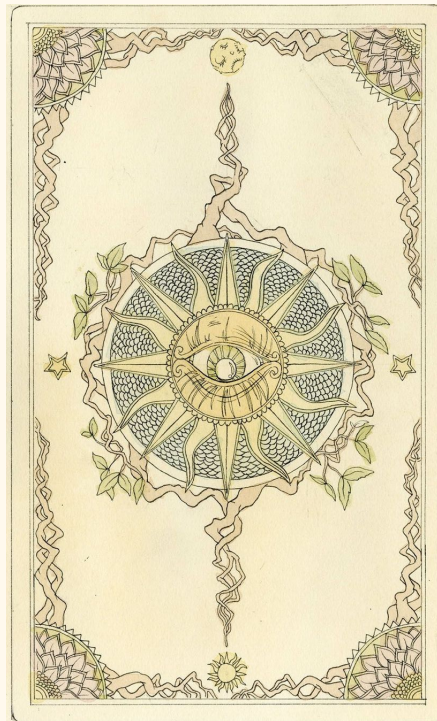Taylor Maldonado, Hannah Muczynski, Anna Samuels
ENGL 558: Women Writers and the Avant-Garde
Dr. Linda Kinnahan
Group Project White Paper
14 December 2018

"COLOR-PICTURE MAPS OF DESTINY"
TRAVELING WITH MINA LOY THROUGH TIME AND SPACE

INTRODUCTION

"Defiled marble of Carrara / On which she spreads / Color-picture maps of destiny"
(At the Door of the House 4-6)

Traveling with Mina Loy through Time and Space is a collaborative Digital Humanities (DH) project concerned with biographical and close-reading approaches to poetry as a means for investigating the relationship of artists with historical time(s) and physical, geographical spaces. These close-reading practices took form three-fold: as a gameplay of Loy's "At the Door of the House," a navigable Baedeker map of Florence in the early 1900's, and a tauro card timeline of Loy's time in Florence from 1907-1916. These projects, housed collectively on the website, originally sought to establish a greater understanding of Florence as an inspiration to and influence on Loy and her poetry. Moreover, our hopes for *Traveling with Mina Loy* were to provide an interdisciplinary audience with an accessible entrance into Loy's Italian life--be it to visualize space and time through poetry and photography or to travel from the comforts of home.

Roles and Responsibilities

In the following section, we will discuss briefly the work that went into the multiple smaller projects within our larger collaborative project entitled *"Color-Picture Maps of Destiny:" Traveling with Mina Loy through Time and Space* and how they came together as a collective.

For any DH project to be successful, a great deal of research must be conducted and an even greater deal of metadata must be collected. Before a polished final product could be produced--in this case our Weebly site--we first had to analyze the data and organize it in a way that we could utilize for our own projects but that could also be understandable and useful to individuals beyond our larger project interested in Loy. To collect the metadata spreadsheet seen on the site, Hannah and Taylor did a distant reading of all of the relevant poetry from Loy's text. Together, they selected each place and space, and made the decisions collectively on what to include and exclude in terms of locations to be included on the map. Taylor numbered the poetry lines for later reference, and Hannah inserted the references into the metadata spreadsheet. Anna then input the biographical information.

For the Baedeker Prezi for the larger project, we utilized the smaller Prezi from Hannah and Taylor's smaller project, updating circles with more information and pictures as well as adjusting circle sizes and colors to represent particular metadata. For this portion of the project, Taylor provided suggestions such as making circles more transparent to prevent covering the locations on the map as well as including unidentified 'spaces' as references not pinpointed but still included in the Prezi. Hannah suggested the different colors for the circles

to represent different Metadata. Hannah inserted the metadata from the spreadsheet and Taylor inserted pictures collected from Dr. Kinnahan. Hannah also adjusted the circles and added historical context to the different 'sites.' Anna added the biographical information.

