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Here and Not Here

How Mina Loy reconciles Aesthetic Impersonality with the assertion of Female Subjectivity

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Abstract

Title: *Here and Not Here: How Mina Loy reconciles aesthetic impersonality with female subjectivity*

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According to Christina Walter (2009), the tension between artistic conveyance of the universal and transcendent and the assertion of marginalized subjectivity particularly concerned Mina Loy. The aim of this study is to explore how Mina Loy understood and reconciled this tension. By surveying a selection of Loy's nonfiction work, the present project will use a Jungian approach to literary criticism inspired by the work of Susan Roland (2019) to explore personhood and individual being, identify how those individuals are who they are by analyzing relationships, and treat culture through seeking what is lost, marginalized or yet to come into being. I map these three trajectories onto Loy's work using the following concepts: understanding of the construction of a (female) self, the aesthetic/relative impersonality problem, and her idea of what could be if the contemporary social and artistic paradigm was shifted to include the female voice, before eventually moving past gender altogether. Relevant ideas from the "Feminist Manifesto" or "Pyscho-Democracy" are used to understand Loy's theories, while sections from "Mi & Lo" are analyzed as examples of these theories in the context of artistic expression. Doing so illuminates not only the passive role the artist plays in relationship to artistic expression and the creative process, but also the ramifications of this passivity on the assertion of female subjectivity in a patriarchal society. Simply put: how can the female author achieve the disconnect required to be an authentic (modern) artist while simultaneously asserting the female perspective into the male-dominated discussion?

Keywords: *Mina Loy, Carl Jung, Virginia Woolf, feminism, modernism, psychoanalysis, creativity, artistic integrity, depth psychology.*

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Introduction

Carl Jung regarded the unconscious as the source of creativity. By directly tapping into this deep reservoir of symbols, the artist can produce the purest representations of the universal human experience. This is indeed the task of the modern writer, according to Virginia Woolf in her 1919 essay "Modern Fiction." Two years later, in the manifesto "Psycho-Democracy", Mina Loy posited that creativity can be the force most capable of psychologically unifying modern humanity. Woolf's, Jung's, and Loy's respective positions on the role of creativity are connected by a recognition of universal contents in this deepest realm of the human psyche. These contents transcend the borders of gender, class, race, and all manner of similar social constructions. As such, the author herself must detach from her individual subjectivity in order to convey this material in all of its transcendence.

However, this detachment presents a problem when attempting to convey a marginalized point of view, like that of the female artist. The tension between artistic conveyance of the universal and transcendent and the assertion of marginalized subjectivity particularly concerned Mina Loy, according to Christina Walter (2009). Loy was a writer's writer: her work was known and influential in literary circles yet had a smaller impact than her contemporaries, particularly Virginia Woolf. Her literary output ranges from poetry to fiction to short, stylistically intriguing and deeply philosophical essays. The consistency of quality across disciplines has perhaps made her a difficult figure to pin down, as she has historically played a supporting role in the history of modernist literature. Recently, Loy's work as a theorist and figure of first wave feminism has enjoyed an increase in academic interest.[1]

A gap in the scholarship of Mina Loy's complex thought outside of aesthetic and theoretical treatments of her poetic output has long been identified, yet little has been done to fill it. Overshadowed by Virginia Woolf, Loy was a dynamic thinker whose philosophy formed a visible structure in both her "artistic" as well as "intellectual" endeavors (though I feel this distinction is artificial). The tension between accessing the universal human experience while maintaining a sense of individuality, a unique voice, is undoubtedly real and

[1] The reference list of this paper offers a small but informative selection of fairly recent scholarship regarding Loy in this light.

is present in far more than Mina Loy's textual corpus; it finds expression in the mythology, psychology, and the Platonic-Cartesian brand of dualism of found in Christian Science that influenced her, whether or not she was aware of it. The latter of these is perhaps the least studied. This could be due to Loy's underrepresentation in academia, but also due to the general unease that such religious movements are met with in the modern academy.

In her essay "Getting Impersonal", Walter argues that although it was a common modernist view that the "impersonal aesthetic" actually strengthened individuality, its universal roots created deep implications for the establishment of the feminine voice (665). The aim of this study is to explore how Mina Loy understood and reconciled this tension. By surveying a selection of Loy's work, the present project will illuminate not only the passive role the artist plays in relationship to artistic expression and the creative process, but also the ramifications of this passivity on the assertion of female subjectivity in a patriarchal society. Put simply: how can the female author achieve the disconnect required to be an authentic (modern) artist while simultaneously asserting the female perspective into the male-dominated discussion?

