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THROUGH THE AUTOBIOGRAPHIES AND INTO THE ART: A DEEPER LOOK
INTO WOMEN OF THE 1920S

BY

KELSEY M. HOYT

UNDERGRADUATE THESIS

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Through the Autobiographies and into the Art:
A Deeper Look into Women of the 1920s

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Departmental Honors Thesis

Abstract

The 1920s in America reflected a time of change ranging from prohibition to the iconic Flapper girl lifestyle. Famous public figures tended to transform their ideals to the rapidly changing societal standards. Fortunately, for many artists, their lives encompassed the ideals that were established in the 1920s. Thus, the production of art simply became a reproduction of past experiences and lifetime events that the artist encountered. Seemingly obsessed with drugs, alcohol, and sex, artists fell into lives consumed with addictive and psychotic behaviors. The public eye saw these artists as victims of tragic lives and searched for any psychoanalytic meaning throughout their work. Lines dividing Surrealism or Expressionism and writing a diary or an autobiography became blurred. Readers became avid fanatics of these artists with the hopes of catching a glimpse or understanding the personal life of the rich and the famous.

Reasons for appreciating the art were skewed in the 1920s and still are in the present day. Women such as Zelda Fitzgerald, Mina Loy, and Frida Kahlo all produced art deserving immense respect and analysis. Instead, the public understands these artists to have fallen victim to their abusive husbands, drug addiction, and mental illnesses. Yet, deep within the lines of the text or past the paintings, viewers can find more than an autobiography of a tragic woman. These artists utilized their ideals and their lives to produce astounding art worthy of recognition. Embracing Surrealist ideals moving far beyond simple autobiographical qualities, Fitzgerald, Loy, and Kahlo each transform from artist to the art itself.

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Preface

The roaring twenties in America introduced an entirely new lifestyle for men and women alike. Automobiles were available for leisurely usage, Futurists and Surrealists were proclaiming their ideologies, and women were adopting the famous Flapper image. Film directors, authors, painters, and political figures were accommodating this new lifestyle and adapting to society in order to attract the majority of the population. Men such as Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, and Diego Rivera became popular for their stylistic quality and full immersion in the twenties lifestyle as they nearly defined the Jazz Age with their work. With this new era came a new definition for a way living concerning women. These men came to coin the term Flapper, and women were suddenly transformed and now recognized.

This newfound exposure and exciting fad encouraged women of the twenties to live a fast paced everyday life, which included adopting characteristics of the rich and famous, even if the money was not available. It is nearly effortless to believe that these women fell in to pits of despair and alcoholism with the knowledge of their way of living. Speculation has caused the stereotypes of the typical Flapper woman to be a drug addict, alcoholic, hopeless romantic, and victim of domestic abuse somewhat popular among famous women such as Zelda Fitzgerald, Mina Loy, and Frida Kahlo.

Although assuming these women of the roaring twenties adopted the Flapper lifestyle and all endured tragic, psychotic, and hopeless ends is simple, their lives and their work did impose a significantly large impact on the world of literature, poetry, painting, and feminism. These women became famous due to their immense amount of work and the quality they produced. Still today their novels, poems, and paintings are still analyzed, acclaimed, and honored.

The impact the women's work clearly forced readers to understand their lives and ideals in a new light. These famous females gained and maintained their popularity due to the quality of their work and the messages conveyed, rather than their husbands, their lifestyles, and their scandals. Their message was one of feminism, of obtaining a voice and forcing themselves to be heard, and to be recognized as who they are and what they have accomplished, rather than an affair or their tendency of drinking. Several of these women maintained their popularity and still today are seen as iconic not necessarily of their time, but of their ideals. Futurists, Idealists, and Surrealists, as well as feminists look to these women of the twenties to expand their knowledge on the beginnings of women voicing themselves. Rather than focusing on their tragic deaths or abusive relationships, it is crucial for the reader to see these women as intelligent and talented writers, artists, and actresses, all who contained a specific message to be conveyed and a certain story to be told.

Chapter One: Reading for Wrong Reasons

Writers, artists, and actors alike generally hope to go above and beyond their work, whether that requires allowing readers into their minds, painting their ideals on a canvas, or expressing their creativity through their actions. Regardless of the art form, these professions subject the writer or the artist to what may be considered a type of “Celebrity Syndrome”. The rich and famous generally become caught up in their work, many essentially becoming the art they are producing. In the 1920s during the height of prohibition, several of the fame struck fell into a habit of drug addiction, an infatuation with both love and sex, and the exhilarating possession of alcohol. High class parties were studded with stars, each of them either seeking refuge from their own selves or looking to simply start a new chapter. Many of these celebrities fell into similar lifestyles as they would constantly succumb to the power of love, or the more frequent lust, or the strength of an addiction.

It is simple to label these women as victims of their husbands or a sufferer from the time period. Zelda Fitzgerald, Mina Loy, and Frida Kahlo each endured tragic life experiences such as abusive husbands and the obsessive infatuation that came along with them, as well as severe and disabling mental illnesses. Yet beyond the outer layer of public appearance lies an intricate woman with the motives of producing quality art and expressing oneself through the medium of a novel, poems, or paintings in each case. By viewing each of these artists as products of their husbands or their tragic outcomes is to degrade and deprive them of the quality they deserve. For Fitzgerald, Loy, and Kahlo they each express themselves through their work and as their audience skews their perspective on the art, they are skewing the idea of the artist themselves.

Zelda Fitzgerald is seen as a tragic figure in the present day, just as she was throughout her lifetime. She was a woman who continuously challenged herself to become an artist, but was

nonetheless disillusioned by uncontrollable personal demons. Critics and even avid readers have labeled Scott's writing as a work of pure genius and his wife's work as a pitiful tragic failure. However, the apparent shortage of serious criticism concerning Zelda Fitzgerald's writing creates a mandate for inquiry. Jacqueline Tavernier-Courbin, in 1979 described Zelda's novel, *Save Me the Waltz*, as "simultaneously a response to an unhappy marriage and personal situation and a search for a woman's identity" (22). Published in October of 1932, *Save Me the Waltz* is still read today for the wrong reasons, just as it was when it was published. Due to her famous husband and the turmoil in her personal life, the public is attracted to Zelda's novel with the hopes of a glimpse inside her personal life with Scott. Regardless of several publishers attempting to bring back Zelda's work in a new light, the majority of the public cannot look past her famous breakdown and the dysfunctional aspects of her tumultuous marriage.

Similarly, Mina Loy's audience seems to locate the dysfunctional and tragic qualities in her life throughout her poetry. In "Lunar Baedeker" [Appendix A], a "silver Lucifer" (Loy 80) could stand for an extremely attractive seduction in Loy's life, persuading her to an addictive substance. This addiction very well could be read as either a strong attraction to drugs or a viral relationship with the unstable Arthur Cravan. This "cornucopia" (Loy 80) of seduction seems to be completely overwhelming for Loy, and she honestly does not believe she holds the strength to overcome the persuasion as well as the following addiction. In the end, she succumbs to the "macho elements of Futurism" (Burke 107), and shortly following a divorce from her first husband, Loy and the "poet-boxer" (Burke 107), Arthur Cravan, marry. Infatuated with the idea of marrying a stereotypical Futurist, Cravan became Loy's world. Even through the sting of abandonment not once did she falter from her sheer obsession over this man. Clearly sparks flew between Loy and her lovers as she fell into the seduction she was surrounded by. She simply

could not hold strong to herself when sex was paired with drugs and pushed in her face. Thus, the satirical irony within merely the first stanza of “Lunar Baedeker” overwhelms the readers, as Loy bombards her audience with an autobiography, a confession, and a complaint.