Anna was inspired by Loy's poem "At the Door of the House" and set about creating two tarot-influenced projects for incorporation into the larger website. One, a "Choose Your Own Adventure"-type game designed using Twine, leads users on a walk through Florence. Pulling text from each of the seven poems that Hannah and Taylor had focused on for their baedeker project, Anna created a remixing of Loy's poetry that allows for an alternate reading of the texts. She also designed a "Tauro Timeline" to provide additional biographical information about Loy, specifically focusing on her years spent in Florence. Instead of relying on a linear timeline, Anna chose to use a Prezi template that features a deck of cards and a table top. By customizing each slide/card with text and images, Anna created an interactive "Tauro Timeline" that provides a reading of Loy's life from 1907-1916. Users can move through the timeline chronologically or can click on any of the slides/cards to jump to a certain point in Loy's "reading."

For the Weebly, as Taylor and Anna struggled to utilize the site having little to no experience with the platform, Hannah created the site using the Weebly free feature and executed many of the team's ideas. Taylor selected colors and designed the layout of the Tauro Card cover page; Hannah executed this design. Taylor wrote the introduction on the about page, and each collaborator wrote their biographical sections. Hannah input the Loy poetry pages; Taylor suggested including the Google Maps modern locations in connection to the poetry pages and Hannah executed this design idea. Hannah added pictures to this page as well. Hannah wrote the explanation of the navigable map, and Anna wrote the explanation for the timeline and Twine tarot game page. Taylor came up with the idea to include a comments and inquiries page to the site for viewers and Hannah executed this idea. Taylor wrote the introduction page and each team member wrote their own bio for the site. Someone had the idea of using Tauro cards on the first page, and Hannah and Taylor executed this.

Use of Technology

While Prezi was our main use of technology, other kinds of technology were utilized throughout the collaborative process, such as FaceTime, Google Docs and Google Sheets. FaceTime was utilized to chat over video about ideas and the creative process itself. Google Docs became a place where we could share research ideas, and Google Sheets was used to creating a metadata excel sheet containing all of our "raw data." Without these online, real-time, collaborative technologies, our entire process would have taken more time, effort, and may have had a higher likelihood for mistakes. Additionally, the writing of this very White Paper was an intensely collaborative effort, with each team member adding to the paper

simultaneously. The lines between Hannah's, Taylor's and Anna's writing were blurred into a 'single' voice.

For us, Weebly was an easy way to bring together the different pieces of our project. Weebly is an aesthetically pleasing and minimalist platform. One big benefit of Weebly is that there are no ads, even with the free version. Weebly is fairly easy to use, customizable and intuitive. Hannah was very familiar with this platform, so the team drew heavily from her prior knowledge. As compared to Wordpress or other web-design platforms, the team agreed that Weebly best suited the needs of the project.

In designing her Twine game, Anna worked with a platform that she was unfamiliar with. She relied heavily on a series of instructional videos created by Adam Hammond, an Assistant Professor in Toronto University's English Department. Hammond's videos were easy to follow and provided her with a much needed foundation for her work with Twine. While the Twine website does link to extensive message boards, Anna found it much easier to follow along with Hammond's step-by-step videos. Anna also had the chance to experiment with coding while developing her game. As a complete novice, she again relied on videos, FAQ guides, and, more often than not, trial and error.

So What?

The "so what" of the project is encapsulated in the two following questions:

"How can we map spaces that are not specific places?"
"To place a reader in a space, does that space need a name?"

Both of these concerns are aspects we planned to address in this bigger project, one that specifically looks at the biographical and historical context to Loy's poems. In this, we hope to see a large improvement to the amount of data that is displayed on the original Prezi. Some of the difficulty of using a physical map means that not all spaces will be given representation, especially when these are unknown. One way we attempted to go around this was by including a circle on our Prezi titled "Spaces." This allowed us to include spaces that were not necessarily specific places.

Additionally, by offering multiple representations of information, we allowed readers the agency to create their own journey: guided by our findings and research, but decided by the reader. We specifically designed multiple paths but each reader's own journey could be unique: through the timeline, the choose-your-own-adventure, and the close-reading map. This was highlighted in each part of the project, and especially with the home-page of the Weebly, which took the form of three tauro cards.

GOALS

Our biggest goal was to **Offer Multiple Visualizations of Loy's Time in Florence.** Each part of our project was a different representation of Loy's time in Florence. The Prezi served as a visual journey through Florence in the eyes of Loy with a "Baedeker of Florence" created by Loy's poetry and the context of the Burke biography. The timeline, created also on Prezi, served to highlight Loy's biography and clarify her time spent in Florence. The Weebly website as a whole collected these different visualizations in one space to then make connections between them. We offered the list of poems we used on the website so that viewers could read the poems themselves. These different visualizations of the same material offered readers the agency to journey through the information in the way they desired.