This question will be approached via a Jungian reading of three nonfiction essays by Loy: "The Feminist Manifesto" (1918), "Psycho-Democracy" (1914), and "Mi & Lo" (n.d). The philosophical idealism presupposed in Loy's thought, and its subsequent developments, closely resemble the underpinnings of Carl Jung's most important tenets. Further, Susan Rowland (2019) posits that a Jungian approach to reading literature provides us with the ability to explore culture through what is lost or marginalized, shedding light on personhood and individuality as well as its interconnection with the broader society, as Jung was concerned with marginalized forces and the relationship of human creativity to the unconscious. Because psychoanalysis was in vogue during the early 20th century, and there is clear documentation that Loy had contact with the Freudian approach,[2] a Jungian analysis is a relevant, novel, and enlightening approach to her work. Loy's idiosyncratic writing style is deeply creative and artistic at its very core, rendering even her nonfiction into something of a work of art in its own right. What's more, outside of her biographical outsider status (gender and ties to Jewishness, for example), Loy (Jaskoski, 1993) identified herself as a member of a

[2] According to Jaskoski (1993), Mina Loy visited Freud in Vienna, but did not undergo analysis (n. 6, p 353), and rejected his theories.

group of artists on the outside of society whose input could have the revolutionizing effect for which the Modernists can be generalized as searching.

Mina Loy's ties to the Christian Science movement had a profound influence on her. As Lara Vetter (2007) has pointed out, the philosophical idealism upon which Christian Science stands "provides the theoretical basis for [Loy's] meditations on race and evolution" (49). Psychological evolution was the catalyst for the psycho-democratic movement Loy aimed for, and this evolution was grounded in the idea that the physical world was illusory (*ibid*). Thus race, gender, and the corporeal hang-ups of modern culture were blocking the way for a human-directed progression; and since the artist has access to that part of the human connected to the more real, idealistic realm, it was the unique task of the artist to fuel the mechanisms that would drive humanity forward.

Loy's suspicion of psychoanalysis is also, at least in part, fueled by the philosophical idealism inherited from Christian Science.[3] Like her contemporary D.H. Lawrence, she saw the booming trend of psychoanalysis as a worrying substitute for the religious monopoly on morality and sex (Beauchamp 2014). A dissonance is felt when considering that, according to Vetter, Christian Science itself was a growing trend among the intellectual literati of Loy's era, and was viewed "not as an odd religious sect but as a trendy spiritual philosophy, a kind of self-help movement and a substitute for psychoanalysis" (49). Loy felt Freud's focus on human sexuality left psychoanalysis on the corporeal, illusory plane. Thus, given her idealism, she too swiftly disregarded the new discipline's attempts at knowledge of the human psyche. Adding to the relevance of this study's approach, Jung's position in the psychoanalytic movement opposite the Freudian, anti-religious, sex-focused clinician sets his theories in-line with Loy's. Jung, like Christian Science, has historically been cast aside as irrational and therefore unworthy of study.

In addition to placing Mina Loy in a synchronic multidisciplinary context, it is also anticipated that an answer to Loy's concerns over artistic detachment resulting in a weakened ability to assert the subjectivity of the female artist will be found in her philosophical connections to Virginia Woolf. A positive connection has been overlooked in much of the scholarship relating Loy and Woolf, as they are usually subjected to studies highlighting their differences (Delsandro, 2020). While Woolf was wholly aware of threats to feminist artistic

[3] This is really a chicken-and-egg situation: was Mina Loy's idealism inherited from Christian Science, or was she a good fit for the movement because of it?

expression, she did not address the specifically abstract question that concerned Loy. Nevertheless, her work may provide a method for asserting individuality while simultaneously being a conduit for the unconscious. Additionally, not only do both Loy and Woolf struggle with an outsider status as an artist, but with artistic alienation and the self-creation of the artist.[4] Mina Loy's idea of relative impersonality finds an analog in Virginia Woolf's abandonment of the title "lady writer" as a way to enter into the public sphere (Fernald 159). By studying the corpus of both Loy and Woolf in connection to each other and engaging both authors in a dialogue through their essays and nonfiction literature, the existence of the modern woman as an artist can be highlighted and separated from the single-sided portrayal of a champion for a voice, and may instead be revealed as a nuanced struggle for authenticity.

Two Types of Impersonality

The foundational thesis of the present project, namely that Mina Loy's vision of the modernist impersonal author conflicts with the assertion of a female voice, is based on the work of Christina Walter (2009). While Walter does not explicitly propose this contradiction, she hints at it through a dissection of Loy's understanding of artistic and social impersonality. Walter argues that Loy's invisibility as an author is not an attempt to produce art that is an exhibition of the universal human experience, but an exhibition of the deeply personal, unmediated and uninterpreted experiences of Loy herself (664). Thus, impersonality is ultra-personal in that it reveals something about an individual that lies deeper than subjective interpretation; the author no longer interprets and tells a story but simply conveys information. In this way, the artist acts as an interpreter only once she has become a spectator; the creator of a piece of art does not really understand what they have created until it is released to and interpreted by its audience, and in some ways the creator herself is the first member of that audience. Walter begins her article by quoting a letter Loy wrote to photographer and writer Carl Van Vechten that expresses precisely this point: "We are all pervaded by a consciousness that goes beyond while intensifying the personal" (663).