Kahlo produced several paintings which exhibited two aspect of her personal life: one infatuated with Diego Rivera, and one merely yearning him. Exploring a childlike obsession with her unfaithful husband, Kahlo incorporated him within every aspect of her life, which is clearly seen through not only her paintings, but her writings as well. She goes as far to state that Rivera is not only an important piece of her life, but an essential one, as she states that “Diego is my Universe” [Appendix B]. Although she incorporated her husband into her work, it is important to not view him as her work. Kahlo allowed the reader deep within her mind and her beliefs, often using genuine wording, her own cultural baggage, and extremely personal anecdotes conveyed through both her diary as well as her painting. Although literary historians are hesitant to pair Kahlo with a genre or time period, it is evident that her writing was effective in translating her emotions to her readers, regardless of the affect Diego imposed upon her personal and professional life.

These three women clearly held similar obsessions with the love of man, or rather the idea of a man. They sought what seemed to be deemed popular of the time, whether it was a recognized writer, macho Futurist, or a distant Surrealist. Thus, it may not have exactly been the men themselves that these artists were infatuated with, but more so the presence of their being, and the reflection upon the women. Although their choices clearly were not healthy and their actions slightly paranoiac and fixated, perhaps they were considering their social image and their work before their own personal gain. Regardless, Fitzgerald, Loy, and Kahlo were incredibly fanatical over the men in their life to a frightening and child like degree, and it can clearly be

seen throughout their works. However, is this the primary reason why these artists should be recognized?

Fitzgerald, Loy, and Kahlo all noted the strength a man could have over them, alongside the lifestyle of the 1920s. These women, although tattered and torn by the men in their lives and the turmoil that came alongside them, proceeded with what seemed to be pure infatuation. However, these seemingly detrimental aspects of their lives empowered them with an extensive amount of creativity, a voice demanding to be heard, and above all, intriguing stories to be told. Through their experiences, this novelist, poet, and painter essentially became their own art as they conveyed their stories to the best of their abilities. Expressing themselves in terms beyond their audiences' imaginations, Fitzgerald, Loy, and Kahlo embed brief autobiographies into several of their works. Although allowing their readers into their personal lives shocked and startled many, as it introduced a new form of conveying a message, along with a new form of interpreting it.

Chapter Two: Women and the Surrealist Movement

Many critics state that the surrealist aspects of Fitzgerald's novel further stray away from the idea that *Save Me the Waltz* is a simple autobiography and a reproduction of her husband's works. This is first brought to light through Alabama's father, Judge Austin Beggs. Not only is his house described as a dreamlike stronghold, but also the man himself as a "living fortress" (Fitzgerald 9). He is first described as "entrenched in his integrity when he was still a young man; his tower and chapels were builded of intellectual conceptions. So far as any of his intimates knew he left no sloping path near his castle open either to the friendly goatherd or the menacing baron" (9). The language that Fitzgerald uses to describe the home that produced Alabama speaks both of the confinement of the mental hospital and the tall towers of an almost make-believe world that she created. The entirety of her novel is buttressed between the life and death of Alabama's father, the watchful figure of order, the original figure of safety and sanity.

Claiming that her work is dreamlike and surreal, critics are stating that Fitzgerald's work can never be as real to any reader as they are to the dreamer. Yet even to the dreamer Zelda Fitzgerald, the stories begin to dissolve and they became unarchivable. With the symbolic dreamlike features and surreal landscape qualities, Fitzgerald has made room for disconnectedness not simply for her readers from the real world, but for disconnectedness from herself and her own world. In her introduction to *Save Me the Waltz*, Mary Gordon expresses a hope that a "more open reading" of Fitzgerald's work could be possible "now, in the wake of a literary movement that tries to come to terms with the artist's struggle with what cannot be said—or cannot be said in terms of what we used to be comfortable calling 'realism'" (xxvii). The illusionary world, possibly Fitzgerald's very own version of a happily-ever-after, can be

seen as a deep surrealistic interpretation of pain and struggle, rather than a simple diary of thoughts.

Save Me the Waltz reveals a society where women, regardless of her gifts and abilities, will consistently be a possession of a man. David Knight, the painter whom Alabama marries, ironically appears as the saving knight and turns Alabama into a princess. He then transports her into a surreal fairy-tale world; but it is a masculine heaven as Alabama quickly perceives:

“‘City of glittering hypotheses [New York],’ wrote David ecstatically, ‘chaff from a fairy mill, suspended in penetrating blue!... The tops of the buildings shine like crowns of gold-leaf kings in conference—and oh, my dear, you are my princess and I’d like to keep you shut for ever in an ivory tower for my private delectation.’ The third time he wrote that about the princess, Alabama asked him not to mention the tower again.” (48)

David Knight simply locks up Alabama in a glass tower which is more confining than her father’s dark dungeon, yet it lacks the paternal protection.

In *Save Me the Waltz*, Fitzgerald suggests that these imaginary ideals are better admired than pursued. Living in the 1920s, known as the golden age of American hope and prosperity, Zelda and Scott manufactured themselves as quintessential consumers of all that their decadent age had to offer. Once American illusions had broken from too much consuming and once American credit had completely lost its value, Zelda began writing her novel. In *Save Me the Waltz*, Fitzgerald offers the self-knowledge not only of who she was, but of how her generation’s obsession with the flashy world of the Jazz Age and the constant action of mass reproduction has made it impossible for authentic selves to form and emerge. Critic Simone Weil Davis links Fitzgerald to the surrealist movement when she notes that, “both Fitzgerald and the surrealists reeled at their own immersion in commodity culture and responded in the same way, taking up as central themes commodification and the image of woman” (174). Just as her husband did to her, Fitzgerald uses herself in her writing as material, muse, and sacrifice.

The illusion of the glamorous 1920s life, gaudy and liberated, becomes a compulsory performance for the characters in *Save Me the Waltz*. Parties that lasted too long and overzealous scandals were commonplace and no longer seemed to shock the public. All of the surrealism seems to exist solely in order to preserve something that has long ago lost its soul. Fitzgerald uses the word “taxidermist” to describe several characters, once in relation to her father, whose hands had the “cruel concision of a taxidermist at work” (Fitzgerald 16). Like a taxidermist, Judge Beggs was preventing the life of a love affair and established its status as a lifeless illusion. Another instance when mentioning the famous dance, Gabrielle Gibbs, Fitzgerald describes her face as being “as innocent as is she had just been delivered from the taxidermist’s” (102). Alabama goes on to think,

“The macabre who lived through the war have a story they love to tell about the soldiers of the Foreign Legion giving a ball in the expanses around Verdun and dancing with the corpses. Alabama’s continued brewing of the poisoned filter for a semiconscious banquet table, her insistence on the magic and glamour of life when she was already feeling its pulse like the throbbing of an amputated leg, had something of the same sinister quality” (111-112).

Here, Alabama condemns her life as a piece of post-war taxidermy, a sickening performance of past glory, an inability to let the dead die. Through these surreal images, Alabama Beggs strives during the course of the story to preserve some lost romantic notion of the world as it had been advertised to her, all the while acknowledging this hope as a futile and imaginary practice.