However, we also had three smaller goals which became steps in our *process* of completing the project:

1. Collect Data

Accomplished by carefully reading the poems written during or about the years Loy lived in Florence 1907-1916. Read through the notes section in *The Lost Lunar Baedeker* to cross-check our own data collection.

Additionally, read the chapters in Carolyn Burke's biography to find any additional places of interest and supportive biographical information

2. Organize Data

Accomplished through the use of a metadata document in Google Sheets. We organized data by poem title, Loy's reference, line number, and real-world reference.

Further categorized data by location, the number of times referenced, as well as biographical information regarding these poetic references.

This data was then also added to by reading Carolyn Burke's Biography of Mina Loy, *Becoming Modern*. The data was organized similarly: page number, date, event, and description.

3. Visually Display Data

Using the data-set created with the excel sheet, we accomplished this goal by completing the three different parts to our larger project: Tauro Timeline, Baedeker of Firenze, and The Poetry of Loy.

Although this project took more time than what was originally anticipated, we feel as if we accomplished the goal(s) we set out to accomplish. The three smaller, more tangible goals, can be readily seen in the *process* we underwent. But the larger goal, offering multiple visualizations, is tangible present in the *product* itself. We feel as if both of these goals were accomplished to our satisfaction.

DESIGN

1. Tauro Card Timeline

One component we wanted to include was a timeline of Loy's life while in Florence from 1907-1916. While we included biographical information within the Weebly, we also wanted a separate timeline component that would have all of Loy's time spent in Florence in an easily accessible place. This would allow readers who were not familiar with Loy to learn more about her and also offered a more comprehensive look at Loy's life to aid the audience in their immersion in the Prezi. Drawing biographical information from Burke's Loy biography, Anna wanted to share information about Loy in a non-linear format and was drawn to the visual of a tarot card spread. Initially envisioning a "timeline" that moved between tarot cards on a table, she chose to use Prezi because she knew she could build off of uploaded background images.

As luck (or fate?) would have it, Anna found a Prezi template that fit her needs exactly. The "Winning Hand" template features a deck of cards and a tabletop; Anna was able to customize the slide/card layout in the appearance of a basic tarot spread. Though structured chronologically like a traditional timeline, the "Tauro Timeline" hints at the themes of fate, religion, and mysticism running through Loy's life which were especially relevant to her experiences in Florence.

2. Baedeker of Firenze

With the map component of the project, we updated the Prezi from our original design to include some of the changes we identified at the end of our smaller project. Our interest in Loy's Florence experiences was peaked by the visual map of Florence within *Baedeker's Italy from the Alps to Naples* from 1904, published while Loy inhabited the city from 1907-1916. Each circle's title was the real-world reference, and as the Prezi zoomed into each circle, more information would appear, including the line numbers to the poetic references. This simple design allowed the information to come to the forefront.

As mentioned previously, the proper-noun, concrete examples we found in Loy's poetry were limited. One way we improved this with a larger project was by considering biographical information to see whether non-specific references have more biographical and historical

weight. To include this information, we added photographs and further slides within each circle. We wanted to see the layers of information present with further research, as well as to immerse the reader in the journey that our Prezi becomes. As each plotted location contained biographical and historical context, the Prezi underwent a large transformation from our smaller project.

One simple improvement we made was adjusting the circles in the Prezi to be more transparent so they did not block out of view the actual map contents. We also changed the size of circles to represent the number of times a place was referenced throughout poems. The difference in color signifies the different kinds of references. Blue represents those references found in Loy's poetry and green represents the references from the Carolyn Burke biography. This allows an easy visual representation of the kinds of information regarding Loy's time in Florence. The poetic references are places Loy mentions and, in most cases, places she frequented. The references from Burke are places Loy spent time in and the multiple locations she lived in while in Florence. In some cases, the information from Burke merely reinforced information from Loy's poetry.

