



THE MOST SHE WEIGHED
THE LEAST SHE WEIGHED

a reader

CONTENTS

<i>Introduction</i> Jen Hutton	2
<i>Self-Representation and Fictionalysis</i> Daphne Marlatt	3
<i>Auto Portrait</i> Liz Magor	8
<i>A Lot of Near Mrs.</i> Michael Snow	15
<i>Portrait of a Legend/Legend of a Portrait</i> Tiziana La Melia	17
<i>The Western Gothic: A Film Script</i> Sandra Meigs	20
Credits	21

INTRODUCTION

For a period in the early 1980s, Liz Magor made a series of sculptures and bookworks based on a seemingly insignificant anecdote. Each work articulated the story of Dorothy, an acquaintance of the artist, who for most of her life remained at 98 pounds—a weight that the woman most identified with—though she recorded several fluctuations at various points in her life. *The Most She Weighed / The Least She Weighed*, a sculpture that Magor completed in 1982, visualized Dorothy’s lifetime using two collections of cast lead objects—such as eggs, bananas, and light bulbs—on a pair of metal shelves to approximate these two extremes.

It is curious to think, in an age where representations of one’s identity seem hinged on more pressing concerns—political, sexual, racial—how weight, articulated as tangible objects in Magor’s work, becomes a qualifier for someone’s lifetime. Similarly, Felix Gonzalez-Torres’s candy spills come to mind, in the sense that the objects that comprise his portraits generate an overwhelming presence of lives lived, as well as a sense of absence as they are dispersed and depleted.

It is within this framework that the group exhibition *The Most She Weighed / The Least She Weighed* begins by bringing together a selection of works by Brian Groombridge, Tiziana La Melia, Arnaud Maggs, Liz Magor, Sandra Meigs, Sasha Pierce, and Michael Snow that “bracket” a biography of a woman that, in this case, doesn’t really exist. Her presence and her absence are described through works that evoke a body, or allude to weight as a state of mind. These works sketch out a portrait of a person who might be or once was, but one that is far from complete.

The exhibition’s narrative impulse prevails in this accompanying reader, an anthology of previously published writing by Tiziana La Melia, Liz Magor, Daphne Marlatt, Sandra Meigs, and Michael Snow. This collection of paratexts has been assembled as a proxy to a curatorial statement and is considered as an exhibition in its own right within the “venue” of a bound document. Though each text does not embody a single point of view—approaching biography from poetic, historical, and/or critical modes—what they do hold in common that each author seems to be seeking his or her subject. These pluralistic approaches resonate with the theme of the exhibition, and perhaps speak to the model of any curated project: that a collectively formed identity will always be partial.

Jen Hutton

Self-Representation and Fictionalysis

Daphne Marlatt

Auto-représentation et fictionalyse

Toute biographie est une re-constitution fictive d'une vie réelle. Grâce à cette forme, les femmes peuvent rassembler ce qui est fragmenté et généralement considéré comme sans valeur (la maternité, leur sexe, le travail domestique etc.). Mais l'autobiographie va plus loin: elle est la coïncidence entre fiction (le moi et les moi que nous pourrions être) et l'analyse (i.e. les rôles dévolus aux femmes par le contexte socio-familial et culturel). Parce qu'elle est l'écriture comme vie, elle donne (à chaque femme qui écrit) la possibilité de tisser (texter) sa vie, de la rendre visible / lisible par toutes les autres femmes. L'autobiographie devient alors un contexte dans lequel d'autres femmes peuvent s'inscrire en tant que différence.

For the critic, the question behind autobiography seems to be first of all how does the writer represent herself? For the writer it is how do you represent others? An interesting differential which, in either case, brings up the notion of truth and how or whether it differs from fiction. The writer worries about the difference between how she sees the people she writes about and how they see themselves. The critic looks at the self that is being presented and its difference from what is known about the writer's life, the facts, say. Or 'the (f) stop of act' as Annie puts it in *Ana Historic*, isolating fact like the still photo as a moment frozen out of context, that context which goes on shifting, acting, changing after the f-stop has closed its recording eye. The fact a still frame. The self framed she suspects, caught in the ice of representation.

As if there were a self that existed beyond representation as some sort of isolatable entity. And then, for company's sake, your self-representation, your self and your self-representation sitting side by side or

better yet, coinciding. And without that coincidence some one can say, 'Oh, she's making herself out to be ...' Oh dear, fiction as falsity.

Fiction, however, has always included the notion of making, even making something up (as if that something had never existed before), and goes back to a very concrete Indo-European word, *deigh*, meaning to knead clay. In many creation myths, a goddess or a god molded us and made us, touched us into life, made us up. Out of nothing, out of a whole cloth as the saying goes. And so, this nothing-something, or this something that is nothing, we insist, as a species, on hanging desperately onto our Somethingness. Fact or photo or figure (even clay), separate from ground, but not ground, not that ... facelessness. Women are ground, women are nature – well, we know all this, how for us it's no small feat to be Something, given the ways our culture reinforces the notion that we are *less* Something than men. And yet we continually demonstrate our abilities to generate something out of almost nothing: a whole baby, a whole book, the whole cloth of a life.