[4] Jaskoski (1993) addresses these issues in Loy, while Littleton (1995) addresses them in Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway.*

Paradoxically, what is implicit in this quote is the idea that through bypassing subjective interpretation something is revealed that is deeply human, and thus universal. While there may or may not be a single human consciousness, in the vein of Jung's Collective Unconscious, the fact that consciousness goes beyond the personal implies its existence in the universality of human experience.

Artistically, and historically, modernist impersonality served as a counterpoint to the Romantic fixation on personality (664), i.e., the outward aesthetic and experiential elements of reality. Like all movements, the modernist project was born out of a rebellion against the systems before it that controlled not only artistic expression, but the intellectual conceptualizations upon which those expressions were based. The most notable of these systems is the dualistic approach to subjectivity, often credited to Descartes, that permeated all subsequent intellectual formulations of subjectivity.[5] And, like all movements, there is an intended liberation built into the ideological foundations of modernism. I will argue that it is precisely this mind/body dualism that creates the fixations on the physical attributes of race and gender, thus the limitations placed on these bodies are extended to the minds that are embodied in them. By pressing past this superficial subjectivity, we can liberate the inherent artistic drive from the politics of gender and race.

It becomes immediately clear that there lies a tension between the rejection of the embodiment of the mind and the liberation of the embodied mind: if the true mind is not embodied, then is it not the victim of a system of oppression that is based on physicality. This has problematic implications for women as they have not had the ability to assert their own subjectivity due historically to biological factors. Philosophically, modernism sees a struggle between the role of the artist, which is to convey that which is deeper than gender, and the emancipation of the *female* artist. Socially, what may be a genderless voice in the artistic realm can, and most often will, quickly become a male voice in the political. As Walter points out, Loy identifies the grounding of this tension in her 1914 "Feminist Manifesto" as women's identity being defined in juxtaposition to the male characticistic of individuality; even within the feminist movement, women were defined in relation to men, where men are

[5] The term "modern-ist, ism" is used in this project as the name for the artistic movement beginning in the late 19th and early 20th centuries that continued until it's postmodern counterpoint arose around the middle of the century. It is worth clarifying that Descartes "cogito", the philosophical genesis of the dualistic approach to subjectivity against which Loy fought in the name of "modernism" is considered to be "modern" in its own right.

defined in relation to themselves, other men, or by their contribution to society (666). The concept is referred to by Loy as "relative impersonality":

> And if you honestly desire to find your level without prejudice—be **Brave** & deny at the outset—that pathetic clap-trap war cry **Woman is the equal of man,** for She is **NOT***!* The man who lives a life in which his activities conform to a social code which is protectorate of the feminine element—is no longer *masculine.*
>
> The women who adapt themselves to a theoretical valuation of their sex as a *relative impersonality*, are not yet *Feminine.*
>
> Leave off looking to men to find out what you are *not* —seek within yourselves to find out what you *are*
>
> "Feminist Manifesto" 1914[6]

The differences between men and women exist on that plane of the superficial subjectivity that the modernist project was attempting to circumvent with aesthetic impersonality. However, the problem is that aesthetic impersonality is easily conflated with relative impersonality once art is received in the world. The ultimate goal for Mina Loy, then, was to construct an approach to the impersonal aesthetic that overcomes this relative impersonality instead of reinforcing it. One may then ask: is the burden to be placed on the artists who create the products or the society who receives them?

The confusion of aesthetic and social impersonality is rooted in both social and aesthetic theories involving the body. It is only in being observed that art can be interpreted, and this faculty of observation is an embodied one. Literary and artistic modernism was well aware of the participation of embodied observers and utilized the limits of perception in a variety of ways.[7] Walter observes that Loy's way of protecting the female artist from this conflation of aesthetic impersonality with its social counterpart is to inject her feminism with a Futurist construction of the self. Discussions of sex and reproduction give the female self its own "ideology" (667), or its own realm of discourse from which it can safely dive into impersonality. This sets the body as the focus of the campaign for selfhood in a way that

[6] The visual formatting of this quote has been adapted to fit the aesthetic of this paper and does not represent the original formatting by Loy. However this, in my opinion, does not reduce the effect of the quote or change the message therein.

