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"The Mongrel-Girl of Noman's Land": Mina Loy's *Anglo-Mongrels and the Rose* as Autobiography

by

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Abstract

This thesis analyzes the long poem *Anglo-Mongrels and the Rose* by the modern poet Mina Loy according to its function as autobiography. Loy's intellectual environment prior to the poem's 1923 to 1925 publication and, in particular, the writing of the philosopher Henri Bergson shape her thinking about the self and consciousness. This intellectual background provides a foundation for a consideration of Loy's abstract poetic autobiography as what Loy called "auto-mythology." The abstraction of modern poetics provides a medium for Loy's expression of alienation as the hybrid offspring of an ethnically mixed marriage. Loy's long poem treats her heritage and upbringing in a mixed Jewish and Christian household; the effect of this intermingling of religion and ethnicity, or what was then considered race, is integral to understanding both her autobiographical expression of alienation and her optimism about the possibilities for Bergson's "creative evolution."

Abstrait

Cette thèse analyse le long poème *Anglo-Mongrels and the Rose* de la poète moderne Mina Loy selon sa fonction d'autobiographe. L'environment intellectuel de Loy avant la publication du poème (1923-1925) et en particulier, les écritures du philosophe Henri Bergson, ont aidé à formé son concept d'une conscience. Cette fondation intellectuelle nous fait comprendre l'autobiographie poètique abstrait de Loy comme ce que Loy a appellé "*auto-mythology.*" L'abstraction des poètiques modernes donne un médium pour l'expression de l'aliénation de Loy, qu était enfant d'un mariage d'ethnicité mixte. Son long poème traite d'un héritage et d'une éducation de culture juive et crétienne; son expression d'aliénation, en même temps liée à son optimisme envers les possibilités de l'évolution créatrice de Bergson, exige cette étude comprennant la combinaison de religion et d'ethnicité.

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Introduction

Well-known in her time, Mina Loy's notoriety was such that in February 1917. the *New York Evening Sun* asked, "Mina Loy, if she isn't the Modern Woman, who is, pray?" (qtd. in Conover xliii). Modern poet Mina Loy was the hallmark of the Modern Woman due not only to her bohemian lifestyle, but also to her poetry, since it crystallized the changing discourses of consciousness in the new century: "[t]his woman," the article continued, "is half-way through the door into To-morrow" (qtd. in Conover xliv). A friend and contemporary of most of the more familiar modernist and avant-garde artists--Gertrude Stein, William Carlos Williams, Ezra Pound, James Joyce. and F. T. Marinetti, to name a few--Loy was conversant in the shifting intellectual discourses that characterized modernism. Loy's poetry was present in many of the little magazines between 1914 and 1925 alongside the work of such contemporaries as T. S. Eliot and Marianne Moore. Her writing was scandalous: not only was it sexually explicit, but also intellectually challenging and profoundly averse to conservative poetics. Published between 1923 and 1925, Loy's autobiographical long poem *Anglo-Mongrels and the Rose* demonstrates her literary explorations in terms of the changing discourses of consciousness, race, and religion in the decades surrounding the turn of the century. Loy's "auto-mythology" moves toward a mystical transcendence by using the strategies of abstract art; she ultimately offers her self-portrait as an example of the development of a visionary artist. This poem illustrates Loy's historically-bound satire of her "mongrel" identity. Part Jewish and part Christian, an expatriate from her native England, Loy problematizes England's history of imperialism and critiques the anti-Semitism of the late nineteenth-century even as she participates in a system of thought that accepts the

racialization of Jews. Furthermore, Loy's allusions to well-known fictional places reinforce the expressions of alienation that appear throughout the poem. In my thesis on Loy's self-portrait as the "Mongrel-Girl of Noman's Land," I will examine the intellectual, philosophical and spiritual influences that inform her experimental poetics and help her communicate the development of the consciousness of an artistic visionary whose alienation was due in part to her ethnic hybridity.

I. *Anglo-Mongrels and the Rose*: Rationale and Objectives

Loy's autobiographical long poem *Anglo-Mongrels and the Rose* was originally published in separate sections: the first two parts appeared in *The Little Review* in 1923; the third part was published in *Contact Collection of Contemporary Writers* in 1925. It was published in total only in 1982 with Roger Conover's edition of Loy's poetry, *The Last Lunar Baedeker*.[1] At 1822 lines, or 68 pages in Conover's edition, it is quite long and is divided into three parts: "Exodus," "English Rose," and "Mongrel Rose." The first part describes the emigration from Hungary of Loy's father, Sigmund Lowy, who is called "Exodus" in the poem. Loy uses biblical allusions to emphasize his Jewish identity. The second part portrays the courtship of Exodus and "English Rose," Loy's mother Julia Bryan, who is alternately called the "Rose," "Alice," and "Ada." Loy's representation caricatures Victorian prudery and British imperialism. The third part portrays the birth of Loy as her persona "Ova" and the development of her artistic sensibility and mystic consciousness. Loy explores the developing consciousness of her hybrid "self" as she

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[1] Unless otherwise noted, all citations from Loy's poetry and prose will be from this edition.

negotiates the discordant religious and cultural identity that results from being a "Mongrel Rose": the product of the coupling of "Exodus," her immigrant Jewish father, and the "English Rose," her Protestant English mother.