Many twentieth-century cultural theorists shared Zelda Fitzgerald’s skepticism of the American advertising model and its relation to human contentment. One of the primary concerns of the Frankfurt School—influenced by Walter Benjamin, and including Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer—was to criticize mass culture for the way it reduced its people to a prescribed set of desires, and in doing so, took away all possibility for satisfaction. Adorno and Horkheimer phrase the paradox when they write, “The culture industry perpetually cheats its consumers of

what it perpetually promises... All it actually confirms is that the real point will never be reached, that the diner must be satisfied with the menu” (139). In his 1986 book *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism*, Andreas Huyssen articulates the feminization of mass culture in surrealist terms. He notes that Adorno and Horkheimer characterize mass culture “as the evil queen of the fairy tale when they claim that ‘mass culture, in her mirror, is always the most beautiful in the land’” (48). Huyssen adds, “The lure of mass culture, after all, has traditionally been described as the threat of losing oneself in dreams and delusions and of merely consuming rather than producing” (55). In surrealist terms, the culture of advertising ostensibly harms Alabama Beggs, who internalizes its offerings and desires. Adorno and Horkheimer’s descriptions apply themselves seamlessly to Fitzgerald’s world in which the flapper and the expatriates in her novel are emblematic of the modernist, soulless, war-logged phenomenon, where the best anyone can do is consume and be admired—or in other words, pretend to be beautiful and a fool.

This formulaic writing becomes a mysterious story, transforming natural objects in the natural world to surrealist beings. In her reading of these surreal phenomena, Simone Davis observes that, “Fitzgerald grants commodities, and indeed objects in general, an animism that disorients” (146). Davis connects this animism to the advertising phenomenon of having objects speak for themselves to better appeal to the reader. The environment seems to come alive, demanding of its characters, a surreal experience for both Fitzgerald and her readers.

Zelda Fitzgerald’s writing presents a conundrum of sorts, not only in its own questionably surrealist landscape, or her use of her life in her writing; rather, *Save Me the Waltz* deals with one woman’s awareness of herself as an instrument, something to be advertised and used, and yet still in need of a significance, a settling point. As a woman whose original

fame lay in being desired, Zelda Fitzgerald's greatest commodity was herself; as the muse for her husband F. Scott Fitzgerald, who wrote about uncontrollable, uninhibited, self-promoting women, she understood that she was on display, and capable of becoming and unbecoming art. This self-awareness is relevant to any reading of *Save Me the Waltz* in terms of the Modernist novel. Note Huyssen's insights:

“Women as providers of inspiration for the artist, yes, but otherwise *Berufsverbot* for the muses, unless of course they content themselves with the lower genres (painting flowers and animals) and the decorative arts. At any rate, the gendering of an inferior mass culture as feminine goes hand in hand with the emergence of a male mystique in modernism...” (50).

Fitzgerald spent much of her life positioning herself both as the inspiration for the artist and also as the authorial creator of a mystique of her own through her self-referential, experimental, and frequently ironic language; this balance is mirrored in the balance of her characters, their own struggles to be both object and creator, story and storyteller—and their ultimate failure to effectively be either. Meanwhile, being written by her husband, Zelda's sole responsibility was to perform herself, manufacturing enough of her own mythology for Scott to find fascinating; in her life, she was art.

Although the title of her book invokes dancing in pairs with the imperative, “save me the waltz,” one could reasonably ask: Save whom the waltz? Alabama dances with David briefly, during their courtship—but even her dance with him becomes a sort of dance with herself, as she notices: “So much she loved the man, so close and closer she felt herself that he became distorted in her vision, like pressing her nose upon a mirror and gazing into her own eyes” (40). In the following paragraph, Alabama “crawled into the friendly cave of his ear,” beginning the cerebral exploration that critics often hail when characterizing her writing as surrealist (40). David becomes distorted into a mirror image of Alabama herself, and he becomes his brain. What

dancing with David produces for Alabama, in other words, is first a closer glimpse at her own visage, and second an opportunity to let her imagination wander into the direction of physiology, where she reduces him to his “sleek gray matter” (40). Is the title an imperative to Fitzgerald herself, from herself—a way of negotiating a contract that she will, one day, dance? Does the title allude to the history of a thing, like Alabama herself, caught in suspension between its old meaning and its new permutations and possibilities, half-metamorphosized between tradition and modernity? Both Fitzgerald and Alabama’s bodily lifeline, her dancing, also functions as a life-breaker, demonstrating yet another ambiguity of the author’s relationship to surrealist paradigms that hold salvation and happiness at bay. Yet in doing so they provide hope, or at the very least offer insight to how hope may be sought.

Much like Fitzgerald, writers such as Mina Loy drew on the surrealist tradition in her attempt to forge a forward way of thinking during a time when art’s distinction from the mainstream culture no longer seemed possible. Disoriented, omniscient, and in a sense astronomical, Mina Loy throws her readers into oblivion and confusion, as she takes them on an extra-terrestrial journey, abandoning all ideals of tradition and conformity through her collection of poetry. In “Lunar Baedeker”, Loy places her reader in an unfamiliar environment, one they were previously unaware and uncomfortable in, one they simply did not recognize. Disoriented and thrown in the middle of things, Loy’s audience is treading unfamiliar grounds. Beginning with the title of the collection, “Lunar Baedeker” seems to be a satirical and autobiographical poem, filled with wit and satire, transforming disorient into material and concrete beings. With this in mind, the reader can develop a critical close reading of Mina Loy’s “Songs to Joannes” [Appendix C], her 1917 composition dedicated to her failed relationship with the futurist Giovanni Papini. More specifically the ambiguities that stem from and shape Loy’s descriptions

of physical existence and sexual activity in the Songs that are explicitly exposed. With a close reading of both poems, readers are capable of considering the material presentation of the poem itself. Through these poems, Loy explicitly whisks the reader away into her own directionless mind, offering a mere glimpse of the temptations she has endured and the ideals she has developed over time.

Possibly the most disoriented and untraditional poem of her collection begins with “Lunar Baedeker”. Within the first stanza of this meta-terrestrial poem, Loy reveals an autobiographical background. A “silver Lucifer” (Loy 80) stands for an extremely attractive seduction in Loy’s life, persuading her to an addictive substance, ranging from drugs, sex, love, travelling, among other entities. This “cornucopia” (Loy 80) of seduction seems to be completely overwhelming for Loy, and she honestly does not believe she holds the strength to overcome the persuasion as well as the following addiction. The satirical irony within merely the first stanza overwhelms the readers, as Loy bombards her audience with an autobiography, a confession, and a complaint.

Littered with mythical references critics question Loy’s lines and inquire, “whether Lethe is a nymph or the more famous river of forgetfulness that flows through the underworld” (Shreiber and Tuma 83) and the theme of distorted situations carries on. From cocaine, to prostitution, to losing oneself with “hallucinatory citadels” (Loy 82), Loy’s poem brings her readers to a developed, yet completely unfamiliar setting, such as the “moonscape” (Loy 83). This lunar world that Loy has prepared for us seems to be an urban setting, although an unfamiliar one. She labels it as “Necropolis” (Loy 83), meaning both a booming metropolis and a cemetery filled with lifeless corpses. This fictional city is made distinct by visible absences of what was once present: “a city as seen in dreams or negatives held up to the light” (Loy 82). Her

narrated journey is colorless and only guided by a glowing “phosphorous” and the “eye-white sky-light/ white-light district/ of lunar lusts” (Loy 82). The craters are “evacuate”, the Orient “oxidized”, and Eros “obsolete” (Loy 83).

Defined by its “Delirious Avenues”, this urbanism place of “eye-white sky-light” and even “Stellectric signs,” introduces a new idea of landscape (Loy 81). This neologism that carries the words “stellar” and “electric” and invokes the impact electricity had on reshaping the landscape of cities at night (Loy 81). “By the 1920s, New York’s Broadway, which Loy would have seen in one of her stays” in the city (1916-17 and 1920-21), was known as the “Great White Way” because of its use of many electric bulbs on marquees (Shreiber and Tuma 47). Loy’s “Baedeker” then, while it makes room for her imagination, also serves as an anti-tourist guide, a guide to human pretensions to knowledge and immortality embodied in the museum and in the guidebooks which claim to chronicle a nation's cultural treasures.

