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“Of traditional Israel and Albion”: discourses of racial purity and the Jewish body in Mina Loy’s “Anglo-Mongrels and the Rose”

Rachel Smith

This essay explores the modernist poet Mina Loy’s work “Anglo-Mongrels and the Rose” (1923) within its historical and cultural context. The poem consistently challenges ideologies such as eugenics, which informed anti-Semitism and sought to strengthen notions of racial purity. Incorporating the biopolitical theory of Rosi Braidotti, this essay explores how Loy exposes the figure of the Jewish “mongrel” as a constructed figure within eugenic discourse, in turn revealing the ways in which eugenic and biopolitical ideologies work together to govern, vilify, and glorify certain lives over others.

Situating Mina Loy’s poem “Anglo-Mongrels and the Rose” amongst texts that explore “modernizing, assimilated Jews”, critic Rachel Blau DuPlessis holds that Loy posits the figure of “the mongrel ... as fruitful and creative” (141, 159). A pejorative term used to describe the offspring of Jewish and non-Jewish people, Loy frequently explores “mongrel” identities and the language of anti-Semitism to expose the ways in which ideology – eugenic, racial, Darwinian – came to inform notions of such identities. Speaking from this mongrel or hybrid position, Loy subverts the ideological language of eugenics and racial purity throughout the text to expose the body and identity as fluctuating sites of cultural and discursive inscription, not determined by the biological essentialism of these discourses.

This essay will read “Anglo-Mongrels” as a response to the racialisation of Jewish peoples as internal others within the eugenic biopolitical discourse of the early twentieth century, excluded from what Giorgio Agamben describes as the *bios* as bare life (which he terms *zoe*), possessing a recognisable though unassimilable “probationary whiteness” within the shifting matrix of race (Jacobson 176). In other words, anti-Semitism was couched in a racialised ideology, the Jewish body becoming another point against which the ideological formulations of eugenic hegemony – a stable, white selfhood and its concomitant “civilised” values – were measured and instilled. As Jewish and mongrel subjects respectively, Loy perceives her poetic protagonists Exodus and Ova as threats to hegemonic conceptions of identity, turning to ideas of hybridity and plurality in order to envisage alternative ontologies away from the eugenic script.

Rosi Braidotti’s conception of *zoe* and affirmative politics lends critical weight to Loy’s poetic project. Examining the liminal space of Otherness in her book *Nomadic Theory* (2011), Braidotti diverges from previous biopolitical theorists such as Giorgio Agamben, who describes two spheres of life constituting a political subject: *bios* (political and social life, possessed generally by men), and *zoe* (animal life, essential to all subjects). Her divergence is achieved by locating *zoe* as a “vitalist”,

inassimilable force within the *bios*, one that channels the subject's proximity to death into a productive celebration of the temporality of life (288).

In Agamben's writing, sovereign power possessed by the state maintains the absolute right to reduce those possessing *bios* to their "bare life" (*zoe*), effectively stripping them of their social and political life, rights, and status as human. Following Foucault, Agamben argues that the production of "bare life" is the paradigm of Western modernity: included in the polis by its exclusion, the existence of the political subject rests on the possibility of its social death. This political domination "puts at stake living itself" (*Means Without End* 4). The *bios/zoe* dichotomy is conceptualised by Agamben as resting upon the familiar binaries that constitute Western "political structure[s]: naked life ... and political existence, exclusion and inclusion" (32). Eugenics similarly rests on these binaries, reducing certain lives to their biological essence whilst others are permitted access to "play their part on the stage of life", the sphere of political and cultural existence (Galton 410).

In *Nomadic Theory*, Braidotti rescues *zoe* from its position of negation to representing a life-force signifying otherness and "alterity" that can function within and without the space of *bios*, thus posing a threat to the "imagined natural order" of eugenics (334). Braidotti's argument illuminates the way in which the healthy, eugenic body was racialised, gendered, and otherwise hierarchised in terms of class and proximity to the perceived norm, the "male, white, heterosexual, Christian, property-owning, standard language-speaking citizens" of the *bios* (Braidotti 327). No longer figured as lack, bare life, or negation, Braidotti's conception of *zoe* resonates with Loy's body politics throughout "Anglo-Mongrels", as both seek to establish an alternative framework for the ways in which human life is coded and qualified within society. This usefully connects Loy's poetical project in "Anglo-Mongrels" with the aims of eugenics, as it exposes the discursive reliance of eugenics upon a single, naturalised identity, and how that identity might be brought down by making space for other voices and beings both in society and on the page. This push for hybridity and plurality forms the backdrop to all sections of "Anglo-Mongrels"; in this essay we see how each of Loy's poetic personas – Exodus, Ava, and finally Ova – struggle for self-definition and expression within a society and a culture that deems their selfhood and identity already fixed.