To pick up that phrase 'out of whole cloth' is to find an odd reversal, given that 'whole' means healthy, undivided, intact, the whole of something. How is it that the whole phrase has come to mean pure fabrication, a tissue of lies? Whole the other side of hole, w (for women?) the transforming link. We can't seem to avoid the notion that making and the thing made – tissue, or text for that matter, since they come from the same root, have, at root, nothing: 'you made it up,' or more usually, 'you just made it up' (as if making were easy). In our culture of ready-mades, making anything is an accomplishment, making something of yourself even more so, but add that little word 'up' and you add speciousness, you add a sneer. Children learn that dressing themselves is an achievement but dressing up is only play, child's play as they say of something easy. Yet as children we know that play is not only easy, it is also absorbing and immensely serious, that play is the actual practice (not factual but act-ual) of who else we might be.

A powerful put-down that word 'up.' Does it imply we're trying to imitate the gods and have no business reaching a notch higher on the scale of creation, especially when it comes to creating ourselves? Or is that scale fictional too and 'up' merely indicates we're getting close to something non-hierarchical and very real as in 'i'm waking up'?

Perhaps what we wake up to in autobiography is a beginning realization of the whole cloth of ourselves in connection with so many others. Particularly as women analyzing our lives, putting the pieces together, the repressed, suppressed, putting our finger on the power dynamics at play. It is exactly in the confluence of fiction (the self or selves we might be) and analysis (of the roles we have found ourselves in, defined in a complex socio-familial weave), it is in the confluence of the two that autobiography occurs, the self writing its way to life, whole life. This is the practice of the imaginary in its largest sense, for without vision we can't see where we're going or even where we are. Autobiography is not separable from poetry for me on this ground i would call fictionalalysis: a self-analysis that plays fictively with the primary images of one's life, a fiction that uncovers analytically that territory where fact and fiction coincide.

In *Ana Historic*, Annie and Ina discuss the difference between story and history, between making things up (out of nothing) and the facts, those frozen somethings of evidence. But what is evident to Annie is not always evident to Ina, because in each of them the seeing occurs in differently informed ways. Clearly, there are different kinds of seeing, as evidence by another little word, 'through': seeing through, which isn't prepared to take things at face value. For Annie the facts are 'skeletal bones of a suppressed body the story is,' and that suppressed body which can be resurrected by dint of making up is the unwritten story of who (else) each of the women in the book might be. It is through analysis, analysis of the social context each of them inhabit, that Annie can write her way through the bare bones of who they apparently are to the full sense and the full sensory body of who each of them might be, *if* they could imagine themselves to their fullest.

And why isn't the imaginary part of one's life story? Every poet knows it is, just as i know that in inventing a life from Mrs. Richards, i as Annie (and Annie isn't me though she may be one of the selves i could be) invented a historical leak, a hole in the sieve of fact that let the shadow of a possibility leak through into full-blown life. History is not the dead and gone, it lives on in us in the way it shapes our thought and especially our thought about what is possible. Mrs. Richards is a historical leak for the possibility of lesbian life in Victorian British Columbia, which like some deep-packed bedrock continues to underlie the leather shops and tinted glass of our high-rise

1990's. We live in that context: the actuality of both. Just as we also live in the context of salmon rivers polluted with dioxins, harassed abortion clinics, Hong Kong's historic jitters, eco-islands of Sitka spruce, half-hidden memories of child abuse, and whatever hungry ghosts still pursue each one of us – to pull only a few threads of the whole cloth. The context is huge, a living tissue we live together with/in.

To write a whole autobiography, i mean autobiography in its largest sense of self writing life, not the life of the self but the life self writes its way to, the whole cloth, is to reach for what is almost unwriteable, a hole in that other sense. Yet autobiography until recently was set aside as a minor form, a sort of documentary support like letters or journal-writing, for the great texts. Its significance lay in its veracity, the faithfulness with which it followed the 'life-line', the overall narrative of its writer's life, without leaving any holes or gaps, certainly without contradiction. The 'life-line' after all represents a single line, just as the writer's representation of herself should be a true likeness – *like what?* Given the whole cloth, the truth of ourselves is so large it is almost impossible to write. It is full of holes, pulled threads, multiple lines, figures indistinct from ground.

Here we run up against the reductiveness of language which wants to separate – what do you mean threads? ground? Get your metaphors straight for god's sake, no for your reader's sake. Who's the creator here anyway? Maybe language after all, despite itself. But that's only if we can subvert its mainline story, that black stands to white as woman to man, that is, for the sake of definition (which language is all about) as ground to figure. Language defines Something, the subject let's say, as *different* from any thing and any other, who is always merely object. We begin to see the bias of the subject operating here and that this subject who so dominates the stage of representation is white, heterosexual, middle-class, monological, probably Christian and usually male. Wherever we as women overlap with any of those aspects, we inherit that bias. It leaks out everywhere in the most familiar of colloquial phrases, of idiomatic usage, in the very, indeed – and only by varying them (disrespectfully the subject might say, intent on the singular line of his story), only by altering them infinitesimally, undermining what they say, bending them into knots, into not's and un's, can we break the rigid difference between figure and ground

which preserves that figure's hegemony, his 'truth.' No wonder women have such difficulty with the truth – such a single-minded / simple-minded truth it is, with no sense at all of the truth of the ground, of that which bears us in all our harrowing complexity: context.