3. The Poetry of Loy

The final part of our project, "the Poetry of Loy," included remixing text from our selected poems:

"Italian Pictures"
"Babies in Hospital"
"Giovanni Franchi"
"At the Door of the House"
"Songs to Joannes"
"The Prototype"
"Summer Night in a Florentine Slum"

Inspired by one of Loy's Florence poems, "At the Door of the House," Anna developed a digital project that drew on the practice of tarot card reading, encouraged an alternate reading of Loy's poems, and provided an interactive visualization of her texts. As a tradition, tarot places great importance on order, symbols, and reading. Like Loy's texts, tarot cards inspire multitudes of readings. Depending on order and placement in a spread, each card may mean something different. Perhaps most importantly, tarot cards are responsive to their subject. In its collaborative nature and individualized storyline, tarot seemed like the perfect representation of what Anna came to understand as the interactive nature of Loy's poetry. Using "At the Door of the House" as her starting point and anchor, Anna developed a digital project that illuminates the variety of readings Loy's poetry inspires through an interactive tarot-inspired game.

Anna's initial vision for the project was a gallery of tarot card images that would "flip" when a user clicked on them. Dr. Churchill suggested that each card could link to additional information, and Anna envisioned a sort of Tarot baedeker. After experimenting with different platforms on the master list that Drs. Churchill and Kinnahan compiled and having no luck creating flippable images, Anna decided to focus instead on the interactive aspect of tarot. Anna had never heard of Twine before, but was drawn to the platform for its ability to design "Choose Your Own Adventure"-type games. Still unsure about project specifics, Anna decided to start experimenting with Twine and see what she came up with.

In an attempt to ground her audience directly in Mina Loy's poetry and mindset, Anna used Twine to design an interactive game which leads users through Loy's Florence. She began by pulling lines from "At the Door of the House" that she used for directives within the Twine game. The game begins with the user/Mina Loy walking down an alley in Florence and noticing a group of women crowded in a doorway. "Do you join them in the doorway or keep walking down the alley?" the game asks. By following the first path, users are invited into the tarot reading taking place in the poem, while selecting the second path leads the user/Mina Loy further down the alley to intersect with characters and locations featured in Loy's other Florence poems. Unlike Anna's initial vision for the game, the final version focused less explicitly on the history of tarot and instead relied on tarot's themes of fate, journey, and reading in its design.

In order to further engage her project with Hannah and Taylor's Baedeker of Florence, Anna incorporated text from all of Loy's poems which they drew metadata from. Anna also referenced some of the physical locations that were mentioned in either Loy's poetry or Carolyn Burke's biography of Loy, *Becoming Modern: The Life of Mina Loy*. Other than information about the quoted text within the game, the introduction page provides a brief description of the game and invites users to engage with the project. Because the game relies on exploration and discovery, Anna intentionally did not provide extensive information regarding the game's content or how to navigate within it. She considered keeping Twine's sidebar and navigation menu, which would allow users to move backwards within the game or start over completely, but instead decided to link back to the first slide when a user reaches one of the five possible endings.

RESEARCH & CRITICAL CONTEXT

One of the biggest difficulties when beginning the research was in deciding which poems to include for our analysis. Loy lived in Florence from 1907 to 1914 but moved back and forth between Rome, Naples, and Florence between 1914 and 1916, before setting sail for New

York in 1916. This presented a difficulty in the selection of poems for consideration because Loy did not write many poems while she was physically in Florence.

After much debate, we picked poems written 1914-1920 -- the first section in *The Lost Lunar Baedeker*, entitled "I. Futurism x Feminism: The Circle Squared (1914-1920)" -- "Songs to Joannes" -- written between 1915-1917 -- and the three early poems in the appendix section -- written in 1914. These were all written during or about the years Loy lived in Florence. These poems additionally were written during Loy's closest proximity to Florence. Additionally, we read through the notes section in *The Lost Lunar Baedeker* to cross-check our own data collection. This helped us to determine whether or not certain poems were set in Florence or elsewhere in Italy.