“Lunar Baedeker” takes as its mission orientation, but Loy only achieves this by first disorienting her readers. In the end the poem asks her audience what it is they expect when they are “certain” (Loy 82). To some, there seems to be a sort of philosophy to Loy’s approach to words, or “an ethics to her way of confusing us” (Burke 24). She is reminding us of what we once knew but forgot, pre-Lethe: that we move through our world by telling ourselves that we know where we are, when in fact the world is immune to our cartographies.

There is, in *Songs to Joannes*, an intensely physical relation between the text and the experiences outlined within it. The physicality of the Songs is conspicuously foregrounded through typographical, stylistic and phonetic devices that necessarily determine the way in which the text is read. In this sense, the individual sentence structures are distorted or modified by Loy’s ambiguous grammar—a grammar that is established in the first fragment of the Songs:

“Spawn of Fantasies
 Silting the appraisable
 Pig Cupid his rosy snout
 Rooting erotic garbage
 ‘Once upon a time’
 Pulls a weed white star-topped
 Among wild oats sown in mucous-membrane” (Loy I, 53)

Although this fragment is structured around a number of verbs, these first lines remain strangely static. Furthermore, the rhythm with which one reads the stanza alters its syntactical elements. The stylistic devices that Loy presents in the first fragment are developed throughout the course of *Songs to Joannes*, and acquire a particularly striking relevance in the presentation of contradictions and oxymoronic clusters. These recur throughout the *Songs*, and appear with the greatest regularity in those fragments in which the traditional poetic line is most distorted. In fragment XIII, for example, the stanzas are irregular in terms of the length and shape of the lines, while the typography of the second and third stanzas complicates conventional strategies of reading by presenting the possibility of reading the lines as two vertical stanzas, running concurrently, side by side:

“It is ambient And it is in your eyes
 Something shiny Something only for you
 Something that I must not see
 It is in my ears Something very resonant
 Something that you must not hear
 Something only for me” (Loy XIII, 57-58)

While the next to last line finally reunites the two ‘halves’ of the stanzas, any sense of closure or cohesion remains elusive; the declaration that the speaker makes at the beginning of the fragment is borne out: “There is something / I have got to tell you and I can’t tell” (Loy 57).

Readers also propose a critical approach to a different aspect of Loy’s *Songs to Joannes*. In “‘Love is a Lyric / of Bodies’”, the negative aesthetics of Mina Loy’s love songs’, Maera Shreiber states that “unlike Gertrude Stein, Loy does not seem preoccupied with unlocking

words from their conventional meaning” (Burke 90). Taken in its strictest sense, it is indeed true that Loy does not insist on repeating words and sounds as a means of breaking down the conventional workings of logic and meaning. On the other hand, however, the intense codification of Loy’s poems would suggest that readers must be wary of accepting the first meaning of each word on the page; in this respect she does throw an important focus on semantics in the Songs. Firstly, the use of medical terms slows down the pace of reading: the failure of romance is thus emphasized by the difficulty encountered in reading a love lyric that refers to “protoplasm” (Loy XXXIII, 67), for example. Secondly, the use of vocabulary from the field of linguistics affects the fluency of the text: for instance, Loy replaces the idea of a “secret name” with the term “cryptonym” (Loy XXIX, 65), which the Oxford English Dictionary describes as rare.

Another characteristic of the “Songs to Joannes” is the multiplicity and ambiguity of the language that Loy selects. Indeed, in the first fragment, the ambiguous figure of “Pig Cupid” is described as “Rooting” (Loy 53). This verb, far from being straightforward, can mean “to implant roots”, to “uproot” or to “rummage through” according to the Oxford English Dictionary. By rendering the action of “Pig Cupid” mysterious, Loy complicates the meaning of the fragment in general (Loy 53). As a result of Loy’s ambiguous semantics, conventional, linear, narrative logic is unavoidably broken down.

Loy’s interest in the “openness” of language is evident in her poetry (Burke 29). While in Songs words often mutate in accordance with the logic of sound, Loy plays on the visual similarities of various letters. For Loy, it seems, sensitive or physical stimuli are necessarily integral to the production of sense and the generation of meaning. In this respect, Loy joins

Joyce, Stein, and Proust in her personal interpretation of the avant-garde, and anticipates subsequent feminist theories of sexual and linguistic identity.

Showing signs of feminism and sexual identity, Kahlo herself was emerged in the surrealist movement, and possibly seen as one of its most powerful advocates, without essentially realizing she was. Her art consisted of horrific gore, slamming her audience with the truth and the pain she endured, whether they wanted to see her exposed or not. Although many critics and followers claimed her as a great surrealist, she quotes that “until Andre Breton came to Mexico to tell [her] she was a surrealist,” (Breton 64) Kahlo simply did not see herself in that light. Rivera continuously argued that Kahlo must be seen as a realist, describing her as “down to earth, having depicted real images in the most literal and straightforward way” (Breton 70). Like much art of her time and culture, Kahlo’s paintings constantly would interweave fact and fantasy, as if they were both equally real. Yet Kahlo goes on to state that “[she] does not know whether [her] paintings are surrealist or not, but [she] does know that they are the frankest expression of [herself]” (Kahlo 278). She has always been infatuated with her subjects, whether they were herself in agonizing pain, Diego Rivera, or the plants and animals which surrounded her. Kahlo has embraced her states of mind and the reactions that life has forced her to understand and she “objectified all of [these] in figures of herself” (Kahlo 280). These sincere and realistic expressions of herself, her culture, and the world around her are the aspects which crown her with the title of “surrealist”.

In “First Manifesto of Surrealism”, Andre Breton explained the concept as a life philosophy based on the preeminence of dreams and the subconscious associations people make in their dream lives (Breton 167). It was primarily in the 1920s and the 1930s when surrealism took a popular stand, and transformed art as well as literature for the future. Kahlo understood

that her work would simply flourish if she were to market the paintings as surrealist art. Yet, this did not stop Kahlo from speaking her mind and expressing her opinions. Referring her surrealist qualities, Breton stated that,

“Kahlo’s outlook was vastly different from that of the Surrealists. Her art was not the product of disillusioned European culture searching for an escape from the limits of logic by plumbing the subconscious. Instead, her fantasy was a product of her temperament, life, and place; it was a way of coming to terms with reality, not of passing beyond reality into another realm.” (Breton 200)

Kahlo necessarily did not paint for her audience, but she painted to work out her emotional, psychological, and political difficulties which she continued to face daily. These real and raw emotions forced Kahlo as well as Rivera to see her as a realist, as she stated, “I never painted dreams” (Kahlo 263). However, it is difficult to look at much of her work and understand that these were concrete and tangible ideas, pains, and beliefs for Kahlo, thus allowing her audience to easily dub her as a great surrealist artist.

In her personal diary, the most surreal and dreamlike imagery can be seen. These ink drawings and infatuation poems allowed the reader into her mind to understand the beginnings and inspiration for several great paintings. However, Kahlo did not intend for the pages of her diary to become available for public consumption, and today, there is no way to understand if these drawings were meant to be legitimate feelings or dreams.

The painting, *What the Water Gave Me* from 1938 [Appendix D] is seen as one of the most surreal of her works. Several miniature bodies are floating alongside what appears to be Kahlo in bath water. Some notable “bath toys” are a volcano with a building erupting from the crater, two women floating on a sponge, and a portrait of her parents’ heads emerging from water plants. These surreal images are placed alongside the bathtub itself, its stopper and pull chain, and Kahlo’s own bloody feet. The disproportionate size of the objects and figures with the

unrealistic scale and pairing of the objects leads one to understand that this strange painting may be seen as surrealist. Although the painting is filled with strange and somewhat horrific instances, the idea that the viewer is sharing Kahlo's gaze, as they are placed in her viewpoint, allows the viewer to believe that this is truly what Kahlo sees and believes. This juxtaposed detail and irrational idea enhance the surrealistic qualities of the painting.