Autobiography has come to be called 'life-writing' which i take to mean writing for your life and as such it suggests the way in which the many small real-other-i-zations can bring the unwritten, unrecognized, ahistoric ground of a life into being as a recognizable power or agency. This happens when we put together the disparate parts of our lives and begin to see the extensiveness of that cloth of connectedness we are woven into. Then we begin, paradoxically, to weave for ourselves the cloth of our life as we want it to be. For it is in the energetic imagining of all that we are that we can enact ourselves. Every woman we have read who has written about women's lives lives on in us, in what we know of our own capacity for life, and becomes part of the context for our own writing, our own imagining.

When text becomes context, when it leaves behind the single-minded project of following a singular life-line, when it drops out of narrative as climax and opts for narrative as interaction with what surrounds us, then we are in the presence of a writing for life, a writing that ditches dualistic polarities (the good guys vs. the bad guys, gays, bitches, blacks – you see how many of us there are), dodges the hierarchies (the achieved, the significant vs. the inessential, the failed, which goes to the root of our fear about life: was it all for nothing?) – it's all there in the so-called 'nothing.'

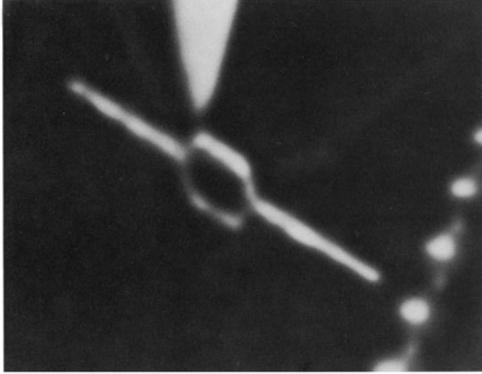
Auto Portrait

Shortly after Samuel Beckett's death, I again heard the story of how Suzanne Deschevaux-Dumesnil leapt from her bicycle to rescue the writer as he lay dying in a Paris street with a stab wound in his chest. And how, after helping him recover from his grave injury, she devoted her life to his work by organizing everything for him, from homeopathic diets to publishing contracts. It could be argued that Beckett's life was saved first by his overcoat, and then by Suzanne. The coat, by virtue of its thick cloth, prevented the knife from penetrating his heart and, pinned to his chest, offered a felty swaddling, keeping the knife out and the body in, as the spider-legs gave way, and Beckett fell to the ground.

The scene: a lamp-lit alley. The attacker runs into the shadows; demi-monde type, greasy hair, tight skivvy, elevated shoes. The bike enters; balloon tires, a tubular, curved frame and high, wide handlebars. It falls to the ground. A woman runs to Beckett's side. Do her shoes make a noise on the wet stones? Does her skirt spread out around her as she bends down? Is her hair loose? (Blond? Black?) Does it fall forward as she leans to look at him? Is she a nurse, a Nightingale? Is she Estragon already, an Irish *butty* in a big coat?

She **was** something, I think. Training to **be** something. On her way home from somewhere. She's wearing a dress, mid-calf, with a neat pair of flats on her perfect dancer's feet. Or is she a painter in black pants? Was this before the war or after? Her hair must be short. She could be a writer: tight, grey suit, white shirt. This would have her walking the bike as she approaches, leaving a hand free to hold a cigarette. But this is Beckett again. Now all social costumes dissolve, giving way to a stranger image: a cowl, a tunic, a habit, a shirt of hair. She leaps from her bike in robes. But this is Squeaky Fromme.

To clear things up, I turn to biographies, expecting to find photographs of this selfless assistant. I even anticipate a picture of the rescue itself, a tableau of all the players: the bike, the knife, the pimp, the coat, the writer and the rescuer. But there is no photograph of that night, as there is no photograph of Suzanne – though Beckett is everywhere. A beautiful, wounded bird. An edgy line of pain in every picture. I search the group shots for his female equivalent, knowing that together they will make a dark track over the field of healthy people. She's not there. I find only one photograph that includes her, a snapshot, really, of three small, fuzzy people in a garden. It was taken at Ussé in 1952. Beckett's brother Frank is in the middle. His right arm encircles Sam from behind and clasps him under the arm and high on the chest. He is pulling Sam in, literally holding him in the picture.

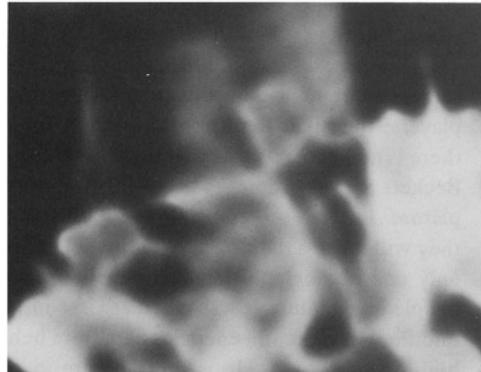


Nora Joyce Jersey blouse gathered at the shoulder, belted at the hip. Small, contrasting collar. Polka-dot crepe de chine shirt, flounced. Silver pin with onyx centre. Long strand of onyx beads. Hair waved with scalloped edge framing the face.

Teha'amana Ankle length, cotton missionary dress. Bodice yoked and Shirred. Batiste scarf knotted at the left shoulder. Flowers over right ear. Hair worn long and loose. One lock curled on the forehead.