In the first chapter of my thesis, I will demonstrate why Loy's long poem *Anglo-Mongrels and the Rose* should be considered as autobiography. I must do this because Loy's choice of writing exclusively about her parentage and childhood in this long poem is too easy to simply categorize as "semi-autobiographical." Certainly, it contains many elements that make it seem outside of the realm of narrative prose autobiographies: it is a poem, it is not written in first-person, and it describes only Loy's "pre-history" and childhood. For me, her autobiographical "oddities," to a certain extent, reflect her role as an artist committed to the evolution of the creative self. While I will respond to Loy's representation of the origins of her own ethnic hybridity, I will also be placing the autobiography in a historical context, since I will be distinguishing both traditional concepts of autobiography that were challenged by Loy's work and experimental autobiographical works that, like *Anglo-Mongrels and the Rose*, responded to the intellectual currents of the era.

Just as theory is now coming to terms with the importance of autobiography as a genre, so too did Loy see the autobiography as an important mode of expression. Indeed, Loy's inclusion of biographical subject matter in her verse is a sore point for many critics, who either claim that there is too much of her life or too little. For example, the virulent reviewer Reno Odlin writes, "[t]hus we return to biography! I think it must be her fault. . . . what we feel is the embarrassment of the Peeping Tom, not the presence of a created object" (57). Conversely, critic Keith Tuma suggests, "without at least some extra-textual

biographical knowledge of Loy, the reader is likely to be befuddled by several sections that briefly introduce characters who are not especially integrated into an already cryptic personal mythology" (208). My thesis regards Loy's biography as the central factor in the poem, inspired in part by the philosphical climate of the Modernist and avant-garde art circles in which Loy participated prior to the composition of *Anglo-Mongrels and the Rose*. In particular, the writing of philosopher Henri Bergson helped to shape Loy's thinking about the self and consciousness, which contributed to her alternative style of writing her life story as an "auto-mythology" (Conover 326). The appreciation of Loy's use of her biography is an integral factor in my thesis, then, as I will carefully consider Loy's poetic autobiographical expression of her alienation as the product of an ethnically mixed marriage.

Recent autobiography criticism, particularly feminist theoretical work on the autobiography, helps me to identify the autobiographical strategies that Loy uses. Feminist autobiography theory, in particular, maps the work of marginalized writers: autobiographers who write, in part, about identities that have been de-stabilized by gender, sexuality, class, or race. Bella Brodzki and Celeste Schenck, for instance, indicate the complications of autobiographical expression and suggest, "[n]o mirror of *her* era, the female autobiographer takes as a given that selfhood is mediated" (1). While I am influenced by feminist critique, however, my own study will focus less on Loy's gender than on other aspects of her identity since much work has already been ably accomplished by other Loy scholars who focus on gender, with less attention paid to her ethnic hybridity. To inform my own inquiry into Loy's marginalization as an ethnic hybrid, I will draw on the work of Sidonie Smith, Shirley Neuman, and Shari Benstock. These critics

focus particularly on issues of marginalization for women autobiographers and, for Smith and Neuman in particular, the necessity to recognize additional elements of difference for women autobiographers, such as class, ethnicity, sexuality, and nationality. In addition to these theorists, I will also refer to the more historically specific autobiographical studies of Helen Henderson and Suzanne Nalbantian. These studies examine autobiographies in the historical contexts of their production, as I try to do in my own work on Loy.

In the decade preceding the composition of *Anglo-Mongrels*, Loy was involved in an artistic milieu that made much of speculations into the self and the role of consciousness. As Virginia Kouidis indicates in *Mina Loy: American Modernist Poet*, Loy "shares with her generation the sense of a 'crisis in consciousness' and like them undertakes to restore to language honesty and vigor, clarity and exactness, and to make the movement of words correspond to (new) ways of seeing" (87). Loy's biographer Carolyn Burke argues that the philosophy of Henri Bergson influenced Loy and applied particularly well to her situation since in "the realm of pure duration, perhaps, the contradictions between being Christian and Jewish, British and foreign, respectable and commercial, might dissolve" (122). By internalizing such discourses of "New Thought," Loy "puts into question the most essential component of the autobiographical--the relation between 'self' and 'consciousness'" (Benstock, Authorizing 21). Indeed, Loy had previously written more explicitly on "consciousness" in her "Aphorisms on Futurism":

> TODAY is the crisis in consciousness.
>
> CONSCIOUSNESS cannot spontaneously accept or reject new forms, as offered by creative genius; it is the new form, for however great a period

> of time it may remain a mere irritant--that molds consciousness to the necessary amplitude for holding it.
>
> CONSCIOUSNESS has no climax. (273)

Loy's early manifestos help to explicate both her concern about "creative genius," which creates "new forms" and the significance of the revolution in thinking about "consciousness." Even as she is here writing about Futurism, the proponents of which she would later satirize, the attention that she pays both to new art forms and to the development of consciousness underscore the assertions of my first chapter: Loy's long poem *Anglo-Mongrels* represents an experimental autobiography that uses an abstract poetic to communicate the genesis and development of consciousness rather than prosaically detail the events of a life, as would a traditional Victorian autobiography.