In Kahlo's 1949 painting, *The Love Embrace of the Universe, the Earth (Mexico), Diego, Me, and Señor Xolotl* [Appendix E], a cloud like figure appears which represents both day and night. This cloud like mother nature character holds Kahlo in a passionate embrace, just as Kahlo seems to cradle Rivera in a giant triple hug. The living characters in this painting are extremely limited, as the only recognizable humans are Kahlo and Rivera. Even within these two, Rivera is nearly depicted as an unnatural being as he is adorned with a third eye. Aside from the vegetation and their dog, Señor Xolotl, there are little to no true-to-life representations. The void of emotion mother nature is enhanced by the ravine running through her chest and exposing a drop of milk from her exposed breast. Behind her, night and day appear as clouds united in a cycle of darkness and light with their arms embraced near the bottom of the painting. Many seem to understand this painting as Kahlo depicting herself as a "weeping Madonna" who is distraught over the loss of her "child" (Lindauer, 12).

The fantasy based painting seems to lack a clear foundation in the realm of reality. Although the lack of natural and concrete ideals may be valid points to establish Kahlo as a surrealist artist, Renne Riese Hubert claims that the true meaning lies much deeper. She states that "it is not the surrealist presentation of spatial relationships, but what Kahlo's ideology shares with the surrealist thought" (Hubert 42). Kahlo wrote a "portrait essay" near the same date that the painting was produced stating that,

“The forms of Diego [as] an affectionate monster, inspired by fear and hunger, created by the ancient concealer, a necessary and eternal element, the primal mother of all men and all the gods that man has invented in his delirium... Women among all of them, I would always want to cradle him like a newborn child.” (Kahlo 307)

Hubert interprets this as Kahlo making a transition during the time from the directly personal to the ambiguous universal. Unlike other’s limited references to Kahlo’s relationship with Rivera, Hubert understands this work as emblematic of Kahlo not merely having depicted specific hurt, but as having placed herself in a larger macrocosm of humanity: pain, heartache, love, all these things belong to more than just Kahlo and Rivera’s emotional and intimate world.

Aside from these works of obvious surreal visual elements, Kahlo painted an innumerable amount of self portraits. Whitney Chadwick classifies Kahlo as a surrealist due to her obvious links to Breton and his groups, as well as her tendency to use double images of herself. This duality is described in a variety of ways ranging from night and day, European and Mexican, past and present, sickness and wellness, civilization and the wild, and the physical and the spiritual realms. The symbolism Kahlo utilized in her self portraits, although it seemed to be disjointed or illogical, Kahlo almost always grounded it through means of daily life, whether it was her own reality or the world at large. In her earlier years, the self portraits she had produced she used as studies to teach herself the craft of painting, which was a common technique of the time. Kahlo idealized herself through these paintings as she depicted herself with an elongated neck and characteristically emphasized her mustache and unibrow. In her 1930 *Self Portrait* [Appendix F], Kahlo seems to have painted her head too small in relation to her body and her concept of light is limited. As these abilities improved, she acquired the skill to clearly depict details accurately from life, yet often chose not to obey the rules of reality. Instead she continued to emphasize certain features while preserving qualities such as her youth. However, this

decision was not due to any belief or goal to embrace the surrealist ideal. Kahlo perceived her life in an emotionally driven way and conveyed that through each of her works.

Ultimately, Kahlo did not identify herself with any of the surrealist pioneers as she refused to succumb to their system and be swept into their clan. She knew how to use the genre of surrealism and the tactics of Breton to her benefit for crowd and popularity purposes, though she never truly vocally admitted to her motives. Her additions to the surrealist movement were not astonishing personifications or embodiments of spirit, mind, and soul, but rather her own version of art therapy. Kahlo was simply an artist who happened to wear her “heart on her sleeve by painting her own reality” (Gomez 58). Through this, she helped encourage other artists, women and men alike, to find their voices through brush and canvas. Thus, Kahlo’s version of surrealism was, in the end, her own assertion of herself.

Chapter Three: More Than an Autobiography

Zelda's writing exhibits her understanding of the artistry of her life material, which was a quality that her husband began, but one that she perfected. Zelda, much like Scott, brings the facts of her own life up for examination, and her observing judgment, both of herself and her world is crafty and powerful. Tavernier-Courbin goes on to observe that "even a casual reading of *Save Me the Waltz* reveals how lonely and frustrating the role of the light-hearted wife of a genius was to a woman who was creative and brilliant in her own right and who, in time, found that she desperately wanted to prove herself" (26). Zelda encountered many conflicts regarding the life she had committed herself to, her belief of an unglamorous side that resulted of being someone else's fiction, and her awareness as a performed and manufactured object of art.

Much like any other work of art, including her husband's, Zelda's work is artistically flawed, yet her claims to excellence outweigh these simple errors by far. Among the impressive writing qualities within Zelda's novel, she begins to search for portrayals of a woman's soul and the complex tangle of selves within wedlock. Fitzgerald divulges into her novel's remarkable revelation of a gifted woman's struggle to fulfill herself in a traditional, male dominated society. This is not only seen in Alabama's relationship with her husband, father, and sisters, but through her dance career. Once a dancer herself, Zelda encompasses all of the grueling aspects of perfecting ballet, elaborating on the tension of both the body and soul.

Fitzgerald presents herself in writing as a mosaic of performances, yet she does not present her fictional heroines as particularly complex. These women perform as currency in exchanges between men, understanding that men will pay them, in either marriage or attention, in return for their company. In her 1922 essay, "Eulogy on the Flapper", Fitzgerald writes that a woman must have "the right to experiment with herself as a transient, poignant figure who will

be dead tomorrow” (392). The conscious idea of how women must continuously distance herself from her world is a guiding impulse in Fitzgerald’s writing. Much like the characters produced by her husband, Zelda’s heroines allow themselves to be put on display, simply trying out different personalities and utilizing their bodies as instruments of trial and error. Fitzgerald states in her essay that the flappers in her novels “are merely applying business methods to being young” (393). The duality in her female protagonists masks their deeper emotions and self perceptions under a surface of mundane vanities.

Unfortunately, much like her husband, Fitzgerald is not able to escape the constant motif of the female self as a work of art. After her husband’s first novel, *This Side of Paradise*, Zelda became a legend as a heroine and as a famous author’s wife. In a biography of Zelda, Kendall Taylor writes that “Scott did not just base his heroines on Zelda. He copied from her letters, her diaries, watched her intently, continually wrote down her comments, and endlessly analyzed and dissected what she said... In effect Zelda was Scott’s co-author” (370). Yet Zelda is wise, and understood her husband’s borrowing and at first, she enjoyed the perpetuating the idea that her husband had made of her.

However, the forces of maturity and mental illness resulted in Zelda Fitzgerald’s evolution into an incredibly earnest writer. She depicts both herself and her work in writing, artistry, and ballet more seriously while still keeping up her veils. In her one and only novel, *Save Me the Waltz*, is essentially an autobiography with small efforts to obscure her own facts with pieces of fiction. The protagonist of the novel is Alabama Beggs, a smart Southern belle who enjoys being admired and puzzled over, and marries a famous and creative man. Zelda and Alabama nearly shared a childhood as the major events of their lives are parallel. In both Fitzgerald’s life and her novel, the heroine is a consummate performer, and in both stories, the

woman's body fails. Furthermore, Alabama's journey in *Save Me the Waltz* is one of finding meaning in life and in herself, both typical autobiographical elements.