Coretta King Black wool dress with squared neckline. Three-quarter length sleeves, set-in. Large corsage with tulle and ribbon bow. Gold watch. White drop earrings. Hair loose, high at the crown, off the forehead.



Suzanne assists in this endeavour by standing on Frank's other side. With her body close to his, they are united as a counterbalance to Sam's entropic lean to the left. She's wearing a suit with a pleated skirt and tailored jacket. She has a brooch on her jacket and a leather bag hooked over her left shoulder. Her hair is blond and waved. She's wearing lipstick. She's smiling. She is not a wraith. She appears to be normal.

I am surprised by her substance. I was expecting a ghost. Or perhaps this photograph of three people in a garden has brought another to mind: Virginia Woolf, T.S. Eliot and his first wife Vivienne are in a garden in the summer of 1932. Virginia is in the middle. She seems completely at ease, both with her company and in her clothes, wearing a cardigan and blouse, skirt, sunhat, beads, and flat, laced shoes. She leans toward Tom and away from Vivienne. Her right arm overlaps Tom's while her left, akimbo, thrusts its elbow at Vivienne, driving her toward the edge of the frame. In Virginia's mind, at least, this is a portrait of two writers. Vivienne, thus banished, draws her feet together, pulls her arms back and disappears, offering her body as a lifeless rack for her outfit. Hers is a coordinated ensemble: garden dress, stockings and shoes – all in white and held down by an embellished, wide-brimmed hat. The intention, clearly, is to cut a sweet figure, evoking childhood and innocence with maybe a touch of Alice. Standing beside the giantess, Vivienne appears small enough to pull it off, but her Wonderland must be a horror if it could freeze her in such a posture of anxiety. Her own body betrays her disguise and the carefully selected costume becomes a shroud for a dissolving self.

Tom, of course, way over on the other side seems oblivious to all this, just as he seems oblivious to the weather. In contrast to his wife's short-sleeved summer dress, he is wearing a thick, tweedy suit with a vest. Perhaps this failure to notice things accounts for his being photographed *sans* spouse for the next 25 years. In any case a second wife doesn't appear until 1957, and, when she does, you can tell by her clothes that she's more appropriate.

Just as Suzanne leapt from her bike to scoop up Samuel Beckett, so Valerie Fletcher leapt from hers to scoop up loose papers. At the age of fourteen, she declared her intention to serve as secretary to a celebrated writer, and realized her ambition in 1950 when she reached T.S. Eliot's desk. In his service she evolved from secretary, to spouse, to literary executrix, extending her care to the posthumous. Valerie was frequently photographed: at Eliot's side during his lifetime, and as his representative after his death. Like a politician's wife she dresses with an understanding of her public responsibility. She is costumed but doesn't appear to be, so closely does she conform to the fashions of the time. As with others who appeal to the confidence of the public, she uses fashion to present the paradox of being willing to change while remaining conservative. Always her pleasure and flourish in dressing are restrained; the evening dress that hovers on the far edge of the shoulders, not daring to slide into straplessness; the silver fox collar and hat that would never conspire to being a full fur coat.

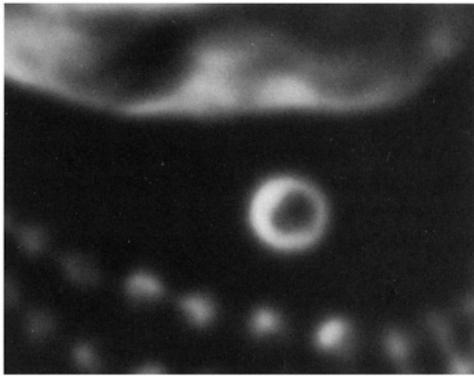
But Valerie's clothes diverge from those of the public figure, if not in appearance, at least in function. She can be seen as offering assurance more than seeking it, as her constituency was but one person – Tom Eliot, from whom she had a mandate for life. Both her public and private selves were charged with maintaining his work, so her wardrobe also took on a double role. While her correct hemlines declared to the world that all was well with the genius, her command of

the codes of fashion just as effectively assured her melancholy poet that all was right with the world.

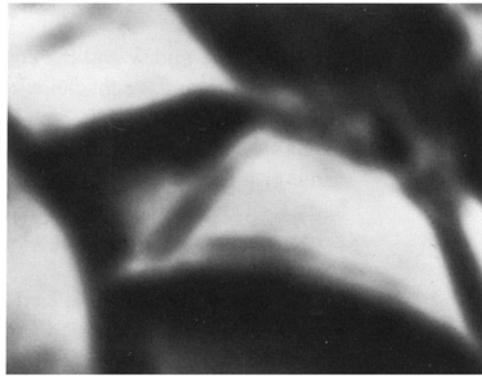
A harder task fell to Nora Joyce insofar as assurances of normalcy were concerned, and it appears that she took to fashion for recreation rather than for duty. She exercised her interest extravagantly when means allowed, outfitting the whole family *à la mode* down to the last shoe buckle. Yet for some reason the stylishness attributed to James, Lucia and Giorgio does not attach itself to Nora. In his portraits, Joyce's wonderful elegance seems inherent and his characteristic vanity is seldom extended to his wife. Perhaps this is consistent with the perceived differences between them – he was literate, she was not; he was intellectual, she was not; he was frail, she was not; he was natty, she was not. This idea is reinforced by the conflation of Nora's identity with Molly Bloom's – drawn as a large, female thing with a mouth, who would no more punctuate her appearance with fashion than her speech with pauses. Besides, who needs clothes when one is constantly abed?