Such late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century works as Henri Bergson's *Creative Evolution*, William James's *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, Evelyn Underhill's *Mysticism*, and Mary Baker Eddy's *Miscellaneous Writings* on Christian Science represent the strands of "New Thought" that inform Loy's writing. Current criticism by Frederick Burwick and Paul Douglass, and by Sanford Schwartz guides my explorations into the primary sources of New Thought and, in particular, the influence of Bergson's philosophy on Modern literature. The critical works of Timothy Materer and of Leon Surette describe the influences of myth systems, mysticism and occult spiritualism on Modernist writers. These studies help me to identify the distinction that Loy makes when she calls *Anglo-Mongrels and the Rose* an "auto-mythology" rather than "autobiography" (Conover 326).

While *Anglo-Mongrels and the Rose* expresses the development of Loy's consciousness, or to use Bergson's terminology, the "mental life that exists in real duration" (Schwartz 283), it also charts the genesis of Loy's self by including the consequences of her parentage on her artistic, spiritual, and ethnic identity. The second chapter of my thesis will therefore focus on the historical conditions that gave rise to Loy's hybrid identity. Her discordant religious and ethnic identity is a result of her parents' mixed marriage; she is the "bearer of a split heritage which needs to be addressed and reconciled" (Schaum 265). By emphasizing her father's alienation as a Jewish immigrant in England and her mother's representation of Victorian prudery and imperial authority, Loy's autobiographical examination of her heritage critiques the society in which she was raised. In my study of Loy's ethnic hybridity and alienation, I draw upon sociological and historical studies as well as post-colonial theorists in order to contextualize the abstractions of Loy's poetry and historicize the conditions of Loy's life. My writing about the racialization of Jews at the turn of the century, for instance, is largely based on the work of Sander Gilman and Raphael and Jennifer Patai. I am also indebted to Robert Young's definitions in *Colonial Desire* for helping me delineate my use of terms like "hybrid" and "mongrel."

Loy's feelings of being the "mongrel-girl / of Noman's land" suggest that she, like her father, has a trans-cultural sensibility that both results from and leads to migration (143). The line also suggests Loy's complete displacement, even in the hostile environment of the Great War's battleground. The work of the critics Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, whose three-volume *No Man's Land* treats the "Woman Writer in the Twentieth Century," explores the relevance of history to the imagination of women

writers. In a chapter on literary men and women and the Great War, Gilbert and Gubar emphasize the psychological transformation of this historical event: "World War I virtually completed the Industrial Revolution's construction of anonymous dehumanized man, that impotent cypher who is frequently thought to be the twentieth century's most characteristic citizen" (259). In the third chapter of my thesis, then, I will concentrate on Loy's alienated identity and her attention to fantastic lands. In writing about exile and alienation, the work of Terry Eagleton, Susan Stanford Friedman, and colleague Adam Muller offers various perspectives that allow me to define Loy's alienated, expatriate identity and to discuss the insertion of Loy's expatriation into her writing. The poem anticipates Loy's later adult wanderings--she moved from her birthplace in England to, variously, Italy, France, Mexico, and the United States. The close of the poem heralds her eventual settlement in America as she "makes for the / magnetic horizon of liberty":

> So this child of Exodus
> with her heritage of emigration
> often
> "sets out to seek her fortune"
> in her turn
> trusting to terms of literature (170-71)

Alongside this promise of movement from her birthplace, there are various allusions to a series of "lands of the cultural imagination." I have constructed this expression to refer to places that would have been familiar to her contemporaries, whether by religious instruction, history, or literature. Loy's reference to "Noman's land" and her many biblical allusions offer a rich historical context to her life story that contributes to the

poem's status as "auto-mythology" (Conover 326). By referring to the "No Man's Land" of the Great War, for instance, she brings a later chronology into the story of her *fin-de-siècle* childhood. By referring to the stories of Genesis and Exodus, she suggests a Promised Land more residual in a religious culture than her birthplace of England. These allusions, as I will show in my third chapter, share an element of fantastic society or philosophy as do the allusions that Loy makes to the following works: *Gulliver's Travels*, *The Romance of the Rose*, *Alice in Wonderland*, and *Sartor Resartus*. Loy's alienation, arising in part from her hybridity, is set alongside references to works that use fantasy in order to question society from an outsider's perspective. Loy's references to fantastic places emphasize her dislocation with the England of her childhood.