Yet the novel seems to go far beyond simple autobiographical qualities. Fitzgerald clearly left out any hint of mental illness in her novel, although it plagued her for the majority of her adult life. Opposed to restating her own struggle with mental illnesses caused by ballet practice, the novel chronicles Alabama's struggle with her own physical illness. Further protecting herself from transparency, Fitzgerald also wrote the novel in third person.

Although she does not mention any form of mental illness in the novel, it is apparent that Fitzgerald's time spent in the psychiatric ward influenced her writing of *Save Me the Waltz*. Mary Wood has pointed out in the tradition of the twentieth-century phenomenon of "asylum autobiographies", survival stories written by hospitalized mentally ill women, often at their doctor's suggestion. Many critics have commented on the nonexistence of mental illness in the otherwise autobiographical text and it is generally agreed by critics that Fitzgerald replaces the story of her mental illness with a long and earnest story about her attempt and apparent failure to become a renowned ballet dancer. Wood interprets this substitution by arguing that Fitzgerald escapes by being reduced to a psychoanalytic text by writing her asylum autobiography and yet never once mentioning her schizophrenia. This avoidance is Fitzgerald's way of critiquing the representations of female insanity as dependent upon on the objectification of female bodies. Wood believes this to be Fitzgerald's way of insisting that, at least as a writer, she is able minded and well.

Thematically, the novel can also be seen as existential in that the protagonist tries to create herself through action, and as one of the earliest studies of the predicament of women in a male-dominated society. The metaphor of the title reveals with irony the reasoning of the novel,

along with its central theme. A casual remark a man may pass to a woman at a dance, “*Save Me the Waltz*”, a short phrase clearly encompasses the respective roles played by the two opposite sexes: the man does the choosing and the asking, while the woman waits to be chosen and asked. The man has the active role; the woman has the passive and subordinate role—the very role against which Zelda was rebelling.

Breaking from a different type of role, Loy proves herself unique and further satirical in her poetry. Comparing and nearly meshing her own personal lunar world with a sort of ungodly hell with no sense of direction or orient, Loy creates an alternate universe for both her and her readers, far from the reality of life. “Lunar Baedeker” is at once a reproach and a brief glimpse of the material world. The reader notices this as a form of satirical personification, which flips the basis of the trope on its head. “Personification is the attribution of human characteristics to nonhuman entities, or even ideas” (Shreiber and Tuma 72), as when for example a poem apostrophizes death by telling it not to be proud. The players in Loy's drama are however almost exclusively non-human. Lucifer is an angel, Peris are either fairies or elves, and we see Eros zoom overhead: “Onyx-eyed Odaliskes/ and ornithologists/ observe/ the flight/ of Eros obsolete” (Loy 83).

This speaks to the “second mode of materialism in Loy’s world” (Burke 54), how the poem takes original and impalpable ways of thinking or ways of knowing things and concretizes them. In doing so, Loy makes strange the ways we think, for she casts those tendencies as aspects of the material world. In that sense, “Lunar Baedeker” takes a swipe at the poetic tendency to be metaphorical—personification seems to be a metaphor that Loy resists.

Yet “Lunar Baedeker” does not in the end reject personification completely. Instead it remarks upon its inevitability with its closing lines, “Pocked with personification/ the fossil

virgin of the skies/ waxes and wanes” (Loy 81). If personification is the bestowing of “life on the non-living, the poem here reverses the process”, ending with an image of a non-living thing that was once alive (a fossil), wrapped in a cloud of metaphor (Burke 47). The metaphor of the lunar entity as a virgin draws from the mythic association of Diana, or Artemis, as a goddess of the moon, who famously or notoriously remained virgin—“a topic and a politics Loy would remark upon extensively” in, among other places, “Virgins Plus Curtains Minus Dots” (Burke 47). The syntax is fierce and quite unclear, yet Loy tends to begin and end with things up in the air.

The disturbed chronology of “Songs to Joannes” translates the relationship Loy describes alternates randomly between success and failure. The reader’s ability to establish a coherent understanding of this relationship is further undermined by Loy’s use of modal auxiliary verbs, which work to blur possibility, desire, and reality: “We might have coupled / In the bed-ridden monopoly of a moment” (Loy III, 54), or “We might have lived together / In the lights of the Arno” (Loy XVI, 59). Loy’s use of the verb “might” foregrounds a tension between reality and fantasy, implying that no single word can be read as a stable conveyor of meaning.

The fragmentation of the romance narrative usefully dramatizes the genre to which the poem ostensibly belongs: the love lyric. As Jeffrey Twitchell-Waas suggests, this genre would “conventionally... be taken as most appropriate for a female poet, the most quaintly ‘poetic’ genre yet also the most easily dismissed for its lack of high seriousness”, relating back to the letters of Ovid (Shreiber and Tuma 50). These letters do fictionally place the woman in the authorial role, yet they still imagine the absent lover as the necessary element to each heroine’s sense of identity.

Traces of herself and popular art can not only be referenced in Frida Kahlo’s paintings, but in her sporadic form of literature as well. It clearly influenced her imaginative world, as some

pieces appeared to be clear interpretations of her thoughts and ideas, while others only contained mere traces of Kahlo's inner workings. An intimate and personal world, Kahlo's imagination built up over several months of her being bedridden, transforming her mind into that of an artist's, formulating a unique and creative thought process that would stand out above other painters' of her time. Her aesthetic world shaped by her diverse heritage of European, specifically Italian and German, and Mexican stylings, Kahlo developed an artistic trend that would further be known as "Mexican-ness", which emerged in the early twentieth century. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, Kahlo's interest for subjects such as literature, botany, photography, and painting heavily nourished the images of her products. With these interests in mind, Kahlo created an art that essentially referenced her very self, which were simply influenced by the traditions of popular art. Kahlo both indirectly and directly utilized the images that enveloped her life, in which she expressed popular traditions as well as substantial elements of herself.

Influenced by factors that surrounded Kahlo her entire life, the painter embraced Mexican traditions, commonalities of daily interactions, meaningful relationships, and translated them into both her paintings and literature. These created and enhanced an existential universe for Kahlo, in which she developed specific stigmas that her audience could essentially embody in order to view her work through her own eyes. To gain this broader vision of her creative process and her imaginative activity, her audience must turn to the iconographic stock of popular expression that served as a driving force for her paintings and writings. These influences either directly or indirectly contributed to the development of her imaginative world, and her inner "I" was manifested on both paper and canvas.

For the majority of her life, Frida Kahlo was eclipsed by the fame of her lover and her husband, Diego Rivera, an influential Mexican muralist. Her life seemed to be intrinsically interwoven with the life of her husband as he appeared to be a major theme in most of her artwork. Public awareness of Frida Kahlo's art was limited to art historians until a sudden interest in the 1970s when feminists started paying more attention to her work. Since then, her fame has reached far beyond Rivera's and inspired both men and women to find a voice through the work of expression and painting.

Through her father's European and mother's Mexican backgrounds, Kahlo grew up surrounded by the idea of identity and sense of self. Her mother was a devout Spanish Catholic woman, and influenced much of young Kahlo's interests. Yet, in 1922, her parents enrolled her in the Preparatoria, a prestigious school. Kahlo however seemed to be fond of getting into trouble, abandoning her previously enforced Catholic ideals, and later joined a revolutionary gang. Only three years later on September 17th of 1925, Kahlo was riding in a bus when it violently crashed into a street trolley car and was essentially crushed. She suffered severe medical injuries as well as psychological ailments. The most devastating of all these seemed to be her damaged reproductive system and her inability to bear children, as well as the psychological affects that she endured.