The aspects of his wife's identity that obsessed James Joyce certainly didn't encompass all that she embodied, yet the accounts of who she was have consistently sided with the literary portrait over historical accounts. Photographs, anecdotes and letters concerning the Joyces are a finite resource and are subject to various arrangements. For example, in Richard Ellman's 1959 biography of Joyce, there is only one photograph of Nora alone. She's in costume for a play – Synge's *Riders to the Sea* – and consequently is barefoot, wearing a peasant skirt and flowered blouse. Her blouse is wrinkled and her cuffs unfastened. The effect is rural: free, natural, careless. In the rest of the book there are no pictures of Nora without a hat; we never see her hair or her hands. She is usually buried in a crowd or lost in the murky resolution of the photographic emulsion. Like Vivienne Eliot she is so close to the edge, margins and nether worlds of the pictures that she is at risk of dropping out of sight and memory altogether. She takes on the characteristics of the pictures and seems indistinct and forgettable. But a rearrangement of documents by Helen Maddox in 1988 shows more, including a beautiful portrait by Berenice Abbott that reveals Nora as a match for Joyce – at least in terms of self-esteem. For his cane top, she has marcelled hair; for his ringed fingers, her pins and beads; for his stripes, her polkadots; for his bow tie, her lace collar. More surprising is a studio portrait taken in 1935, the glamour of which is attributable as much to Nora's own regal posture as to studio lighting. The elegance of this portrait is generated by the subject herself who comments on her own pale skin and silver hair by wearing a black dress with a white fox fur. This photograph confounds the image of Nora as a barefoot girl of Galway, offering instead a sophisticated Parisienne who frequents the same designer as Marlene Dietrich.

In terms of how people are represented in a given work – through photography or writing – there's a question as to whether or not the real-life models for stories fare better than those for pictures. People who end up in books are usually given full treatment: a name, a context, a role. Often they are depicted so faithfully that they can be traced as being the inspiration for a character. Certainly the tenure for the literary model is quieter and longer because its effectiveness as subject is dependent upon the slow formation of a psychological shape. Models and muses for visual artists, on the other hand, may be better able to protect their identity as they can confine their offering; they retain proprietary rights to subjecthood.



Anna Freud Dark cashmere cardigan. Tortoise-shell buttons. Grey pleated wool skirt. Double strand of jade beads. Roundfaced watch with brown leather strap. Hair cut short, unstyled.



Chiang Ch'ing Heavy-weight cotton overcoat with wide lapels. Cotton pants and shirt, loose fitting. Buttoned breast pockets and safari pockets at the hip. Hair, short bob, parted in the centre.



Alma Mahler Alpaca dress with high collar. Gathered sleeve caps. Bodice full in front, pulled in at waist with a sash. Shell cameo at the throat. Gold chain and locket. Hair piled on the head with a chignon at the nape.

Both the nudity and the costume of the model in the studio are abstractions and act as camouflage for the sitter. The figure doesn't refer to a psyche as much as it refers to light and to how light plays on the surface of the body. However, looking at photographs of models at work, one tries to look under the skin for a name or a notion of self. The hair is checked for style, the face for makeup, the body for features that may generate empathy. But consistently the body remains generic in the studio; it's not a body but a figure, and no particular person resides there.

'Think of Teha'amana. Left alone in the dark in Paul Gauguin's hut, she flings herself in terror onto the bed and is found there when the painter returns. He is moved by the intensity of her fear and her primitive perception of what surrounds her in the dark. He decides to paint the scene. But what he paints is a beautiful pattern, with a brown figure as part of an arrangement of colours. This is not a Zelda Fitzgerald situation. Teha'amana can jump up, leaving the brown body behind, and tell her own story of what happened that night, not that we'll ever hear it, but, if we did, we would not confuse it with the other.

In fact, Teha'amana did jump up and tell a bit about herself. She sat for a photograph. She is sitting, not lying on a bed or a beach. Her hair is very shiny, and she has two flowers tucked, Tahitian style, over her right ear. She's wearing a white cotton dress, the kind distributed by missionaries in a bid to cover up the miles of pagan skin they encountered, and instill a notion of Christian modesty. It looks something like a nightdress, loose, with a shirred bodice and high neckline. If nothing else, the conflicting signs of the flower and the dress situate Teha'amana at a point of cultural change for her people. We can only speculate that the choices concerning her appearance in this photograph indicate her feelings or opinions on questions central to her identity.

Granted, **CHOICE** may be too strong a word – not just for Teha'amana, but also for Nora, Valerie and Suzanne. Getting dressed is a social act, negotiating what is desired and what is allowed. To wear clothes is to speak in a public language about one's status, sensibilities and expectations. A choice with regard to appearance is checked on every side and often seems the result more of coercion than of deliberation. There may be no choice that hasn't already been made. There may be nothing to wear but conventions.

But the best thing about conventions is that there are so many of them. If dress is a language, then the conventions of dress are its units, and they abound. In the inexhaustible recombinations of fashion's bits and pieces, a potential for expression can be found – not an expression inclined to profundity, but something exquisitely superficial. Fashion's qualities are best enumerated in a kind of inverted list of what modern art is: fashion is **NOT** private, it **IS** substantial and representational, and its trajectory is **ALWAYS** described in full public view.

