, clinking glass bottles rattle as they make their way up the block.

Hammer -

Screenplay 166 pages in vitrines, first draft, drawings/notebooks interspersed

Huntington -

18 paintings on lawn in circle, large brush wipe painting in middle

I have some ideas that can potentially stand in for the sculptures. For the Sculpture Garden in Geneva I have been making work on the streets with waste I find in one location, getting the work professionally documented, and having it live updated to the site and added to the eventual brochure for the show. The

work is made on the site of the discovery of its component objects, I've attached Iphone photos below of the first such sculpture, as the professional documentation is still being edited.

Sculpture Garden ends on September 30th, and viewing the work is a question of stumbling upon it on the street before city authorities haul it away to the dump etc.

For the Huntington and the Hammer, I could perhaps make a large body of this work, about 14 sculptures, and make a series of postcards via Swiss Post, that can either be taken by visitors or kept as static objects. The amount of the postcards can be different for each location, such as 6 of the 14 sculptures at one location and 8 of the 14 sculptures at the other. And I would just make 200+ copies of each sculpture? And hand write the title of each work, a line of poetry, and the date on the back of each card so they're also art objects. This is a suggestion that can grow into something bigger, or be accompanied by more work

Don't take iron and magnesium at same time

I've always wanted to be beautiful

AVENE

visa
form
acceptance letter

inform@swisscare.com

Thick blue tape
Roll of plastic
Burgundy paint
2 Paint roll sets w plastic tray

I'm gonna get ready downstairs

2 falafel baguette
Soap

Allergy 2 times a day
Immune 3 times a day

Soap
Disinfectant
Booze
Sushi

THESE WORDS ARE MY OWN
FROM MY HEART FLOW I LOVE YOU, I LOVE YOU,
I LOVE YOU, I LOVE YOU
Olamiju Fajemisin

Can you read these words? through the thicket of flowers and lace

I implore you to look while you can. The words on this bookshelf are importable, the shelf itself a hostile institution.

You may not tug me free from the pile with a licked finger which you then curl, and then, sliding down and pinching (with the tips of your fingernails), flatten me right-sides together, creating near-perfect halves, bonded by a seam so soft and so mashed the edges will begin to pucker and fray between the warm moisture of your fingertips. I'd tear when forced into your denim pocket.

Read me now as you are in front of me. Mouth these words silently (it's praxis).

Bourgeois of you to be here (in public), reading me, with a drink in your hand.

What are you drinking?

Do you wish you had a bench to sit on? Do you wish I was an image, so you could look away when bored, rather than feeling guilty for abandoning me at the end of the lyric?

What does exhibitionism mean in this place, at school? Are these words more worthy of being stored because they are being outwardly committed to the public? Because you can take a photo on your iphone. Because you can reread wherever? (if you take the photo). Because you can get a pdf of these words, and tack them at this height, but at your place. Or is it because you can sing the words *These words are my own From my heart flow I love you, I love you, I love you, I love you* to yourself, and be mnemonically returned to the first time you read me.

"A bookcase may be fitted with glass doors that can be closed to protect the books from dust or moisture. Bookcase doors are almost always glazed with glass, so as to allow the spines of the books to be read." ¹ Crane your neck and hunger for the turgid spines of those old editions but you may not touch them.

(1) <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bookcase>

Semuel Lala and Michael Zimmermann The decay settled.

A wired gloss covered the sky on that day, it pulled some people towards it, upwards at first. I didn't know them so well, I was new there. I felt bad for them, sure, but it was so amazing the way the gloss flickered half glittery, gigantic like the sooo fire palette.

Urban decay swept across the ground, the sprawl rose like mold, jealous and hungry and always associative with the direction it decided to grow in; first locally, then towards the main airports, then becoming decay international.

The gloss reflected the world back at itself, all the major cities were confronted with their own shadows, upside down; their silhouettes shimmering.



It shone iridescent, it felt other. Shocking. It got everybody (in a state of tonic immobility / playing dead), buying just about enough time so that it could say what it had to say.

Ethereal and formless—yet with an undeniable presence, the gloss had quite a lot to communicate before fragmenting into thousands of little fractal bits like mini starburst pieces; even more shimmer, even more resplendence; as they fell down, precipitating into the depths of the world, lower and lower, crossing into the underworld classic, setting spells in motion.