[7] The visual presentation of Loy's nonfiction works is a testament to this.

forces Loy to impose Victorian ideals of character onto the female subject - such as virginity - thus preventing her from moving into modernity (*ibid*). In other words, by centering her liberation attempts on the body, Loy effectively runs the risk of leaving the woman "behind." When she advocates the surgical "de-virginization" of women at puberty in the "Feminist Manifesto" (an attempt to reclaim the "purity" of body aimed at the assertion of self-mastery) she is trying to circumvent this problem. Having physically removed her "virtue" from the clutches of the (male) individualist culture, a female self can emerge which expresses itself in every action, resulting in specifically female functions of the body becoming artistic expressions.

The Jungian Approach

Mina Loy's concern with an underlying consciousness, below the level of personality, wherein the true "self" is found, echoes the contemporary psychoanalytic theories espoused by both Freud and Jung.[8] Though Loy visited Freud in Vienna, she did not undergo analysis (Jaskoski, n. 6, p 353) and rejected his broader theories. As an outspoken critic of psychoanalysis, it seems as though her problem with the discipline resided more in a resistance to Freudian theories specifically,[9] because in her concerns regarding universal human experience and sympathies towards religiously expressed philosophical idealism she resembles more of a Jungian. Jung expressed his understanding of the collective unconscious as such:

> In addition to our immediate consciousness, there exists a second psychic system of a collective, universal, and impersonal nature which is identical in all individuals. This collective unconscious does not develop individually but is inherited. It consists in pre-existent forms, the archetypes, which can only become conscious secondarily and which give definite form to certain

[8] It is worth clarifying that what is meant by "personality" is the subjective point-of-view from which each individual interprets the world around them, including their own art. This is different from the "self" because, for Mina Loy, as well as for the psychoanalysts, the "self" is found below the level of interpretation.

[9] Loy saw the general reliance on sex in Freud's theories as problematic in that it elevated the role of sex to something akin to a "duty". For a detailed discussion on literary modernist objections to psychoanalysis, including Mina Loy's views, see Beauchamp 2014.

psychic contents (Excerpt from *The Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious* by C.G. Jung. Quoted in Deal p 242)

In fact, Loy's understanding of aesthetic impersonality closely resembles Jung's idea of the generation of meaning by the autonomous collective unconscious (Rowland p. 14); Loy viewed aesthetic impersonality as using inspired creativity to plunge beyond the level of interpretation, and Jung held that it was from this uninterpreted level that the inspiration came to the artist. Essentially, this idea can be understood as the individual using creativity to gain agency over the collective unconscious and thereby organizing the chaos of reality into something interpretable by a personality. This organization happens deeper than the realm of rationality.

The Jungian concepts most relevant to this project are the incorporation of the shadow, individuation, and sacrifice. The former two are shades of each other: Jung believed that an individual's ultimate goal was to become a complete self, and the way to achieve this was to reconcile with the darker parts of the psyche, what depth psychology calls the shadow. The recognition and incorporation of this "shadow" would result in "individuation"; no part of the psyche was left unacknowledged and therefore the individual would be a complete whole. Part of achieving individuation was a person's willingness to sacrifice. A sacrifice can come in many forms. Sacrificing the comfort of ignoring the darker aspects of one's history and psyche was, perhaps, the sacrifice most commonly needed and simultaneously the most difficult to perform. An emphasis on searching for truth where one least wants to go is a core element of Jungian depth psychology.

The human creative impulse is the purest expression of this search for truth. Author Borden Deal (1966) echoed this idea when he defined the true function of the artist in Jungian terms. Deal pointed out that Jung had identified, with "intellectual crystallizations," emotional states that were felt by the artist, and in this way had "pointed the way out of the rationalistic impasse in which the western mind [had] cornered itself" (Deal, 242). Loy's project could be said to resemble this type of intellectualized way through the rationalist labyrinth, to the extent that we can say that Mina Loy was engaged in a singular, specifically modernist project. The striking similarity between Jung's and Loy's respective ideas surrounding a deep-seated shared human experience and the role of creativity raises the question: what would Jung make of this tension between impersonality and the assertion of the female voice,

and Loy's attempts at easing it? This question can be answered using a Jungian reading to analyze the small selection of Loy's nonfiction works mentioned in the introduction. "The Feminist Manifesto" and "Psycho-Democracy" focus on the socio-political concerns of the female voice, both artistic and personal, describing the current state of affairs and providing radical suggestions for its improvement. Put succinctly, the raw material of the tension between the impersonal goals of the artist and the specific goals of the feminist are laid out for examination; while the third puts theory into practice. Susan Rowland has identified the three major trajectories in a Jungian approach to literary criticism as exploring personhood and individual being, identifying how those individuals are who they are by analyzing relationships, and treating culture through seeking what is lost, marginalized or yet to come into being (2).

In the following sections, I map these three trajectories onto Loy's work using the following concepts: understanding of the construction of a (female) self, the aesthetic/relative impersonality problem, and her idea of what could be if the contemporary social and artistic paradigm was shifted to include the female voice, before eventually moving past gender altogether. Relevant ideas from the "Feminist Manifesto" or "Pyscho-Democracy" are used to understand Loy's theories, while sections from "Mi & Lo" are analyzed as examples of these theories in the context of artistic expression. First, a brief discussion of each text provides a foundation on which the analysis can stand.