Written between 1923 and 1925, "Anglo-Mongrels" is situated at the height of anti-Semitic, xenophobic rhetoric popularised in the United Kingdom but largely concentrated in the United States. Faced with immense influxes of immigration at the beginning of the twentieth century and after the First World War, racial purists and eugenicists alike were increasingly concerned about the dilution and "mongrelisation" of the population.¹ As a threat to white hegemony, the mongrel became the "object-target" of the biopolitics of racial purity (Foucault 149). Robert C. Young, discussing hybridity and miscegenation in colonial history, identifies these phenomena as instrumentalised by the "Victorian extreme right" in order to protect the hegemony of the dominant race through the careful regulation of

¹ A comprehensive overview of the historical and literary context of transatlantic anti-Semitism at the beginning of the twentieth century can be found in Rachel Blau DuPlessis' useful text.

desire (10). For Young, the language of racial purity expresses anxieties about “the issue of sexuality and the issue of sexual unions” between races to produce the mongrel, necessitating the penetration of the white body by the Other (9). Loy plays on this anxiety throughout “Anglo-Mongrels”: Ada is simultaneously a “pouting / pearl beyond price” and a spectacle of “the Anglo-Saxon phenomenon / of Virginity”, evoking the language of conquest and nationhood (126, 125). In this formulation, the cultivation of the “mongrelised” body ultimately sought to reaffirm “the white norm”, and any transgression of this boundary “became identified with other forms of sexual and social perversity as degeneracy, deformation or arrested embryological development” (Young 181, 180). Forms of otherness, such as those explored by Loy in the poem, were coded under eugenic ideology as threats to the cohesion of dominant white selfhood.

In a similar vein, eugenic thinkers believed that Jewish intermarriage with Gentile English “stock” would lead to “race degeneration” and pollute the “racial instinct” of the population, resulting in the widespread degeneracy produced by unmediated sexual partnerships (Turda 20). Charles Davenport, an American eugenicist and biologist, argued that “miscegenation commonly spells disharmony”, in that “a hybridized people are a badly put together people and a dissatisfied, restless, ineffective people” (quoted in Doyle 15). Davenport was not alone in his opinion that intermarriage would lead to a loss of integrity and hegemony of eugenic stock. Galton and Pearson thought of Jews as parasites and criminals; the former in an interview with *The Jewish Chronicle* in 1910 praised “the wish of the Jewish woman to be married and have children”, but suggestively maintained, “it is still more important to determine that the children shall be born from the fit and not the unfit” (206). Entrenched in the eugenic ideology of unworthiness and illegitimacy, the Jewish claim to maternity and visibility is, in the hands of eugenicists, reduced to Agamben’s “bare life”. Loy illustrates Exodus’s and Ova’s sense of exclusion from British society as resulting from the (bio)political realities of their subject positions: as Jewish and mongrel, the British “Motherland / stands nakedly incognito / in so many ciphers” (115).

The problem posed by Jewishness was not simply a concern for the individual body, but for the national body too. Tamar Garb attests to the way in which “Jewishness came to be conceived not as a matter of belief but as a racial identity, one which could be observed, measured, understood, and pathologised” (22). Jewishness was made recognisable and quantifiable within discourse. Garb writes that “in the racialized body of the Jew was “his” cultural and psychic otherness, an otherness which would persist even when the disguises of assimilation and integration had rid the body of its outward signifiers of difference” (23). Anti-Semitic vocabulary of the period relegates the Jewish and “mongrel” subjects to the category of racial other. Often described as polluting the national body, anxieties surrounding Jewish separatism proliferated ideas about “foreign radicalism”; as “a nation within a nation, Jews were “a group whose national allegiance could be questioned” (Doyle 137). The experience of Exodus is similarly insular, although it is English culture rather than the Jewish nature that isolates him; he finds “the heart of England” empty and “crippled” (Loy 116). The phantom of Jewish separatism can be read as a biopolitical technique to placate the anxieties surrounding racial purity. As Agamben writes, Jewishness constitutes “naked life that modernity necessarily creates within itself but whose presence it is no longer able to tolerate in any way” (*MWE* 34). Included in *bios* through its exclusion,

the Jewish/mongrel racialised body represents “the wretched, the oppressed, and the vanquished” against which the “integrated” and worthy body of the eugenic Self is qualified (31). After all, the “English Rose” Ada is “storage” for “British Empire-made pot-pourri / of dry dead men”; she too has a (reproductive) stake in the progression of this civilisation built on such ideologies of conquest, exclusion/inclusion, Self/Other (Loy 122).²