The lack of Loy criticism makes original scholarship less complicated than with studies of canonized Modernists. Indeed, this thesis presents much original research on related aspects of Loy's poem. First, I will consider the intellectual history that surrounded Loy during the period prior to the composition of the poem. Usually this does not enter into Loy scholarship as she is more often considered according to gender-based theoretical studies. Second, I will carefully examine Loy's use of the word "mongrel" in her self-description and, further, consider the historical context of the cultural factors that surrounded Loy's mixed-ethnic background in late Victorian England. While Loy's mixed religious parentage is often cited, as I note above, most critics do not concentrate on the effect of this intermingling of religion and ethnicity or what was then considered race. Third, my close analysis of Loy's allusions to the "lands of the cultural imagination," as I call them, invites further, more in-depth studies. Certainly, some of my observations about Loy's literary allusions have been briefly noted by other critics, as I will indicate,

but rarely are they accompanied by the type of theorizing that I will undertake. In this thesis, I survey the allusions, draw a connection between them, and suggest that they form a topography of lands of the cultural imagination: the allusions share an element of fantasy that is not utopic in the idealized sense; instead, these well-known places--from the Promised Land to Wonderland--provide allegorical or satirical versions of the contemporary society of the works, which will include *Romance of the Rose*, *Gulliver's Travels*, and *Sartor Resartus*. The body of Loy's work requires more study, particularly her later poetry, her visual artworks, and her industrial applications of art--for example, her inventions of toys and her designs of lamps and cosmetic containers--which have received almost no critical attention, yet are beyond the scope of the present study. My thesis helps to make up for Loy's long absence from academic notice both by providing a comprehensive examination of the autobiographical status of her longest and most important published work and by introducing useful historical and theoretical aspects that attempt to contextualize Loy's reconciliation of her "mongrel" identity. This contextualization of social critique, modernist aesthetics, and identity construction in her long poem may assist further studies of her other works.

There are very few publications that focus on Loy, but the following works are the standard texts to which I and other critics refer. They include the editions of Loy's work, her biography, and criticism that focuses on Loy. Since the 1982 publication of *The Last Lunar Baedeker*, which contained Loy's published, and much unpublished, poetry, Loy's writing has been more accessible. Its editor Roger Conover has since re-edited this collection of poetry, with the deceptively similar title *The Lost Lunar Baedeker*, but this does not include *Anglo-Mongrels and the Rose*. Loy's previously unpublished novel *Insel*

was also recently released, edited by Loy scholar Elizabeth Arnold. Carolyn Burke has been a pioneer of Loy critical studies and has published numerous articles that focus on Loy; her latest work is the biography *Becoming Modern: The Life of Mina Loy.* Virginia Kouidis's critical work *Mina Loy: American Modernist Poet* examines Loy's feminism and poetics. Linda Kinnahan, too, considers Loy's work alongside that of William Carlos Williams in a chapter of her *Poetics of the Feminine: Authority and Literary Tradition in William Carlos Williams, Mina Loy, Denise Levertov, and Kathleen Fraser.* There is also a forthcoming publication of critical essays edited by Keith Tuma and Maeera Schaub, *Mina Loy: Modern Poet and Woman*, which should stimulate and invigorate various underdeveloped avenues of Loy scholarship. In addition to these books, the pace of Loy appearances in anthologies, articles, and dissertations is increasing.

Still, at this time, only three journal articles have been published that focus exclusively on Loy's long poem *Anglo-Mongrels and the Rose*: Helen Jaskoski's "Mina Loy: Outsider Artist"; Melita Schaum's "'Moon-Flowers Out of Muck': Mina Loy and the Female Autobiographical Epic"; and Keith Tuma's "Anglo-Mongrels and the Rose." While I share many observations with these critics about the function of Loy's poem, in my thesis I try to analyze *Anglo-Mongrels* differently than other critics in two particular ways. My thesis focusses more on a detailed account of Loy's experimentation in the autobiographical genre due to the intellectual influences of the period and examines more comprehensively the historical conditions that account for her identity as a "mongrel." Jaskoski emphasizes the biographical details of Loy's childhood and her connection with avant-garde artists and demonstrates how, in *Anglo-Mongrels*, Loy "explores the formation of her identity as an artist, as a woman and as a Jew" (350). Schaum's article,

on the other hand, places Loy's long poem in contradistinction to canonized modern long poems, alongside the autobiographical long poems of women writers such as Lola Ridge and Laura Riding Jackson, which she describes as, "[o]ften violently polemical, radically confessional, encoded in unconventional poetic language" (256). For Schaum, the "'sub-genre' of the female autobiographical epic stands as a fascinating phenomenon of literary resistance to the constrictions of culture and canon" (256). Tuma identifies Loy's satire of Freud and "the various discourses of impulse then ascendant on the European intellectual scene"; he subsequently describes *Anglo-Mongrels* as "the oddest among modernist long poems, a strange combination of satire, didactic commentary, and lyrical mysticism" (208).