The "Feminist Manifesto" addresses the marginalized role of women in society as a whole; it is here where the reader is introduced to Loy's idea of "relative impersonality." Forceful and at times scathing, with seemingly erratic uses of the capitalization, boldface and underlined text, the "Manifesto" expresses anger and offers concrete and corporeal tactics for women to elevate their role out of submission and into full participation in society. The text visually resembles poetry in its form, and is arguably Loy's most famous and studied production.

"Psycho-Democracy" reads like an advertisement for a revolutionary social movement. Presented in a small weekly magazine typical of the literary scene in the early 20th century, the declaration of a psychologically derived and rationally structured society is split in two by a series of pictures displaying futurist sculptures. This is perhaps an intentional reflection of the central role played by creativity and the artist in this society. It is a movement driven by creativity from the bottom up. Again, Loy's style is deeply creative, rendering this

piece of nonfiction an appropriate candidate for our specific Jungian critique. Here, the socio-political role of the artist is the focus, but it quickly becomes apparent that, in Loy's thought, wherever we find the concern of the artist, we also find the concern of the feminist.

The third piece to be examined plays a slightly different role. "Mi & Lo" is a performance of the resolution of this tension; the two sides debate and are presented as being part and parcel of a unified, feminist artist. It reads as a direct transmission of the contents of the deep sub-personality level of the artist, yet it is written as if it is at the point of interpretation. The piece is a dialogue between what we can assume are two aspects of Loy that are being integrated: "Mi", assumed to be part of "Mina", and "Lo" presumably derived from "Loy". The essay can be seen as an example of the Jungian principle of "individuation" put into practice; that is, the artist, the creative process, and the unconscious are matured into one entity.

Constructing the Female Self

Mina Loy's construction of a female self was born out of her Futurist understanding of the body as an ideological playing field composed of corporeal material. This construction is, however, built upon a psychological and philosophical foundation of artistic selfhood that goes deeper than both gender and corporeality. Yet, paradoxically, to get a more concrete grasp on this artistic selfhood we must focus on the body.

According to Walter, the Futurist conception most inspiring to Loy's view of the (particularly female) body was that of the "willful and contained self" (667). Given Loy's adherence to the artist's role as a conduit for the contents of consciousness, it is only logical that her conception of the social and political self would be one of limitations: the unconscious, shared or otherwise, is expansive and is only made intelligible by the limitation forced on it during the process of artistic expression. This process is embodied not only by the artist but also by the audience. The body, then, is the ultimate symbol of this limitation. Limitations create the boundaries of the autonomous subject and any threat of censorship or a "challenge to subjective autonomy (*including the precepts of aesthetic impersonality* -emphasis supplied) may effectively block women's ability to become modern" (*ibid*). While this explanation of Loy's conception of the self as an embodied phenomenon is reasonable, it

does not necessarily lead us to the conclusion that Loy viewed the female body purely as a hindrance to the modernization of the woman, as Walter claims it did.

Walter supports her assertion of Mina Loy's fatalistic view of the female body with an idea put forth in the "Feminst Manifesto", namely, the mandatory de-virginization of all women at puberty. The interpretation offered by Walter can be refuted by applying the Jungian principle of incorporating the shadow to the text. Seemingly aggressive and ascetic, the surgical destruction of virginity is in reality a symbolic act that I argue is more rhetorical than practical. Loy, coming from a childhood in Victorian England, employs the concept of virginity as a measuring stick for a woman's social value, which is exactly what it was at the time (and in many ways still is). The mandatory removal of this purity is not a malevolent mutilation of the female body but a ritualistic sacrifice of an impersonal bargaining chip. In the context of relative impersonality, the sacrifice of the virtue of virginity forces the woman to develop a self strong enough to dive into that part of consciousness beyond gender and individuality and represent it unmediated; and the male is forced to accept it. It is this raw, vulnerable state that allows for the female body to become the generator of artistic expression in itself. Motherhood, and even marriage, is an expression of this galvanized self and not of the "parasitic" coupling described in the "Feminst Manifesto." Intention is the key. If the self is "the covered entrance to infinity" as Loy claims it is in "Psycho-Democracy," then this ritual destroys that cover and rips open the entrance, both metaphorically and physically.

My use of the Jungian embracing of the shadow through the sacrifice of virtue receives further support in the "Feminist Manifesto" when Loy advances the formulation that the poor mistress will be a poor mother. This is obviously the opposite of the accepted understanding of the relationship between a "mistress" and a "mother": the mistress seeks pleasure and has loose morals (if any), and is thereby the image of the bad woman; while a good mother is self-denying and highly principled, thereby the image of the good woman.[10] Loy challenges this because she understands the importance not only of sex, but of the incorporation of the so-called darker elements of a personality. Loy's woman, as a whole individual, is made of both burning sexual desire as well as the nurturing instincts of motherhood.