Loy foregrounds Jewish and mongrel bodies as sites of expression and creation which disrupt literary and eugenic formulations of identity both on and off the page. In her prose writing, Loy attested to her love of linguistic hybridity: lauding the multicultural dialects of American immigrants, Loy believed modern poetry must reflect such variation and vibrancy. Loy’s view of language is consistent with conceptions of Jewish cosmopolitanism: “bereft of a homeland”, their “lack of fixity” for Loy offers liberatory and disruptive representational possibilities, both in terms of language and identity (Vetter 55). Loy evidently has fun with these fluid categories, intertwining high and low poetic registers. When an infant Ova overhears her nurse describing her “[d]iarrhea” as “quite green”, the incident is framed as an epiphany in the formation of language: “the child / whose wordless / thoughts / grow like visionary plants” latches onto the word, “the cerebral / mush convolving in her skull”, until

... instantly
 this fragmentary
 simultaneity
 of ideas

embodies
 the word (139-141)

Loy’s choice of lineation here reflects the slow unravelling of Ova’s thoughts as they connect the word to its meaning: the staccato effect of the words with their similar endings (“instantly”, “fragmentary”) adds to the sense of fusion as the “simultaneity of ideas” are knitted together in Ova’s consciousness. This example attests to the way in which Loy meshes together the intellectual language of Darwinism and science (“grow like visionary plants”) with the scatological in order to “trivialise the [poetic] traditions she adapts” and appropriates (Frost 151). In response to Loy’s ironic style, Frost has coined the term “strategic over-writing” (150). Characterised by “an overdoing of poetic technique to the point of parody”, it bridges the gap between bathos and higher registers. In this sense, Loy’s racialised body, incarnated here in the figure of Ova and elsewhere with Exodus, embodies an alternative aesthetic that undermines traditional literary expression, centralising hybrid and plural perspectives and voices.

Loy explores and satirises the eugenic conception of Jewishness as racial otherness through the development of Exodus. Modelled on Loy’s Hungarian Jewish father Sigmund Löwy, a tailor who immigrated to England in the late nineteenth century, Exodus’s trajectory throughout the first section of the poem subverts the canonical quest narrative in epic poems. Situating Exodus as epic hero, Loy

² Loy’s gendered language here is significant, and points towards a deeper history of the roles of women within the Imperialist project. This is expanded upon in *Gender and Imperialism*, ed. Claire Midgley (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998).

places the authorial power in disenfranchised hands and places the Jewish subject firmly within the Western canon as a disruptive force. Exodus's legitimacy as epic hero is clearly established in the poem's final section, "The Social Status of Exodus", whose racialised body is reified by its connection to Jehovah. The end of the poem appears to posit a new hero "out of the hands of Exodus", "another / greater than Jehovah", "a man-made God" who like Christ "staked the plot / of manhood in his nobler form" (173-175). This proto-Messianic figure (who may well be Exodus in a renewed state) is a Jewish "Tailor" who literally cuts the cloth for a new generation, carving out space within the dominant culture: "Under the shears / of the prestidigitator cutter", he is a "fancier of travestied torsos / weaver of fig-leaves out of Cheviot" (174-175). Loy's irony cuts into Jewish stereotypes: "prestidigitator" is another word for a magician practising sleight-of-hand, playing up to claims of Jewish duplicitousness. Moreover, "weaver of fig-leaves out of Cheviot" brings together the Genesis tale and modern popular culture, the godly with the quotidian, foregrounding Loy's mongrel aesthetic. Notably, Loy connects Exodus with his namesake, positing him as a figure capable of regeneration and delivery, a

... man with his amorphous nature
 Who defied
 The protoform of Who made him
 But has not denied
 Him obeyed
 The tailor who remade him
 And denies him (175)