While I make similar assertions to these critics, my work will focus more specifically on the poem's autobiographical status. Like Schaum, I argue that Loy's work is a polemically alternative autobiography. I try to analyze the philosophical environment in which Loy was writing and demonstrate how Loy's autobiographical work responds to the types of discourses that dealt with the explorations of consciousness. I show how Loy subsequently presents a version of her identity using abstract poetry rather than narrative prose. Where Tuma sees a parody of Freud, I concentrate more on the way that Loy draws on the matrix of intellectual work associated with New Thought, of which psychoanalysis is only a piece. My work will draw on Jaskoski's as well, as I share her interpretation of the Exodus as exemplary outsider and artist, but while she quite rightly aligns Loy with avant-garde artists, portraying Loy as an "individualist and a satirist of society," she also tends to critique Loy according to present-day feminist theoretical issues as she "qualifies and specifies" Loy's feminism (367). While being bound to

contemporary theory is, to a certain extent, inescapable, I have tried to let the content and concerns of the poem shape my methodology. Consequently, I historicize Loy's work by privileging her appreciation of early twentieth-century thought and use what I see as the poem's genre--autobiographical long poem--to link the assertions in the three chapters of my thesis in which I examine the philosophic background for Loy's autobiography, the satire of her parentage, and the importance of place for Loy's migratory identity.

II. Biography

Mina Loy's public persona sometimes overshadows her intellectual merit. She is often noted in the memoirs of the expatriate Paris circles in connection with her beauty and wit. For example, as Sylvia Beach writes in *Shakespeare and Company*, "[w]e had three raving beauties in 'The Crowd,' all in one family, which was not fair. Mina Loy, the poetess, and her daughters, Joella and Faby . . . were so lovely that they were stared at wherever they went" (113). Nevertheless, she was a respected artist and poet among her contemporaries, as her biography attests. Born in 1882 in London, England, Loy died in the United States a naturalized citizen in 1966. As recounted in *Anglo-Mongrels and the Rose*, Loy's childhood saw much discord between her parents. While her father supported her artistic endeavours, her mother vigorously tried to stifle her work. Nevertheless, she was allowed to leave home and study painting. While at school, she met and married fellow artist Stephen Haweis in 1903. They had three children, but the first, Oda, died on her first birthday. In 1913 Loy and Haweis's marriage dissolved. Loy, in Italy at the time, became personally involved with the Futurists F. T. Marinetti and Giovanni Papini. Coinciding with this involvement was her move from visual to word-

based art. Loy's first published poems began appearing in 1913. The Futurist movement did not influence her art as much as provide an impetus to write: she wrote to Carl Van Vechten, "If you like you can say that Marinetti influenced me--merely by waking me up--I am no way *considered* a Futurist by futurists--& as for Papini he has in no way influenced----*my work*!!" (qtd. in Conover Lost 188). As the First World War drew closer, Loy grew disenchanted with the misogynist tendencies of the Futurists; her work from this time strongly satirizes the individual Futurists. After the close of the war, Loy married her second husband, the dada writer and sometimes boxer Arthur Cravan, who claimed to be the nephew of Oscar Wilde. Loy accompanied him to Mexico, where he disappeared--for good--while she was pregnant with his child. After his disappearance, Loy lived in various nations, but spent much time in Paris. She eventually settled in the United States, where she continued to try to market her inventions, to apply her talents in the visual arts with her collage style portraits of the vagrants in the "Bowery" of New York, and to write, but not publish, poetry in the 1940s. She died in 1966 in Aspen.

Loy's international moves brought her into contact with many contemporary artistic luminaries during the period that led up to the composition of *Anglo-Mongrels*. She appears as "Patience Scalpel" in Djuna Barnes's *Ladies Almanack* (Moore 88). In *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, Loy, like her husband Stephen Haweis, is "equally interested" in Gertrude Stein's manuscript for *The Making of Americans*, but, unlike him, "was able to understand without the commas. She has always been able to understand" (Stein 124). According to Susan Dunn, Loy is also allegedly the subject of Marianne Moore's poem "Those Various Scalpels" (22). She made portraits of Sigmund Freud, James Joyce, Man Ray, and Carl Van Vechten, sold lampshades in a business funded by

Peggy Guggenheim, and acted in Alfred Kreymborg's play *Lima Beans* alongside William Carlos Williams. She was one of the "geniuses" who were *Being Geniuses Together*, remembered by Robert McAlmon for her beauty, her wit, and her "cerebral fantasies": in his description of Loy's conversation with Jane Heap, he writes, "[c]onversation is an art with them, something entirely unrelated to sense or reality or logic" (37). To Carl Van Vechten, her beauty and intelligence made her an "unforgettable figure" (130). Even Harriet Monroe, who was not a fan of Loy's poetry, admits, "poetry is in this lady whether she writes it or not" (qtd. in Kouidis 19).