The connection of sacrifice to a unified self is brought to expression in sections II and III of "Mi & Lo." Mi, being that part of the narrator existing at the level of personality, begins

[10] A lot can be said about Loy's relationship to motherhood. See Delsandro 2020.

the dialogue in section II and dominates it with pure interpretation; in other words, the observer is making observations without an object. Because of this superficiality, the body is quickly made the focal point of the monologue. Mi describes the death of the body as "the impulse to supply necessities of the soul" (Loy, 271) to others, to collectivity. A moral dictum is laid out through sacrifice: what is put forth is that the one who gives also possesses, and from the one "that hath not shall be taken away" (272): if you are not willing to sideline the personality, then you cannot participate in collective knowledge, but you will be used by those who do. There is an echo here of the sacrifice in "Feminist Manifesto" in that women must sideline their own bodies in order to participate in the social, political, artistic realms.

Section III sees Mi taking cues from Lo's questions and explicating its understanding of Cartesian dualism; Mi declares "I think therefore I am-- But further-- I can think about what I think" (273). The body plays such a central role in what can be called Loy's phenomenology that she is forced to tangle with this dualism, even if it goes against the modernist current. However, she rationalizes herself out of the predicament, much in the tradition that Deal attributed to Jung, by explaining that if the whole of a human was its body, then it would be incapable of assessing its own existence. It would just *be*, "there would be nothing to hold [it] off as the spectator" (*ibid*). Pain and pleasure exist only because the soul can interpret its own physical instantiation. The artistic endeavor is inspired precisely by the deep unrest in the soul when interpreting the conditions of existence; the artist is in the soul and can detach from the body and all of its limitations, especially gender. The soul is an artist in practice when it pushes this interpretation through the physicality of the body. This is why the body can be interpreted as the worst enemy of Mina Loy's aesthetic impersonality, but in truth is absolutely vital to it and its construction of a strong and true female self.

Aesthetic Impersonality and Creation

Having established the (female) self as an embodied combination of consciousness on both the level of impersonality and of personality, we can now more deeply explore how this self functions as an artist. Rowland's Jungian approach to literary criticism offers us a unique

insight into understanding the role and function of an artist by examining her relation to her own creative processes and products, her audiences, and the socio-cultural milieu in which she exists. Additionally, sections from Deal's (1966) article will be used to develop a Jungian understanding of the creative process in general.

For all of the work done in constructing an ontologically and psychologically sound (female) self, it still seems a trying endeavor to maintain the authenticity of that self during a creative process aimed at transcending individuation. This is only a problem, however, if the creative process is composed entirely of the passage of information from the impersonality to the space of observation, and for Mina Loy, this is not the case. According to Lo in "Mi & Lo," whom we have identified as a sort of personification of that collective impersonality, "Man is the instrument for imposing form upon phenomena. Man *IS* auto-conscioussness" (267). Mi concurs that man is a conduit whose "spinal column acts as a lightning conductor to the universal force which...continuously animates" (269). By conceiving of humanity in this bipartite way, it seems as though the creative human impulse is manifested as an unconscious [11] imposition of form upon phenomena- thus creativity is a natural part of humanity. However, a look at "Psycho-Democracy" seems to suggest otherwise:

> *The Appeal of psycho-Democracy* for the conscious direction of evolution, is an appeal to the thinker, the scientist, the philosopher, the writer, the artist, the mechanic, the worker, to join intelligent forces in a concerted effort to evolve and establish *a new social symbolism*...with a human psychological significance of equal value to that of militarism (18).

Notice that the equal psychological value of the "new social symbolism" is found in its strength relative to militarism, and not between its constituents. The call to join forces is not a call to eradicate the difference in people, and Loy's impulse to address people in their different functions implies that this separation is a necessary truth. People are different. It is an objective truth that people have talents and tendencies. Not everyone is creative, and not everyone is an artist. Thus, the creative process must not only consist of the passing of the contents of subconscious impersonality into the objective world, but of its interpretation on the way out as well.

[11] "Unconscious" here meaning unintended or as a natural reflex.

If the creative process is not complete without some form of interpretation, then the ability of the artist to maintain authenticity is of utmost importance. The minimal amount of interpretation required to render the contents of the subconscious simultaneously pure and intelligible without bias is a tightrope walk. Borden Deal identifies the dangers in allowing the personality to take full charge of the interpretation (245-6):

> For when he is performing his artistic function the artist is -- or should be-- as impersonal as the collective unconscious itself. [...] The artist does considerable damage to the truth of his own being when his ego assumes power over the collective unconscious. [...] he cuts himself off from the very source of his strength and inspiration so that, in the end, his sin is against his own true self.