Recalling Braidotti's *zoe*, Loy's Jewish figure overrides the "protoform" of God in favour of the formlessness of transcendence: he thus reclaims the anonymity and liminality of Jewish subjectivity as figured in discourse, transforming it from its derogatory connotations into a liberatory position. Loy here rejects the biopolitical inscription upon Jewish and mongrel bodies and identities as "bare life", choosing instead to reform the political structures that govern and relegate such identities to that category. The cyclical nature of the above fragment betrays a knowledge of how inculcated the subject is within the dominant ideology identified by Agamben. Helped by Loy's satiric repetition of "him", the lines form a cycle of stubborn patrilineal inheritance. Despite this, Exodus's "manhood in his nobler form", though "ostracized" by the "gently born" (a play on *gentile*) eschews the familiar structures that uphold the coherent, white Self, choosing instead to cut his own cloth (175). Through this action, the racialised body is reclaimed from the grasp of stereotype and pathology into the space of radical self-fashioning. As Helen Jaskoski argues, in Exodus "the self-creating artist and outsider [is] unencumbered by relationships to community or place" and is "forced into the free creation of the self," which Loy positions as the locus of regeneration and disruption (364). In the context of alienation provoked by being Jewish, Exodus's faith imbues him with an integrity that allows him to create his own spiritual identity and to escape the racial and religious hatred that excludes him from English society.

What comprises this society – its cultural icons, emblems, figures, and ideologies – are all compounded in the metonymic figure of the English Rose, elsewhere referred to as Ada or Alice. As outlined earlier by Robert C. Young, the Rose represents the debates surrounding social and racial

purity foregrounded by eugenics: her virginal sexual repression intersects with class and ethnicity; categories of identity at the heart of eugenic discourse. From the outset, the Rose is saturated with the marks of a mass-market, culturally constituted body:

Early English everlasting
 quadrate Rose
 paradox-Imperial
 trimmed with some travestied flesh
 tinted with bloodless duties dewed
 with Lipton's teas
 and grimed with crack-packed
 herd-housing
 pedalling
 the prim guilt
 penetralia
 of a luster-scioned
 core-crown (121)

Ada's entrance into the poem immediately evokes a nostalgic, idealistic image of Englishness to contrast with Exodus's Jewishness. Yet whilst Exodus's integrity on the grounds of his identity is repeatedly recalled, this English identity is shown to be artificial through Loy's "over-writing", which knits together lexicons of nature, culture, and artifice (Frost 150). The romanticised, elongated alliteration of the first line conjures in the reader an image of pastoral "English[ness]", but this is quickly subverted by the irony that follows: instead of a familiar, coherent English subjectivity, there is disorder and artificiality. The misshapen Rose is "trimmed", "tinted", "dewed", and "grimed" by the codes of society: her selfhood, sexuality, and "bloodless duties" are cultivated, native only to the English culture in which she thrives. Loy develops this further by presenting her as literally branded by "Lipton's teas". This brand name disrupts the abstraction of Loy's poetic language with the indelible mark of culture, highlighting the matrix of imperialism, class, race, and gender within which Ada is inculcated. Furthermore, Loy is particularly scornful of English domesticity, figuring it as emotionally and spiritually stunted. The Rose, as the emblem of Englishness, finds its way into the "prim guilt / penetralia" of the home as a decorative feature, but read metaphorically Loy is able to further satirise the austerity and superficiality of English culture. Here, the middle-class English home is a penetralia, the most intimate parts of a building, adorned or infected with "guilt" (a pun that suggests both its literal meaning and *gilt*): a place for eugenic ideology to gather and thrive. Through her wit, Loy exposes the quasi-sexual "core" of the English identity as laced with racial and class prejudices, a reigning "crown" of ideologies that maintain eugenic white selfhood: the "bloodless duties" of Imperial Britain betray an anxiety to preserve this way of life at the expense of those in "crack-packed / herd-housing". Like Braidotti's description of the *bios*, society as described by Loy functions on hierarchies and structures built to protect the bodies it values, committing "incest with its ancestry" (121). As Helen Jaskoski argues, "society, not Exodus, is sick here" (354).

Exodus's and Ada's intermarriage is repeatedly framed by Loy as ill-suited, as neither Exodus nor Ada can escape the racial and cultural mores they have inherited. Ada, "simpering in her / ideological pink", inhabits the typified body of Victorian restraint and "arrested impulses" (124, 121). Embodying the "Anglo-Saxon phenomenon / of Virginity", Ada emphasises the discourses of social purity that police female sexuality and maternity, both sources of anxiety for eugenicists. As Angelique Richardson writes, eugenics "underpinned new aesthetic discourses" defining what was desirable: Ada, as the apex of female English normativity, is the "relatively rigid, symmetrical, normal healthy type" (80, 81). Whilst eugenicists warned against intermarriage as diluting racial purity by damaging lines of heredity, Loy is sharply sceptical of inheritance as biological, instead emphasising the poisonous impact of culture upon individuals (DuPlessis 139). Ada's sexual repression is figured as "an impenetrable pink curtain", a barrier that "hangs between it and itself", divorcing her self from her sexuality in favour of propriety (128). Loy's linguistic dexterity in the following lines exposes the disjointedness of Ada's personality:

A rose—
 that like religions
 before
 becoming amateur—
 enwraps itself
 in esoteric
 and exoteric
 dimensions:
 the official
 and unofficial
 social morale
 The outer classes
 accepting the official
 of the inner
 as a plausible
 gymnastic
 for disciplining the unofficial
 "flesh and devil"
 to the ap parent impecca bility
 of the English (128-129)

Rachel Potter and Marjorie Perloff identify Loy's use of "polyglot" language in the poem as "mongrelized", incorporating wordplay with intricate rhyme and registers (Potter 53, Perloff 140). Here, Loy's hybrid verse is one of opposites: oscillating between inner and outer, official and "unofficial", these lines mesh together religious discourse with the uselessness of socially policed behaviours. The repetition of "in" and "out" deliberately obfuscates the verse to the point of nonsense. Loy's poetic elasticity throughout these lines is broadly satirical as she attacks the middle-class "social morale" that breeds conformity and propagates the classist, racist, and gendered imbalances "of the English", exposed as artificial and rendered ironic by the slow-motion staccato of "apparent impeccability".

Obligated to conform to the cultural values they in turn embody, Ada and Exodus's marriage is marked as a failure not because it is degenerate in racial terms but because of the "burden of their stereotypical racial/cultural inheritance" (Jaskoski 363). Ada's "Maiden emotions / breed / on leaves of novels", having "gathered from her literature / that men ought to be fair", Ada's emotional and sexual education has been stunted and infected by xenophobic and nativist conceptions of masculinity (Loy 124, 145). Her Jewish husband, however, does not and cannot easily fit the template of the masculine ideal, for Exodus, "loaded / with Mosaic passions" carries with him the (constructed) inherited burden of Jewishness (124). In the end, their difference becomes a gulf of "savage irritation" loaded with racial prejudices too big to overcome:

Exodus has nothing but his pockets

to impress

his rabid rose of the hedges

while for her redress

She can flaunt the whole of England in his foreign face. (146, 145)

Access to Englishness is barred for Exodus: it cannot be earned through assimilation, nor can he marry into it. Again playing up to Jewish stereotypes, Loy exposes Englishness as a form of socially constituted wealth that must be inherited; ironically, Exodus "has nothing but his pockets". In detailing their failed marriage, Loy reveals the complex matrix of cultural, racial, and religious prejudices that constitute and inform discourses such as eugenics. Loy tells us that the racialised body, as well as identity, is a culturally inscribed phenomenon, but that body is nonetheless vulnerable to the social and discursive climate in which it moves. As Helen Jaskoski writes, "individuals do concretize in their actual personal lives the social and political ideologies they choose or are constrained to live out" (362). It is Loy's belief that we are all constrained by systems that privilege certain bodies above others. Despite this, Loy admires the power of the individual to transcend the restrictive and damaging boundaries that constitute our bodies. The character of Ova, self-identified "mongrel-girl", brings together her mother and father's Jewish and British identities: assuming the figure of the "mongrel", Loy explores hybridity as a liberatory phenomenon as it informs both Ova's response to the world around her, and how she is received by it (Loy 143).

Elisabeth Frost argues that in the final section of "Anglo-Mongrels" Loy "marks her disavowal of the eugenical creed" by positing "inheritance [as] a cultural affair" (173). Rather Loy appears much more ambiguous, probing the question of inheritance by splicing together the language of culture and biology to posit a new, emerging consciousness. Loy uses this linguistic splicing to foreground Ova as a disruptive figure whose hybridity and individuality allows her to reclaim her body from the marks of culture. As in Braidotti's formulation of *zoe* as a liminal and affirmative presence within the biopolitical sphere, Ova occupies a space both inside and outside the Jewish subjectivity as a "composite / Anglo-Israelite" (143). Loy portrays Ova's mongrel body as a biological reality and as culturally carved: like her father's, it transcribes difference and otherness, she is "a dim inheritor / of this undeniable flesh" of "racial birthrights" (131). It is both the inherited product of ethnic mixing and the site of religious and racial prejudices. The biopolitical vulnerability of Ova's body to racialised and eugenic readings is

established in the section “Psychic Larva”, wherein we first perceive Ada’s indictment of Ova’s physical presence as blasphemous:

under cover
of clothing and furnishing
“somebody” has sinned
and their sin—
a living witness of the flesh—
swarms with inquisitive eyes (147)