For her contemporaries, Loy's writing was outstanding in many respects. First, many considered it obscene. For instance, Alfred Kreymborg wrote of Loy's *Love Songs* that

> such sophistry, clinical frankness, sardonic conclusions, wedded to a madly elliptical style scornful of the regulation grammar, syntax and punctuation . . . horrified our gentry and drove our critics into furious despair. The nudity of emotion and thought roused the worst disturbance, and the utter nonchalance in revealing the secrets of sex was denounced as nothing less than lewd. It took a strong digestive apparatus to read Mina Loy. (488)

However, as the English poet Edwin Muir noted, "the sense of metaphysical obscenity is not far away; but that obscenity is the complement of her subconscious, helpless mysticism" (qtd. in Burke 337). Second, it was difficult and experimental. She almost always dispenses with punctuation. In fact, the work of Loy and that of Marianne Moore contributed to Pound's neologism *logopoeia*: "poetry that is akin to nothing but language, which is a dance of the intelligence among words and ideas and modification of

ideas and characters" (qtd. in Kouidis 91). Many of her prominent literary contemporaries were receptive to and even influenced by her work. In an often-quoted letter from 1921, Pound asked Moore, "Entre nooz: is there anyone in America except you, Bill [William Carlos Williams] and Mina Loy who can write anything of interest in verse?" (Paige 168). Loy's work was consistently included in the "little magazines" that exhibited Modern work. In fact, Loy's poem "Brancusi's Golden Bird" was published alongside T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* in the *Dial* of 1922 (Kouidis 20). In a discussion of Loy's influence on her contemporaries, Jim Powell writes, "I wonder if I am the only reader to have thought I was encountering the influence of the tarot passage of *The Waste Land* in Loy's 'At the Door of the House,' only to discover later that the case was the other way round. . . . during the teens and 20s Loy's work *was* very much read by her fellow modernists and by the more astute among the next generation" (10). Benstock, too, indicates the forgetfulness of the canon when documenting influence when she notes, "Modernist innovation in poetic punctuation and capitalization, evident from the earliest examples of Mina Loy's poetry, has been attributed to e. e. cummings, making Loy's contributions derivative rather than originary" (Expatriate 30). Loy participated in an environment of experimentation with poetry's substance and form.

While my thesis places less emphasis on Loy's gender than on her ethnic hybridity and autobiographical innovation, I am only able to do so because many previous studies on Loy have already ably focused on her gender as the basis for their arguments. Indeed, Loy's work is now being increasingly recognized for the position it had held in the Modernist community. This recognition owes much to feminist critical work that has focussed on the women who participated in Modernism, but who have escaped much

critical and canonical notice until recent publications of collections like Bonnie Kime Scott's *The Gender of Modernism* and Shari Benstock's *Women of the Left Bank.* Critical studies edited and written by such critics as Rita Felski, Mary Lynn Broe and Angela Ingram, Bridget Elliott and Jo-Ann Wallace, and Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar have also assisted in remedying the absence of forgotten Modernists like Loy from the canon. Of course, the most credit is due to editor Roger Conover, who brought out Loy's collection *The Last Lunar Baedeker* and the recent *The Lost Lunar Baedeker*, without which Loy's work would probably still remain largely unknown.

Even though Loy is only now being reinstated as a participant in Modernism, her place as an established Modernist was not in doubt in 1923 when the first part of her long poem *Anglo-Mongrels and the Rose* appeared. Jerome Rothenberg, in his collection of American avant-garde poetry, refers to *Anglo-Mongrels* as "one of the lost master-poems of the 20th century" (57). In my thesis, I try to appreciate the perspective from which the poem was written. Loy was an expatriate at the time of the poem's composition--the autobiographical details of her childhood in her poem anticipate this expatriation--but she was also a prominent figure among many innovative artists and writers. Her autobiography combines poetic innovation with historical acuity in her representation of her parents' mixed marriage and her own ethnic hybridity in late Victorian England.

Chapter 1

Autobiography and the Modernist "Crisis in Consciousness"

Superficially, Mina Loy's long poem *Anglo-Mongrels and the Rose* recounts the history of her parentage and her childhood. Beyond this level, however, Loy explores complicated autobiographical issues in *Anglo-Mongrels*, placing her persona as an example of the development of an artistic visionary during a time when "TODAY is the crisis in consciousness," as she writes in her "Aphorisms on Futurism" (273). Loy's attention towards the genesis of her consciousness, her unreservedly satirical depiction of her mixed-religious heritage, and her experimental, abstract poetics make this long poem tell her life story in a way which rejects the traditional representation that a prose narrative or first-person speaker might offer. While many critics label Loy's poem "semi-autobiographical," then move to other types of analysis, I see her autobiographical impulse as too relevant a poetic choice to relegate to a side issue. I thus explore the aspects of Loy's writing that make her long poem an experimental autobiography; the influence of New Thought on Loy's autobiographical expression; and the mystical aspects of Loy's autobiography which influence my interpretation of *Anglo-Mongrels* as "auto-mythology" (Conover 326). In my reading of *Anglo-Mongrels* alongside the intellectual trends of New Thought, particularly the philosophy of Henri Bergson, I will demonstrate how such currents of thought permeate and inform Loy's exploration and expression of identity through her long poem.