Loy finds this same problem just as dangerous when she, in section VI of "Mi & Lo," calls the overzealous artist an "introspector" who "is aware that he is connective with infinite distance" (Loy, 278), yet loses himself in the "unsown fields" (282) of potential found below the personality. By assuming full autonomy, the fractured personality looks for itself but is unable to see anything.

In order to maintain authenticity during the creative process, there must be some sort of distance between the personality and the interpretation to act as a mediator that regulates the involvement of the former with the latter. In a reflection on a particularly powerful moment of inspiration, Borden Deal identifies a way in which this distance can be achieved: "...I was not the father of the thought. The vision happened to me; I did not think the vision" (*The Function of the Artist*, 248). Artistic production is equated with thought, and Deal likens taking the credit for thoughts to a baby taking the credit for its birth (*ibid*). In "Mi & Lo," Loy implies that a similar distance is the only way in which the artist can be authentic; the same "unsown fields of consciousness" in which the fractured personality loses itself are the same in which the integrated personality finds itself (282). By understanding that the interpretation offered by the personality is not the entirety of the creative process or its product, something is left to be found. "I think therefore I am -- But further -- I can think about what I think [...] That is the testimony of the soul" (273) states Mi in "Mi & Lo." This edit to the *Cogito*

resembles Nietzsche's critique of Descartes' proposition, namely that the ability to think does not imply a subject; it is in the distance where the creative process is completed.

The embodiment of creativity was established above, and with the careful usage just explained, the female voice can be maintained throughout the creative process. However, this distance from the interpretative part of creation is maintained and even made wider once the art is produced and released into the world. It is here where Loy's carefully constructed female self runs the risk of falling into relative impersonality in the wider, masculine world. The boundaries of the sexes are defined in juxtaposition to each other: men are men and women are women only when compared to each other.[12] The reception of a piece of art is subject to the cultural milieu in which it is placed, and equally as important, produced; it is quite easy for things to take a masculine turn. In fact, Loy herself uses the masculine "he" to refer to the artist, the introspector, and all otherwise gender-neutral concepts in "Mi & Lo." "Psycho-Democracy" offers a saving grace by giving the artist (the *true and authentic* artist, we can assume) a special place in the larger world.

The opening line of "Psych-Democracy" provides a definition of a psychologically-oriented society with creativity at its center: "*Psycho democracy is* democracy of The Spirit, governed by creative imagination, participation in essential wisdom [...]" (Loy, 14). The goal is the union of creativity, intuition, and the natural tendencies of man to mediate between the two. Deal, with Jung lighting his way, conceptualizes the relationship of artist to community in a very similar way:

> The artist leavens the mass of our culture with the new and strange and numinous materials which he brings forth in his function as an artist and which are, at the same time, the oldest and wisest deposits of our past human experience. The artist unites within himself and his work the best of the past and of the future. He shows us where we have been and where we must go. He interprets mankind to man, man to mankind. He is, as a type, indispensable [...] The artist is a function, not an entity. (251)

By mining the collective human experience and bringing the material to the surface, the work of the artist allows for the deepest parts of humanity to govern society. It is from these depths that progression, or *evolution*, is driven. In the "Feminist Manifesto" Loy sees the successful revolutionary movement not as the one that usurps the "minority" of power but provides

[12] "Leave off looking to men to find out what you are **not**", implores Loy in the "Feminist Manifesto".

democratizing ideas that enter into the psychology of that minority. The female artist that can maintain authenticity has the power to change the cultural environment that propagates relative impersonality from the inside out.

What is Lost, and What Could Be

What was lost in the contemporary paradigm of artistic expression in the early 20th century was precisely this ability of the artist to steer humanity from its shared depth. The socio-cultural focus on gender, race, and religion was so strong that while the artist may have been successful in tapping into this deep reservoir of human experience while maintaining authenticity, the artistic products were interpreted immediately into a state of relative impersonality. Not only did this effectively silence half of the potential artistic voices, it also blocked the voices that could be heard from expressing a feminine perspective. And that is only in regards to gender. Loy, from a more philosophically idealist perspective, may not have found that to be the most troubling consequence of the hegemony of the European male. The mechanism of censorship that acted on minority artists made it all the more difficult for an artist to fulfill the function Loy assigned them and therefore hindered society's ability to progress as a whole.

From a Jungian perspective, the teleology of the human is to bring order to chaos; or, more specifically, to codify the raw data of the world into an interpretable narrative from which societal structures and cultural norms can be built. While everyone has access to this sub-personality consciousness, it is the creative person who has the tools at hand which allow the quickest access to it. By training an ability to access this and maintain authenticity, the artist can codify the information in such a way as to shape society towards amelioration from the ground up. This is the purpose of the "Psycho-Democracy" document; it was a mission statement to bring all of the ideas above together: integration of the shadow, sacrifice, and an authentic agent to generate meaning.