For some, the extroversion of clothing is a sublimation of what is hidden or invisible. For others, subjected to massive doses of introspection through their service to art or artists, dressing becomes a critical alternative, a parallel to private production. It is the negotiation of an identity that is separate from work. It is the arrangement of one's appearance synchronized with the arrangement of an environment for thinking. It becomes a declaration of the real from one who serves the abstract.

When Nora left Dublin in 1904, she wasn't sailing into exile only as Joyce's

companion. In large part she was embarking on a journey alone, navigating the dense fog of his self-absorption, in constant danger of being obliterated by the blanket of his work and interiority. Photographs log this 35-year marriage, documenting her survival in terms that she could command. With Nora, and others like her, each bead, button and bow is a triumph of self-representation. Everything she wore is a marker on the flooded landscape that was her life, and her clothes and jewelry still bob, like painted buoys, defying the vast sea of obscurity that surrounds her.

A Lot of Near Mrs.

This text was written while Joyce Wieland and I were living in Toronto but making frequent trips to New York to prepare for a long stay there (looking for a loft, etc.) I started to write it basically to clarify things for myself. It was prompted, however, by an attempt to answer what I felt were misunderstandings in what was being written about the work I was doing. It was never published in the sixties but Arnold Rockman used a copy of it in preparing his excellent article in *Canadian Art* in Nov/Dec 1963.

Michael Snow, August 1983

The following text, written in 1962-63, is reprinted with the permission of the publishers, Peter Martin Associates Limited, from *Snow Seen*. Copyright © 1980, Regina Cornwell, distributed by The Book Society of Canada Limited, 4386 Sheppard Ave. E., Agincourt, Ont., M1S 3B6.
W.W. is Snow's abbreviation for the Walking Woman.

Closed shop. Trademark. Trade: Art. *A sign to sign*. Put the outside inside where it belongs. Simultaneity. 'She' is the same in different places and different times at same place and time. Repetition: Trademark, my trade, my mark. Mock mass production. Art the only 'cottage industry' left. Juxtaposition: a 'surrealism' of media within one subject. Social comment, narrative, realism, satire, allegory, abstraction, didacticism, mysticism: art from drawing to past sculpture. Stage director. Fact and fiction: the relationships between space and light illusions (imagination?) and a physically finite object. Coloring books: anyone can do it. Jane Arden. Perils of Pauline. W.W. is detached from her background or 'she' is in reciprocal relations to it. If 'she' is cut-out (no depicted background) alone on the wall the relationships might be just internal or just with the real environment. Art as a form of *mummification*. 'Solid color space ladies.' Women historically as subject in art. Women 'characters', 'types,' 'actresses' designed by artists. Cranach, Rubens, Ingres, Renoir, Pascin, Modigliani, Picasso etc. 'Abstract' *this* element of painting. *One* drawing. Contour to be not only rectangle but just contour of single subject. To 'cut-out' means to (slang) leave. Girl watching. Passing out of the picture and yes we'll soon be passing out of the picture. Pedestrienne. Stepping out. Yes my work is pedestrian. Revelation of process as subject in Pollock, DeKooning continue. Scientific method. Experiments. Problem of originality: invent a subject. Impossible but try. Presence-absence. Be a *tracer of missing persons*. The subject could have been *my* image but prefer to add, multiply create not mirror. Use time: outdoor exposure for one month: weather woman Jan. 1 to 31. Weather report. Given *model* tracing, stenciling, printing are means of including the subject in the work, in the process show the path of the model. My subject is not women or a woman *but* the first cardboard cutout of W.W. I made. A second remove depiction. Always use it same size as original. 5 ft. tall. W.W. is not an idea, its just a drawing, not a very good one either! Bad taste conversion W.W. though representational is invented, an *individual*. One subject, *any* medium. My work is *inclusive* not exclusive, puppetry, choreography. I'm not so interested in making a lot of paintings, sculpture etc. as finding out what happens when you do such and such a thing. A stand-in or abstract person. Attempt to extend certain values of American abstract painting by doing them backwards or 'wrong'(?). 'Art' and 'life' problem. Duchamp. If you can use stuff from the street as art in an art gallery why can't you use 'paintings' or art as art in the street. Not found art but *lost* art. Who can see it? Trying to find new uses for representation. Not a 'figure painter.' Abstraction of *style*. Is that possible? But art is something too. What? An 'abstract shape can be sexier than a (beautiful) representation of a (beautiful) breast but neither are sexier than a (beautiful) breast. Art is an addition to life not only a quote. If you can use 'anything' to make art how about a self contained factory where the material is made to make the art with. What if Braque had printed his own newspaper to use in his collages. I'm doing that. Exhibition