The final list of included poems is as follows. The date each poem was written and page numbers from *The Lost Lunar Baedeker* are included. All information was gathered from *The Lost Lunar Baedeker*:

"Italian Pictures" [Summer 1914] (9)
"Babies in Hospital" [May 1915] (24)
"Giovanni Franchi" [May-June 1915] (27)
"At the Door of the House" [ca. 1915] (33)
"Songs to Joannes" [August 1915] (53)
"The Prototype" [24 Feb 1914] (221)

While we included the first section "I. Futurism x Feminism: The Circle Squared (1914-1920)" of *The Lost Lunar Baedeker* and the three early poems, the following poems were not included in our analysis because they were set elsewhere in Italy but not in Florence:

"Parturition" (4)
"Virgins Plus Curtains Minus Dots" (21)
"The Effectual Marriage" (36)
"Lion's Jaws" (46)
"The Benefit Garland" (220)
"Involutions" (223)

The poems from this first section of *The Lost Lunar Baedeker* which unfortunately did not refer to Florence or even Italy are as follows:

"There is no Life or Death" (3)
"Three Moments in Paris" (15)
"Sketch of a Man on a Platform" (19)
"Human Cylinders" (40)
"The Black Virginity" (42)
"Ignoramus" (44)

Additionally, after a suggestion from Linda Kinnahan, we included "Summer Night in a

Florentine Slum" (1918) which was published in 1920 in the first edition of the magazine *Contract*, published by William Carlos Williams and Robert McAlmon.

As a part of our methods of analysis, we counted lines for our references in a specific manner. In a poem with multiple poems, we counted 1.15 or 2.15 if the poems are numbered, but if not numbered, we counted the title as a line. Each new physical line also was counted as a new line. This occurred even when a line went over to a second line, such as when the page was not long enough. While the extra piece of the line could be considered part of the same line, for cohesive line counting we counted it as a new line.

Another large part of our research method was in the tracking of metadata using Google Sheets. In this excel sheet, we organized data by poem title, Loy's reference, line number, and real-world reference. We additionally color-coded references by location, identifying Florence, Italy, and non-specific references. Color-coded references evolved over time, as certain non-descript references became more important as we researched historical and biographical information. Once we had gathered references together, checking each others' work to maintain consistency, we counted the number of times certain places and spaces were mentioned. We also copied the data and rearranged it by sorting by the poem, by kind of reference, and by the text of the reference itself. This allowed us a few different ways to look at our data to allow us to conceptually understand and analyze it.

For the "Tauro Timeline," Anna selected relevant biographical information about Loy from Carolyn Burke's *Becoming Modern* which she cross referenced with the metadata that Hannah and Taylor had pulled from Loy's poetry and Conover's *Lost Lunar Baedeker* notes. Her research for the Twine tarot game consisted of close reading Loy's Florence poetry and selecting lines that worked well in a narrative context. Additionally, she researched the history of tarot, specifically its connection to Italy and Florence. Early on in the semester, Hannah also shared some articles about tarot and "The Wasteland" that helped Anna to start planning and visualizing the project.

SCHOLARLY CONVERSATION

What are we adding to the scholarly conversation? First and foremost, we are making Loy more accessible to a more varied audience. The selection of Loy that we've chosen, particularly those poems written during her time in Florence, is a small yet interesting enough avenue of scholarly inquiry for Loy novices to enjoy and digest thoughtfully but also for avid fans to delve into and contribute to. Those who are not particularly fond of Loy may stumble upon the project from another avenue--an interest in maps, an interest in geography, in travel, in tarot, interest in the 1910's and Modernism, in photography, in female poets, etc. For those

who already love her, perhaps they'll walk away from this project with a desire to travel to Florence and to make deeper connections than we could here.

In addition, we are making a distinct connection between Loy's biography and life in Florence with the text that she produced. Without her time in Florence, some of Loy's best work would be nonexistent. This shows that while biographical information cannot be the only way to interpret poems, Loy's biography and poems as so intertwined that without it, the poems lose substantial value and weight. Additionally, this close-yet-distant reading methodology allows new understandings and conceptions about Loy's poetry specifically and all poetry in general.

Through this project, we are adding to the scholarly conversation that biographical work remains important even in the age of technology where the world is at your fingertips and, even more importantly, we can utilize our remote connection to the world to our advantage--to produce DH projects that introduce Loy to an entirely new audience in an interactive way.