The focus on individual authenticity becomes even more important in the context of a modernity characterized by the fragmentation of the urban experience. Increased urbanization and industrialization, in conjunction with larger governmental bodies, lead to the type of existential anxieties explored by authors like Franz Kafka. Maintaining individual authenticity

in a world of mass produced culture was one way for the artist to survive. In fact, the society proposed by "Psycho-Democracy" aims to awaken a population dulled by mass media, by "encouraging individual-psychology in place of mob-psychology" (19) with the intention of bringing about the "living successor" to the "Dummy Public created by the press, financed by the Capitalist" (15).

However, where "Psycho-Democracy" describes a society functioning in this way, "Mi & Lo" provides us with an artistic demonstration of exactly what the creative process of this unified, authentic artist looks like. "Truth is the question that answers itself. Truth is the creative formula" (281) states Mi, basically distilling the whole of "Mi & Lo" into a single line. The work, classified as an essay but not written in prose, presents us with an integrated artist, two parts not completely divided. The answering and asking of questions is not assigned to either part in particular. Conceptually, the essay is a tough read, but the lack of clarity is not due to a confusion in the concepts but a stylistic choice. Loy sacrifices the clear message for an aesthetic quality. At times, Mi and Lo seem like opposites. At others, they seem to trade roles and perspectives. What Loy achieves is an aesthetic impersonality which allows her to communicate confusion and resolution, rationally question cultural taboos and advance a moral dictum with mathematical precision. Though brief, "Mi & Lo" is an example of the place from which the artist can direct society.

Concluding Remarks

This study aimed at answering one heavily loaded question: how can the female author achieve the disconnect required to be an authentic (modern) artist while simultaneously asserting the female perspective into the male-dominated discussion? The answer: construct a strong self, an authentic agent based on the Jungian principles of individuation, integration of the shadow, and sacrifice capable of generating meaning out of pure information.

It was mentioned in the introduction that Mina Loy's concerns could be resolved by engaging her philosophical connections to Virginia Woolf. Where Mina Loy blasts a female-shaped hole in society, strengthening female agency and selfhood, Virginia Woolf takes a more subtle approach. With Woolf one gets the sense that she is trying to insert the

individual back into the fabric of society *via negativa*: she renounces her abilities, makes light of her intelligence, and buys into the idea that the artist is a creature possessed of an idea, a conduit from which the unconscious rushes forth. While it can be said that Loy's artist is also possessed of an idea, the lack of agency in Woolf's formulation reduces individuality and makes them the servant of the higher order. In "Character in Fiction" (1924), Woolf explains that authors have no choice, they are compelled to write (421). This could be a reaction to the general observation that the modernists were dealing with a fragmented reality, but it could also be her reaction to the mass production of art.

There are further philosophical continuities between Mina Loy and Virginia Woolf in their treatment of women in the specifically professional realm. Erica Gene Delsandro has given a short example of this sort of work in chapter 8 of *Women Making Modernism* (2020). Delsandro compares the "Feminist Manifesto" with Woolf's "Professions for Women" (1931/1942). Both works deal with the woman's personal and professional place in society, however Woolf still felt as though she had not blazed a trail for women to truly express themselves in full. Delsandro argues that Loy, before Woolf, had presented ways to both destroy the vestiges of Victorian-womanhood and tell the story of their bodies (185). While Loy may have pushed past Woolf in this sense, one thing she does not do is provide a way for artists to affect social change while maintaining the feminine form. The artist is responsible for fueling and maintaining the change in "Psycho-Democracy," however the directives specifically formulated to promote the feminine voice are lacking. There is much to be found in this type of study, and it would be of interest to continue work like that taken up by Delsandro in *Women Making Modernism*.

Aside from a philosophical comparison of Loy's feminism to her contemporary modernists, a project comparing the use of language in psychoanalysis with modernist female writers would produce interesting results for the literary as well as historical studies. Loy used art as the language of choice for expressing the contents of the subconscious, and this is similar to the psychoanalytic view. Even the way in which Loy used language (boldface, exclamations and untraditional paragraph formation, for example) was creative and meant to express something out of the grasp of words. Likewise, the psychoanalysts understood dreams, pauses in speech, and even physiological symptoms as symbols of deeper psychological phenomena. This project would not be out of reach, given the connections made in this paper.

Mina Loy, like her ideas and the ideas influencing them, was an outsider. She remains on the outskirts of the academic study of English literature, and her idiosyncratic writing style puts her out of reach for philosophy departments; a fate more unfortunate for us than for her. It is my hope that this study inspires an interest in further research to these ignored concepts so a fuller understanding of Mina Loy's work can be reached.

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