I. Loy and the Writing of Self

Two types of genre dislocation are presented by Loy's autobiographical long poem. First, Loy's poem exemplifies Modernist experimentation in the form of the long poem. Even so, it does not conform to critical descriptions of canonical Modern long poems, as my references to Margaret Dickie will show. Second, Loy's poem demonstrates explorations in forms of autobiographical expression that were typical of Modernist experimentation, and especially of Modernist women's work. Loy's poem is not a "traditional" autobiography, which I take to mean the "(masculine) tradition of autobiography beginning with Augustine [which] had taken as its first premise the mirroring capacity of the autobiographer: *his* universality, *his* representativeness, *his* role as a spokesperson for the community" (Brodzki and Schenck 1). Loy is uniquely hybrid: her autobiography mirrors only the development of Loy's consciousness as the character Ova. Loy does not presume universality.

Paradoxically, where I find the focus of my thesis--the function of Loy's long poem as an autobiography--is the quality of Loy's work that is often criticized. Loy's reviewer Reno Odlin writes that "at the best of times her work exists rather to serve Mina Loy's personal interests than for any other reason . . . when we are not, at least provisionally, interested in the welfare of Mina Loy there is little to attract us in her work" (57). This type of criticism indicates the bias that Celeste Schenck describes when she points out how women's poetry "has often been assigned similar 'autobiographical' status, which has relegated it to the unsorted pile of sanitized generic laundry" (287). However, as Odlin admits, there is "one reason for her long neglect, for she came along in the age of Mr. Eliot's 'objectivity,' when it was not quite proper for an artist to even have a

biography, let alone speak of it" (57). This may be true for conventional views of the Modernist canon, but the breach of the "purity" of the poetic genre by women's autobiographical poetry previous to and during the Modern period was not unique to Loy. Indeed, Melita Schaum argues that as an "autobiographical epic of the cultural and artistic development of the woman poet, *Anglo-Mongrels* joins the efforts of other now-marginalized women artists working in the autobiographical long poem during the 'Waste Land Era' of the 1920s and 1930s" (255). Loy's poem serves as an example of the type of generic border-crossing of autobiography and poetry investigated by Schenck, who suggests that the two genres "can be read coextensively, in a manner that profitably destabilizes theory of mainstream autobiography and calls into question the patriarchal determination of genre theory more generally" (281). Loy's *Anglo-Mongrels* exemplifies the type of work that Schenck describes "as texts recording the negotiation of the female self-in-process between the historical fact of displacement and the possibility of textual self-presence" (287). Loy transgresses genre boundaries in the process of representing her own hybridity: her long poem is autobiographical; her autobiography is non-traditionally poetic.

To me, Loy's long poem is an experimental autobiography: it does not conform to certain canonical ideas about the Modernist long poem because of its autobiographical content. For instance, Margaret Dickie includes only canonical poems like Eliot's *The Waste Land*, Pound's *Cantos*, and William Carlos Williams's *Paterson* in her consideration and characterization of the Modernist long poem as the culmination of Modernism's development: "[a]s it revealed its energies in these long poems, Modernism became in the end a conservative or conserving movement, quite different from its

revolutionary beginnings" (4). Dickie suggests that "isolated close readings of the long poems as independent, revolutionary experiments . . . have tended to confirm the sense of Modernism as a movement without an internal history" (4). Certainly I agree that it is necessary to see the interconnectedness of the trends and influences that led to the development of long poems. Nevertheless, to diminish the possibility that such poems could be "revolutionary experiments" within the movement seems misguided. Indeed, such a characterization of the Modernist long poem fails to consider other works that were produced during the same period, but which have remained less prominently in the Modernist canon. Works such as the "female autobiographical epics" that Schaum defines, the long poems of Gertrude Stein and of H. D., as well as Loy's *Anglo-Mongrels* do not fit Dickie's following description of the Modernist long poem:

> the long poem was to be an experiment not only with form but also with poetry as a public language. The poets declared that their long poems were to be celebrations of the city, models for good government, values and visions by which to live. Openly didactic, the poets set out to teach not necessarily difficult lessons, but simple precepts that required new and complex forms of expression responsive to the conditions of the modern world. (8)

The "female autobiographical epics" and, indeed, the modern long poem as a genre seems less conservative and more personally or autobiographically driven than Dickie's analysis suggests. Focussing on canonized authors to the exclusion of the now lesser-known contemporaries works to confirm a view of the modern long poem as conservative, rather than as experimental.