'announcements' as much part of it as the paintings All art. Figure in art: 'poses' have been explored (Rodin) no more poses. 'New' representational art and its uses. A representation can be used for something else. I will take orders for any use to which 'she' might be put. *Art pimp*. Lady fence, lady table, lady chair, lady lamp, rubber (balloon) lady, water bottle lady, fur lady, stained glass lady, lady road sign, lady shovel, lady car, lady dart board, lady hat rack, leading lady, first lady, lady like. Home made ready made, ways to maintain the freedom of color possible in abstract painting, represent a woman and not be surrealist i.e., look a green woman! Space must not be 'deep' color and form, material must be one, if any, brush strokes must be subordinate to the image. Art is artificial, not life-like, not warm. Food art goes bad. For me superiority of Vermeer to Rembrandt and of Rembrandts drawing to his paintings ... myth Canada, myth America, modern myth. What are the differences in 'meaning' in comparing the same form (W. W.) in sponge rubber, in plastic, in sand, in light, etc.??* Forms made by manipulation of material, what happens when there is an image on or in the material. Little paintings, printings in street, subway, etc. Compositions of same. Perhaps another painter might paint it. Audience participation: people scribble on, attack etc. These 'posters,' who thinks they are 'art'? I've reclaimed some of the drawn-on etc. ones. Dispersal: 4 or 5 'paintings' in the street, related but separated by as many blocks. Valery: 'The subject of a poem is as foreign to it and as important, as his name is to a man.' Influences and thank you: Duchamp, Matisse, DeKooning, Mondrian. Echoings of artist working in 'Happenings' and 'environments', the ideas, having never seen same. Personality could that be a subject? Patent pending, reaction painter. Culturally today anyone who doesn't know jazz (AM Negro music) doesn't know their arts from a hole in the ground. I'm optically amoral. I don't see what those signs and those things are selling. Some of my ideas turn out to be similar. An unexplainable coincidence which is not leading me to work directly from that material tho I often see signs, displays, etc., which are very interesting. I like work of Johns, Oldenberg, Dine, partly because apparently they came to similar conclusions arising out of the accomplishments of the great senior New York painters. Media scale: sculpture, relief, painting, drawing, printing, film, music. I arbitrarily continue with an arbitrarily chosen subject: It was not designed for uses which could be foreseen. Chance. I take a chance 'drawn personification' of things that happened in abstract art. Tattooing. Art as art criticism (reversible). Opposites. Film I'm working on seems to concern itself with the poetry of the juxtaposition of the static and the dynamic, absence, presence, development of events-for-capture = art series of photographs taken in Toronto April '62. Setting a plywood black cut-out of W. W. in street and recording passerby reaction and often beautiful resulting compositions. Neurotic, erotic, aesthetic. Make light of the figure. Made first cut-out or wall life size 'realistic' figures of cardboard in Oct. 1960. They were result of several years worrying about *where* the figure is or could be or would be. This is the problem. I solved it by removing the figure from *where* and putting it *here*. On the wall or in the room. She was detached from her background or removed from her 'environment' and placed in a 'foreign' one. In painting a figure on/in the rectangle the relationships exist between the figure and its environment. When you paint a 'cut-out' flat representation of a figure rather than on a rectangle, the relationships now are internal. The 'environment' of the figure now becomes separate, and out of my control. But now I think of where as well as what. ('lost' compositions, mail, females, publicity pix, etc.). No distortions of figure itself. W. W. always same contour. I *don't 'believe'* in representation. But we really look and say 'it's a woman!' Passing through. Is 'material' a representation too. Is it any *realer*. We *must* believe that it is. My 'subject' is the same in the 59 and 60 abstract paintings and sculpture but now it is acted. Time. Impossible. La Femme qui Marche. Near miss. Women are the nearest 'other'. The first 'other'. There is something *inside* repetition. 'Participation mystique' with machine production. Hand made art-machine made art. Detachiste art. Tits and arts.

Michael Snow, 1962-63
 Toronto-New York

Portrait of a Legend/Legend of a Portrait, 2007

Tiziana La Melia

First, I painted several portraits. From this germinated a poem.

I first presented the text as an ink drawing. Flanking each sentence was a symbol. At the time, I attempted to translate each symbol and each line into subsequent drawings. I called the poems translation 1, 2 and so forth. Though reading it now they read more like descriptive ornaments around that first attempt.

Although there was satisfaction in the motions of making faces, I began to mistake it for places. Concerned more with the subtleties of the atmosphere surrounding this person, I wanted to extend the idea of what this portrait could be. And so, this is what it reads like now, without its symbols.

Pink line at an angle is a straw used for sucking.
Inside, mellow yellow elbows promise happy days.

7-11 colours are the destination track for an evening miscellaneous.
This green red and orange is the backdrop for flesh—fade sugar mind gone!

Brown arc is the space on the forehead where bangs cut straight across.
Swung line is the do in humid weather.

This shape in hollandaise yellow is when we wore the same quite correct clothing.
If serrate then, a collar.
Two dips punctuate at a tip below a chin is speaking grey fade brush over shoulder,
a fine bone to step over.

Broken lines that slant is rain.
A hand holding a mop of wet hair flipped over is the heaviness.

A rock wrapped in cigarette paper is the document of a trip to the lake.
At 20 dropping stones into water is an excuse to be still still.

SOMETHING SOMETHING on a wooden stage is to exhibit posture.
Only the birthday mood is the head curving the spine where time clings.

This red Bing cherry red is the prettiest rarer room that was styled for a birth.
The outline is a window for viewing live air: pairs standing face to face shifting
their weight from one foot to the other.

Pools of ink are the leaves marking the street with dots and flicks.
AUDRINA, AUDI, APPLES where lists are made behind eyes.