Again Loy employs Jewish stereotypes to emphasise prejudice against the other: the concern for what is “under cover” fits with the perception of Jews as a nefarious agitation within the national body, whilst her use of the verb “swarm” recalls the rhetoric surrounding Jews as a persistent, insectile plague. This is again evoked in “Jews and Ragamuffins of Kilburn”, where Ova’s nurse expresses prejudices towards Jews, as “she fears to find them crawling up her socks” (158). In the eyes of this society so informed by eugenic and imperial ideology, “there is no liberation / from this inversion / of instinct” (147). Ova’s degenerate “flesh” carries with it the marks of Jewish otherness despite her lack of “outward signifiers of difference” (Garb 23). Loy shows contrastingly how Ova’s mongrel identity allows her to assume positions of slippage, both inside and outside the Jewish subjectivity. Walking with her nurse, Ova sees a Jewish child with one leg caught in some palings. This entrapment is perceived by Ova as a metaphor for the persistence of stereotype in defining the Jewish body:

Ova fears
that she can never
release it
iron is so hard
that even in the strongest man in the world
could
never bend it

Ova bears
horror for this child
caught in a novel hell
of immovable metal
which is eternal (159-160)

Loy exposes the mark of culture, not biology, upon Jewish and mongrel subjects. Contained within figurative iron bars, the racial Other is distanced and defined by a culture that disdains foreign bodies. Ova is able to empathise with but does not fully embody the position of the child because she speaks from outside the “immovable metal” that restrains the Jewish body. Yet for Ova, the children possess a material and spiritual wealth she cannot access, for “the common children / have the best of her / though dressed in rags / they feed on muffin” (160). Loy therefore valorises the Jewish body as one of worth, the “best” facet of Ova’s identity and what she covets most.

The individuality afforded by Ova's mongrel identity is manifested repeatedly through her attempts to diverge from the paths of the patriarchal, religious and social institutions of "traditional / Israel and of Albion" (131). Ova's surroundings and upbringing are framed as creatively and spiritually stifling to one who has inherited the "gift" of "the Jewish brain", a source of innate curiosity (132). Loy's attention to pathology appropriates eugenic language in order to valorise and foreground the mongrel subject position: Ova, as her namesake suggests, possesses the embryonic force (the "relentlessly generative force" of Braidotti's *zoe*) necessary to overthrow and reform the systems of language and culture that have historically excluded her (Braidotti 333). As Lara Vetter writes, Loy viewed consciousness as part of "an evolutionary wave", situating mongrels "as leaders of evolution" because of their "racial memory" (56, 57).³ The section "Religious Instruction" sees the valorisation of Ova's mongrel identity. Rejecting both "Jehovah" and "Christ", Ova's "consciousness" is compelled to "arise and walk / its innate straight way", like her father, towards self-definition and self-fashioning (170). As Amy Feinstein has noted,

Loy ... embraces Jewish nature as the racial seed for modernist innovation and simultaneously rejects the evangelism, xenophobia, and imperialism that drive racial condemnations of Jewish nature with a narrator who argues that seemingly natural, inherently racial characteristics are socially constructed. (337)

In her linguistic experimentation, perspectival shifts and satire, Loy foregrounds and reclaims the Jewish/mongrel body from the anti-Semitic and pathological viewpoint of eugenics. In "Anglo-Mongrels", the Jewish body is valorised as radically disruptive in its plurality and lack of fixity to a dominant patriarchal and eugenic discourse that favours one type of body over all others. Recalling Braidotti's conception of *zoe*, Exodus and Ova's Jewish and mongrel bodies resist any "entrapment in an imagined natural order", choosing instead to envisage alternative ways of definition and becoming (334). Loy continually rejects and revises the eugenic conception of identity as predetermined by one's genes, populating her poem with the variance and indeterminacy of racial and cultural mixing. Ova's consciousness unravels "vaguely and variedly", refusing to be a "replica / of institutions" (152-153) and Jewishness and "mongrelisation" are represented as valuable and powerful forces which disrupt the organised and hierarchical principles of eugenics.

³ Racial memory for Loy is a facet of a collective unconsciousness tied to the racial and cultural inheritance of one's ancestors. It was Loy's belief that Jews could access a greater level of consciousness and understanding because "people of multiple ancestry possess a unique vision" (Vetter 56).

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