Like in a fever dream, underworld residents were freed—the surface became flooded. I realized things that year.

Glistening meteoritic fragments became a remainder of a broken unity, stuck in time and space; they turned into kaleidoscopic monuments and the decay became sediment.

Underworld peace.

Housing became cheaper, glamour: free, under the condition that it remained aware of itself.

Gloss, forgotten.

(☹️)

Proposal:

Essentially, an invitation is understood to extend from one position towards another, establishing the terms of some kind of request or desired exchange, to be accepted or denied. However, beyond just a spirit of generosity or goodwill often assumed to be at its root, what relational arrangements does an invitation produce, what affects and languages can it provoke (between us)?

While being conditioned by the spaces that frame them, invitations, at the same time, set preconditions for spaces to emerge upon. Hosting at your home, welcoming in, sharing the proximal space of intimacy, conversely, giving space, freeing up room from self, therefore withdrawing, but also, accommodating ideas and words; matters of surplus and capacity, a favour to return a thousand times over.

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Leere Bücherregale

Liebe Sita,

kein Freud und keine Bibel stehen in deinen Bücherregalen, keine Gesellschaft des Spektakels und kein Fremder. Kein Kant, kein Mann. Da sind auch keine Bildbände mit scheiss Malerei. Keine Enzyklopädien. Auch keine Poesie. Leere Bücherregale ohne egale Bücher. Keine alten Säcke alphabetisch geordnet. Keine Erstausgaben oder Neuauflagen. Keine Leihgaben, Eselsohren oder ...

Ein leeres Bücherregal. Ohne Biografien. Ohne das ganze Theater. Theatertexte. Texte zur Kunst. KUNSTTHEORIE. Scheisse. Theoriearbeiten. Wir müssen niemandem mehr die Worte im Mund umdrehen oder die Zunge. Jetzt sind alle auf einmal still. Jetzt schreibt niemand. Jetzt wird mal nicht verglichen.

Die Uhren sind stehen geblieben, wie nach einer Explosion. Chronos ist tot.

Auf den Strassen Müll vergangener Zeiten. Versteinerte Happy Meals. Asphaltierte Kotze geschichtet auf Vergissmeinnicht. Die Arbeit als Archäologe ist eine schwierige, wenn man sich mit der Tatsache konfrontiert sieht, die Dummheit der Menschen ausgraben und dann zu guter Letzt gar archivieren zu müssen. Aber Arbeit ist Arbeit. Und arbeiten ist scheisse. War es schon immer und ist es noch. Konservierter Hass als Fossilien.

Geschrumpfte Hirne, die von einem Kaugummi nicht zu unterscheiden waren. War auch gleich. Alles in eine Mulde. Hirne und Airways. Die Evolution hat sich den Trick ausgedacht, das Hirn über all die Jahre schrumpfen zu lassen. Wie Trockenobst.

Selbst die versteinerten psychoaktiven Substanzen waren grösser, als das menschliche Hirn. Eine Droge, die grösser ist als das Gehirn. Eine Droge, die das zentrale Nervensystem nicht mehr erreichen kann, weil es vergammelt und von Wurzeln durchwachsen auf offener Strasse klebt. Plattgetreten wie die tausenden Kaugummis. Das Hirn, die Droge. Die Rezeptoren haben schon vor der Katastrophe ihre Arbeit niedergelegt. Und waren nur noch das Zeichen für etwas Vergangenes, das Zeichen für Glück und Schmerz. Gefühlt hatte keine*r mehr. Selbst die Depression, der Volkstanz jener Zeit, war nur noch eine Bewegung. Geweint hatte niemand, noch gelitten. Abgestumpfte Menschen ohne funktionierende Drogen. Kein Glaube konnte sie retten, kein Kraut und keine Kohle. Der Mensch hat sich abgeschafft. Dummheit wird der Natur immer erliegen. Alle wollten sich so sehr von den Tieren abheben und nannten sich trotzdem Maus oder Bärchen. Und alle haben gelesen und gelesen, auswendig gelernt und sich die Regale vollgestellt mit toten Theorien, verkapptem Hass. Doch Papier verrottet, aber Aluminium nicht, jetzt sind die Regale leer. Jetzt können wir Standardwerke herausgeben, Wörterbücher schreiben.

Alles wird gut,

Nils