Dots are a path into an alliterative reality.
Emotion is the motion for the ellipsis of bus stop spots adorable and as real as first times.

Blue arc is the sky, we along the bottom of it, when the memory of itself is itself,
is itself more real, filmic.
Even if it flickers it is still hard as any stone.

Tapering wave is the whisper of a tilt, (really).
Whatever is freckled, dim, spare is the unimagined view from the balcony.

Neck of night is a stalagmite.
Rotting grapefruit is the blackest ossuary ceiling.

Stack of rectangles is the form for the backsteps of the rectangular hold.
This is where hours are spent reciting scenarios about how it could go.

Figure 8 equals out just as much outside as the in.
Two cheerios floating in milk is a measure.

Hedges that are broadest at bottom retain lower foliage, and snow will damage
the rounded tops. This is a thickness at the centre.
No wonder clay dancer, is a voice in an archive.

The texture of shortbread cookies against our tooth enamel is a pastoral of walking over snow.
Crossing a field in summer teased winter.

Obtuse form impales clarity.
Orchard tree trunks lit by scoops of lazy sun.

Cup is the two lips of our work.
This phase is a phrase.

Circle crowned by two triangles is the cat used as punctuation, licking milk.
Afraid of causing boredom was the decision to wear just G-strings.

Curve is a smile.
Recoil back is "And now?" "And now?"

The mound is not concern but a method of actualization that absorbs.
Each eyelash, each hair is in contact with the air is the fly moving slowly across the pane.

Interrogative mark presupposes a missing body; it is where the spit in our mouth
becomes an epitaph.
The lit edge of the cloud is like an eyebrow tuft.

Slanted hand is the scaffolding; it is a stage as the audience sees it.
Tired of being solo is thoughts on three spoons, outside of what the description is.

The Western Gothic:

A Film Script

SANDRA MEIGS

It was from exhaustion, dehydration and fever that he lay unconscious. It was from exhaustion, dehydration and fever that I lay unconscious. It was through rugged outback country that I led my horse to carry him to the sanctuary of my cabin. It was through rugged outback country that he led his horse to carry me to the sanctuary of his cabin. I lowered him off the horse, into the sand and lowered water to his parched lips. He lowered me off the horse, into the sand, and lowered water to my parched lips. As the water touched his lips he awoke only to call out in terror and to beg me to let him die instantly, his pain was so great. As the water touched my parched lips, I awoke only to call out in terror and to beg him to let me die instantly, my pain was so great. I carried him to a camp cot inside my dark cabin. He carried me to a camp cot inside his dark cabin. Besides the badly swollen bullet wounds, there were cuts and bruises all over his body. Besides the badly swollen bullet wounds, there were cuts and bruises all over my body. Each step I took towards helping him recover excited me in a new way. Each step he took towards helping me recover excited him in a new way. I removed his clothes and cleansed his body tenderly. He removed my clothes and cleansed my body tenderly. There were openings in his flesh amid swollen areas where green pus oozed out. There were openings in my flesh amid swollen areas where green

pus oozed out. The infection would have to subside before the bullets could be removed. The infection would have to subside before the bullets could be removed. I applied hot herbal poultices intermittently. He applied hot herbal poultices intermittently. Every couple of hours I put a cup of warm broth mixed with herbs and honey to his lips. Every couple of hours he put a cup of warm broth mixed with herbs and honey to my lips. His deliriums gradually subsided as his fever lowered and he gradually began to stay awake for longer periods of time. My deliriums gradually subsided as my fever lowered and I gradually began to stay awake for longer periods of time. I continued to swathe his forehead and tend to his wounds for days. He continued to swathe my head and tend to my wounds for days. I prepared for him the best food that I had: potatoes, carrots, rabbit, and sourdough biscuits. He prepared for me the best food that he had: potatoes, carrots, rabbit, and sourdough biscuits. I saw him smile for the first time then as I fed him, his arms too weak and injured from the bullet wounds. He saw me smile for the first time then as he fed me, my arms too weak and injured from the bullet wounds. I told him that it would soon be time to remove the bullets. He told me that it would soon be time to remove the bullets.

CREDITS

This reader was produced on the occasion of the exhibition
The Most She Weighed / The Least She Weighed
at Susan Hobbs Gallery, Toronto
9 June to 13 August 2011

The exhibition was organized by Jen Hutton and included work by Brian Groombridge, Tiziana La Melia, Arnaud Maggs, Liz Magor, Sandra Meigs, Sasha Pierce, and Michael Snow.

The cover image is a selection from Arnaud Maggs's *Downwind Photographs*, 1981-83.

Self-Representation and Fictionalysis originally appeared in *Tessera*, vol. 8 (Spring 1990), p. 13-17.

Auto Portrait originally appeared in the book *Instabili* (Montreal: Galerie Powerhouse, 1990), p.37-43.

A Lot of Near Mrs. was copied from the catalogue *Walking Woman Works: Michael Snow 1961-67* (Kingston: Agnes Etherington Art Centre, 1983), p.18-19.

The Western Gothic: A Film Script originally appeared in the catalogue *Sandra Meigs: Pas de Deux* (Toronto: The Power Plant, 1990), p.28.

Susan Hobbs Gallery
137 Tecumseth Street
Toronto, Ontario
Canada M6J 2H2
www.susanhobbs.com