After this accident, Kahlo began to take a serious interest in painting as a form of expression. She essentially took the interest to occupy her time during her temporary state of immobilization as she underwent several surgeries and other operations. Kahlo stated that she paints herself "because [she is] often alone and [she is] the subject that [she] knows best" (Kahlo 209). These portraits and graphic reoccurring themes from the accident could be seen as a surrealist style. Most of these paintings used symbolism to express her daily pain and anguish.

However, unlike several surrealists, Kahlo was not interested in the dream world and the psychological affects, although this could easily be refuted through some interpretations.

In her 1932 painting entitled, *Henry Ford Hospital* [Appendix G], Kahlo depicts herself and the pain, both physical and psychological, endured during a miscarriage. This incredibly disturbing work depicts Kahlo crying and lying on a hospital bed, unclothed and atop bloody sheets. The bed floats in an abstract form of space, surrounded by images that are related to the miscarriage. Each of these items are connected to Kahlo by long bloody filaments that are protruding from her stomach as if they were umbilical cords. The main image of the male fetus has been noted as “*Dieguito*, or, Little Diego” (Kahlo 257), the male child that she longed to bear. The orchid flower was a symbol as the gifts that Rivera had presented her with during her short pregnancy. Kahlo stated that the flower also represented the sexual relationship between her and Rivera, but also the sexual knowledge of her own body. She claimed that when she sketched it [Appendix H], she “had the idea of a sexual thing mixed with the sentimental” (Kahlo 257). Kahlo also stated that the snail was placed to allude the viewers to understand that the miscarriage was incredibly slow and painful. The plaster pink torso was Kahlo’s “idea of explaining the insides of a woman” while the cruel and industrial machine was created to “explain the mechanical part of the whole business” (Kahlo 258). Finally, in the lower right corner the viewer notices Kahlo’s own fractured pelvis that made it impossible for her to have any children. Clearly, this painting depicts a tragic event and the painful physical and psychological repercussions. Although the floating figures and the cityscape background seem to simply scream surrealism, Kahlo disputed that the incredible pain and suffering grounded this painting and labeled it as realism and possibly one of the first forms of expressionism.

Kahlo clearly seemed to favor self portraits as a form of expression, as she was able to recreate own self image with just a few paints and brushes. Often dressed in traditional Mexican garb, she embraced her heritage and often adorned herself in distinguished and regal accessories, allowing her inner physique and mentality to be displayed. In several of Kahlo's portraits, such as the 1939 painting, *The Two Fridas* [Appendix I], the viewer can see a clear form of duality, and a near double interpretation of Kahlo. Mixed heritages, personalities, and lifestyles are simply brought together to make one entity, Kahlo herself. In her diary Kahlo writes that "this painting originated from [her] memory of an imaginary childhood" (Kahlo, 163). The figure on the right represented the person which was respected and loved by Rivera as well as her followers. This is the traditional Mexican Kahlo in a Tehuana costume. In her hand, an amulet can be seen which holds the portrait of Rivera as a child. The other portion allows the viewer to see her native Tehuantepec heritage in her clothing and jewelry. The figure on the left depicts a rather European Kahlo, dressed in a lacy white Victorian style wedding dress, which represents the person that Rivera willfully abandoned. Although these women differ in culture and representation, they are connected by their exposed hearts. This was a visual device that Kahlo often utilized to express and symbolize her inner pain. European Kahlo's heart seems to be broken, while Mexican Kahlo's heart appears to be full. From the amulet, a vein travels that connects both the full and the broken heart, but is cut by the surgical tools held by European Kahlo. The broken connection represents her abandonment to Rivera, as well as her abandonment to Westernized culture. As both representations of Kahlo embrace in a hand clasp, they symbolize that the only companion left is herself. The uniting of these cultures embedded the idea that Kahlo saw herself as a product of the mixing of the European Diaspora and the

Mexican races. Through this portrait and others, Kahlo obviously is extending her artistic hand to create an image of herself which she leaves her viewers to interpret.

Chapter Four: Conclusion- The Artist as the Art

The impact of the women's work clearly forced readers to understand their lives and ideals in a new light. These famous females gained and maintained their popularity due to the quality of their work and the messages conveyed, rather than their husbands, their lifestyles, and their scandals. Their message was one of feminism, of obtaining a voice and forcing themselves to be heard, and to be recognized as who they are and what they have accomplished, rather than an affair or their tendency of drinking. Several of these women maintained their popularity and still today are seen as iconic for their contributions to the Surrealist ideal and further pushing feminine theory to be heard. Surrealists, Futurists, and Idealists, as well as feminists, look to these women of the twenties to further understand the emerging voice of women. Rather than focusing on their tragic deaths or abusive relationships, it is crucial for the reader to see these women as intelligent and talented writers, artists, and actresses, all who contained a specific message to be conveyed and a certain story to be told.

Fitzgerald spent much of her life positioning herself both as the "inspiration for the artist" and also as the authorial creator of a mystique of her own through her self-referential, experimental, and frequently ironic language; this balance is mirrored in the balance of her characters, their own struggles to be both object and creator, story and storyteller—and their ultimate failure to effectively be either. Meanwhile, being written by her husband, Zelda's sole responsibility was to perform herself, manufacturing enough of her own mythology for Scott to find fascinating; in her life, she was art.

Thematically, the novel can also be seen as existential in that the protagonist tries to create herself through action, and as one of the earliest studies of the predicament of women in a male-dominated society. The metaphor of the title reveals with irony the reasoning of the novel,

along with its central theme. A casual remark a man may pass to a woman at a dance, "*Save Me the Waltz*" his short phrase clearly encompasses the respective roles played by the two opposite sexes: the man does the choosing and the asking, while the woman waits to be chosen and asked. The man has the active role; the woman has the passive and subordinate role—the very role against which Zelda was rebelling.

The title also involves the idea of dancing, to which the second half of the novel is devoted. But, while social dancing involves two partners, a man and a woman, the dancing with which Zelda is concerned in her novel is that of a woman alone artistically expressing through motion a personal vision of life—dancing as creative of beauty but also as life-giving. It is important to note that men have no share in the world of the ballet described by Zelda. They simply do not exist for her. The title, therefore, encompasses the two leading themes of the book: the desire of a woman to free herself from her subordinate position in a man's world and her need to discover herself, to go to the end of herself through the artistic expression of emotion. At the same time the title is remorsefully ironic because it indicates the supremacy of man in the world he has created and his conviction that he owns the woman as an object.

Loy's poems offer signs of herself within the art, as she took the opportunity of writing to elaborate and reflect on her own life. In the juxtaposition between both poems, "Lunar Baedeker" and "Songs to Johannes", readers must consider the figurative aspect of both poems making particular reference to the ways in which they conceptualize the idea of the sign. Given that the term feminism is now applied to a multitude of contradictory theoretical and socio-political positions, several readers and critics define Loy's own peculiar brand of feminist thought, and identify the nature of its influence upon her creative praxis.

As Rachel Blau DuPlessis explains in “Sexual Intercourse and Narrative Meaning in Mina Loy”, both psychoanalytical and structuralist critics have examined the ways in which narrative plots follow the basic movements of the sexual act (Burke 86). Many scholars have remarked that this approach to textual interpretation turns on a system of binary oppositions, in which femininity is insistently situated as dark and mysterious. The intelligible understanding of manifest truth, or plot, the “light” shed on a narrative, is thus unavoidably placed, if one follows Brooks’s and Barthes’s models, in opposition to an “obfuscating”, “physical”, or at any rate “anti-semantic” femininity (Shreiber and Tuma 65). Thus, Loy’s ideals and beliefs are incorporated into her poetry, resulting in herself transforming into the art.