AUDIENCE

The intended audience for our project is students and educators who are interested in Mina Loy. This encompasses both scholars and students who are already familiar with Loy, and those who are unfamiliar. We designed our website with this in mind, using different interactive ways of presenting information to aid all learning styles.

The use of the Weebly website platform was also reflective of our audience: Weebly is a very clean and easy to use website platform. We wanted to be able to customize the website adequately, and Weebly allows for many different ways to present information. One example of this is drop-down menu bars and links. Weebly allowed for a minimalistic interface that would let our information stand on its own without the distraction of ads. We additionally included different ways of viewing the information, such as a timeline and the Prezi map, to allow readers their own agency.

OUTCOMES: FUTURE IMPROVEMENTS

We felt like we had a great outcome of our project and were able to complete the goals we set out. Our ideas for future improvement involve information to include to add layers to the project and other large-scale improvements:

1. ## Incorporating Baedeker References

   One area that we would like to improve in the future is incorporating descriptions of locations from the Baedeker itself. This would allow an experience guided by the Baedeker, incorporating not just the image of the map, but references from within the Baedeker. We also would love to include more pictures and maps from the Baedeker, utilizing it to its fullest.

2. ## Monetary Investment in the Project

   In a perfect world, everything would be free and all hard work would be appreciated. A significant amount of time went into the creation of this project, and if we had been equipped with the resources to better the project, the finalized version may have been cleaner, better organized, and more insightful. We would have loved to be able to travel to these places to get a better sense of how they influenced Loy. Even taking videos and pictures of these places would have been valuable to the project. We would have loved to be able to interview scholars about Loy's influences and inspirations. We would have especially loved to have gone to the Beinecke and analyze primary sources first hand.

3. ## A Web-Developer or Programmer

   Another thing that would have been helpful is if we had a team-member who knew web-development and programming better than we did. This would have allowed us to possibly create technologies specific to our project and have a set of eyes with a different perspective, as all three of us come from a humanities background.

TAKE-AWAYS

Overall, this larger project was a success. We were able to do what we set out to do using technology in the process to make it more accessible for viewers and easier for us. Additionally, by building on the smaller Prezi project, we were able to make adjustments from our first attempts and improve.

Technology Can Be Inflexible

One of the biggest difficulties we encountered throughout this small project was the inflexibility of technology. While Prezi was fairly easy to learn and even easier for viewers to use once the project was completed, we still found small issues with the platform. For example, we could not adjust the margins on either side of our image, and we were unable to change the order in which locations fell from the order we initially inserted them (Prezi enforces a chronological order that is beneficial to classroom presentations but not necessarily beneficial

to a navigable, interactive presentation). With time, we were able to understand that Prezi intuitively will understand if a circle is meant to follow one close by. But it takes time and moving the circle around for Prezi to recognize that the circle is meant to be grouped with the ones nearby.

Shortcomings with Weebly

While Weebly is easy to use, it did take time to settle on a website template. One particular concern was the accessibility and our long website title. We wanted drop-down menus to be easy to click and navigate and wanted our title to be customizable so we could make it small enough so as to not overwhelm the webpage. However, once this template was selected, the website design was easy and rewarding. The particular template we used was one that allowed for a lot of customization, so this was beneficial to our project.

Additionally, Weebly is not a live-time application so we were unable to simultaneously edit the website. Weebly can only be edited by one person at a time. Furthermore, any small details that were changed were easier to change across the entire platform, e.g. the way a page was designed. This meant that the design fell primarily on Hannah since she had previous knowledge. However, the team contributed with ideas and in other ways to make the workload even.

Working Collectively Can be Difficult but Rewarding

One of the biggest challenges of Digital Humanities work is collaboration. One person's process and train of thought may make sense to them, but it doesn't always make sense to the team. It can be difficult to communicate ideas and theories, and it can be even more difficult to determine whose ideas are most rational for a project's success. Moreover, it can be hard to let go of one's own ideas and to hand the reins to someone else. Nevertheless, we believe that we worked quite well together and were able to finalize a beautiful project that reflects many, if not nearly all, of each of our ideas.

Working collectively can also be difficult in terms of time and location. When each collaborator has a different schedule, workload, and address, meeting can be hard to schedule and distributing workloads can be challenging as well. With that being said, we did our very best and utilized technology to work on our project both together and remotely.

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