If one reads Loy in the light of what Susan Winnett terms the traditional “Masterplot” (Burke 164), it becomes clear that this narrative unfolding is seriously undermined by the fragmented presentation of the events. For instance, allusions to an abortion having occurred are particularly noticeable in fragments III, IV, XVII, XXIV, XXX and XXXI, through references to blood, as in “We might have given birth to a butterfly/With the daily news/Printed in blood on its wings” (Loy III, 54). Likewise, references are made to a painful experience in a clandestine pseudo-clinical environment: “I don’t care / Where the legs of the legs of the furniture are walking to/...Red a warm colour on the battle-field / Heavy on my knees as a counterpane” (Loy XVII, 60). These passages are interrupted by descriptions of the cataclysmic effects of the erotic encounter, as constituted around graphic references to body parts and sexual fluids, as in fragment IX, where the speaker writes of “spermatozoa / At the core of Nothing / In the milk of the Moon” (Loy 56). The experience of orgasm takes on an equally cosmic resonance in fragment XXIX: “Let them clash together / From their incognitos / In seismic orgasm” (Loy 65). The explicitly sexual events divulge deep into her personal life. However, the surrealist qualities

in her writings push them towards a different aspect. Not so much as Loy writing an autobiography but more transforming her into the art itself.

Kahlo clearly seemed to favor self-portraits, as she was able to recreate own self image with just a few paints and brushes. Often dressed in traditional Mexican garb, she embraced her very heritage and often adorned herself in distinguished and regal accessories, allowing her inner physique and mentality to be displayed. In several of Kahlo's portraits, such as "Self Portrait", the viewer can see a clear form of duality and a near double interpretation of Kahlo. Mixed heritages and lifestyles are simply brought together to make one entity, Kahlo herself. The left half of her body represents the European and Hungarian blood, mainly in the essence of her physical appearance. The other portion allows the viewer to see her native Tehuantepec heritage in her clothing and jewelry. The uniting of these cultures embedded the idea that Kahlo saw herself as a product of the mixing of the European Diaspora and the Mexican races. Through this portrait and others, Kahlo obviously is extending her artistic hand to create an image of herself which she leaves her viewers to interpret.

Through the recreation and reproductions of themselves in their own art, each of these women seemed to embrace their own ideals as well as simultaneously encompassing the ideals of the 1920s in a novel, a compendium of poetry, or a gallery of art. Fitzgerald once held the passion for dance and painting, as she wished to form a living from her art. Yet, when she failed she turned to writing and compiled her own hopes and dreams into one story. Clearly, *Save Me the Waltz* embodies all of Fitzgerald's aspirations and ideals yet moves away from the autobiographical realm. The surrealist qualities and the fairy-tale like appearance makes the novel a reproduction of her own self and what she once wished to be her future. Similarly, Loy continuously based her poems around her tragic love life, littered with conflicting religious and

political beliefs and topped with the sting of abandonment. These tumultuous experiences allowed her pen to produce a deep story, possibly a cautionary tale, into her poetry. Kahlo, who also suffered beneath the hand of a man, channeled her ideas into a variety of paintings. Ranging from Surrealist qualities to early expressionism and duality, Kahlo harnessed the pains and sufferings of her life and transferred them onto a canvas. She forced the viewer to understand the feelings of severe pain, of loss, of love, and of self doubt. The multitude of beliefs that resided within Kahlo were put into painting that the public could see, and thus continue to endure alongside her. Clearly, her own life became the art itself.

Although these women have been studied for various reasons, mainly related to their famous husbands, lovers, or tragic and pitiful downfalls, they each require their own critical analysis. Fitzgerald, Loy, and Kahlo are all exceptional artists in their own ways, each individualistic, surreal, and overall, powerful. As stand-alone artists, these women can truly be appreciated for the work they have produced. Their surrealist qualities astounded many critics and readers, both then and now. These stylistics also drew the boundary from these women reproducing their lives through autobiographies and from creating elaborate art. Fitzgerald, Loy, and Kahlo endured tragic and dysfunctional experiences and endings. However, the art they produced throughout their lives was anything but tragic. Each novel, poem, and painting revealed a woman with a voice, a story to be told, and a revelation as the artist as the art.

Appendices

Appendix A- "Lunar Baedeker"

A silver Lucifer
serves
cocaine in cornucopia

To some somnambulists
of adolescent thighs
draped
in satirical draperies

Peris in livery
prepare
Lethe
for posthumous parvenues

Delirious Avenues
lit
with the chandelier souls
of infusoria
from Pharoah's tombstones

lead
to mercurial doomsdays
Odious oasis
in furrowed phosphorous

the eye-white sky-light
white-light district
of lunar lusts

Stellectric signs
"Wing shows on Starway"
"Zodiac carrousel"

Cyclones
of ecstatic dust
and ashes whirl
crusaders
from hallucinatory citadels
of shattered glass
into evacuate craters

A flock of dreams
browse on Necropolis

From the shores
of oval oceans
in the oxidized Orient

Onyx-eyed Odalisques
and ornithologists
observe
the flight
of Eros obsolete

And "Immortality"
mildews ...
in the museums of the moon

"Nocturnal cyclops"
"Crystal concubine"

Pocked with personification
the fossil virgin of the skies
waxes and wanes

Appendix B- “Diego Is My Universe”

Diego beginning

Diego builder

Diego my child

Diego my boyfriend

Diego painter

Diego my lover

Diego “my husband”

Diego my friend

Diego my mother

Diego my father

Diego my son

Diego = me =

Diego Universe

Diversity within unity.

Appendix C- “Songs to Joannes” (Excerpts)

I

Spawn of Fantasies
 Silting the appraisable
 Pig Cupid his rosy snout
 Rooting erotic garbage
 “Once upon a time”
 Pulls a weed white star-topped
 Among wild oats sown in mucous-membrane

I would an eye in a Bengal light
 Eternity in a sky-rocket
 Constellations in an ocean
 Whose rivers run no fresher
 Than a trickle of saliva

These are suspect places

I must live in my lantern
 Trimming subliminal flicker
 Virginal to the bellows
 Of Experience
 Coloured glass

II

The skin-sack
 In which a wanton duality
 Packed
 All the completion of my infructuous impulses
 Something the shape of a man
 To the casual vulgarity of the merely observant
 More of a clock-work mechanism
 Running down against time
 To which I am not paced
 My finger-tips are numb from fretting your hair
 A God’s door-mat
 On the threshold of your mind

III

“We might have given birth to a butterfly
 With the daily news
 Printed in blood on its wings”

VI

I know the Wire-Puller intimately
 And if it were not for the people
 On whom you keep one eye
 You could look strait at me
 And Time would be set back

XII

“Or are you
 Only the other half
 Of an ego’s necessity”

XIII

Come to me There is something
 I have got to tell you and I can’t tell
 Something taking shape
 Something that has a new name
 A new dimension
 A new use
 A new illusion
 It is ambient And it is in your eyes
 Something shiny Something only for toy
 Something that I must not see...

XXVI

“To Nature
 - - - that irate pornographer”

XXVII

“Our daily deaths”

XXIX

“Let them suppose that tears
 Are snowdrops or molasses
 Or anything
 Than Human insufficiencies”

Appendix D- *What the Water Gave Me*



Appendix E- *The Love Embrace of the Universe, the Earth (Mexico), Diego, Me, and Señor Xolotl*



Appendix F- Self Portrait



Appendix G- Henry Ford Hospital



Appendix H- Henry Ford Hospital (Sketch)



Appendix I- The Two Fridas



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