Loy's long poem, for instance, places her developing self in contradistinction to the two ethnic heritages and histories that are represented by her parents. Her use of the long poem form admits certain aspects of Dickie's description, since the abstract poetics represent the "new and complex forms of expression responsive to the conditions of the modern world" (8). Nevertheless, Loy's poem is less about "celebrations of the city, models for good government, values and visions by which to live" than it is an exploration of the author's mixed subjectivity (Dickie 8). Schaum also more explicitly links Loy with women writers who use the autobiographical long poem to attempt "both to recover the personal voice in poetry and to examine the *Bildung* of the female artist in the modern world" (256). Furthermore, Schaum describes these works in terms that approach Dickie's description of the "didactic," "complex" Modern long poems: they are often "violently polemical, radically confessional, encoded in unconventional poetic language" (256). These types of Modernist autobiographies may be compared to Smith's concept of the "autobiographical manifesto," which, while referring mainly to postmodern autobiographical writing, nevertheless resembles the urgency of the Modern autobiographical efforts described by Schaum. For Smith, the autobiographical manifesto

> always foregrounds the relationship of identities to power. It insists on new interpretations, new positionings of the subject as a means of wresting power, resisting universalized repetitions that essentialize, naturalize, totalize the subject. In service to that political cause, the autobiographer issues the call for a new, revolutionary subject, offers an agenda for "I" transformations. (195)

Where the now-canonized Modernist poets may be seen as moving easily towards the long "public" poem, marginalized writers more explicitly concentrated on the split subject offered by writing the alienated self in autobiography.

Still, Smith warns against simplifying the binary of public and private divisions; there is room in autobiographical writing for "a contestatory autobiographical practice [that] involves the engagement in a politics of fragmentation as the means to counter the centrifugal power of the old 'self'" (187). For Modernists, Susan Stanford Friedman argues, the "narratological structure of autobiography itself intensified modernity's destruction of the unitary self" (82). Loy in particular offers her long poem as an autobiographical exemplification of the problem of the modern self: she is an ethnic hybrid of two distinct religious and ethnic traditions. In this way, her work combines the public or historical aspect with her own personal experience.

When I describe autobiography as "traditional," I am admittedly referring to a generalization, to a narrative style that William Spengemann calls "self-written biography" or the "self-biographical mode" (xiii). Julie Watson and Sidonie Smith define the "traditional autobiography" as "implicated in a specific notion of 'selfhood.' . . . all 'I's are rational, agentive, unitary. . . . the 'I' becomes 'Man' . . . effectively what Spivak has termed the 'straight white Christian man of property'" (xvii). Shari Benstock uses the expression "traditional autobiography" when she argues that Woolf, like other marginalized female autobiographers, "rather systematically cuts out from under herself the props that hold up her authority as an *author*, turning authority back to the matter that constitutes her 'subject'--and that subject is not necessarily the 'self' of traditional autobiography" (Authorizing 18). Benstock's lengthy description of the "traditional" self

of autobiography represents assumptions which, she argues, female Modernists, including Loy, undercut by exposing "fissures of discontinuity" (Authorizing 29):

> In definitions of autobiography that stress self-disclosure and narrative account, that posit a self called to witness (as an authority) to "his" own being, that propose a double referent for the first-person narrative (the present "I" and the past "I"), or that conceive of autobiography as "recapitulation and recall" . . . the Subject is made an Object of investigation (the first-person actually masks the third-person) and is further divided between the present moment of the narration and the past on which the narration is focused. These gaps in the temporal and spatial dimensions of the text itself are often successfully hidden from reader and writer, so that the fabric of the narrative appears seamless, spun of whole cloth. (Authorizing 19)

By drawing on Watson, Smith, and Benstock, I am indicating the type of "tradition" that I speak of when I discuss the "traditional autobiography" to which Loy's poem does not conform. As I will demonstrate, Loy avoids the authorizing "I" of the first-person narrative by calling herself "Ova" and, further, uses a fragmentary, abstract poetics that unravel the "traditional" seamless narrative fabric that Benstock describes.

Implicit in Benstock's writing on autobiography is the assumption that women's autobiographical writing is, as a whole, different from that of men's. In my view of Loy's representation of self within her autobiography, I agree that Loy's writing uses autobiographical strategies that highlight her marginality as a woman, but I hold a more nuanced critical position than that of Benstock. Like Smith, who indicates that "theorists

of multiple differences have differentiated the personal stakes and psychological impacts of systems of colonization, focussing on the personal experiences of multiple oppressions, of class, caste, race, gender, sexuality, nationality," I see Loy's autobiography as a representation of multiple sites of marginalization (192). To me, Loy's depiction of her development as an artistic visionary, her alienation as an ethnic hybrid, and her heritage of emigrancy are just as relevant to my analysis of her autobiographical strategies as is her gender. My examination of Loy's work thus attempts to address what Shirley Neuman describes as the lack of critical attention towards "the self-representation of the autobiographical subject at the intersection of discourses of race and class as well as of gender" (5).

By not calling herself "I" within the space of the poem, and by instead using the suggestive name "Ova," Loy displaces the authorizing "self" represented in traditional autobiographies as described by the critics above. Such displacement is truly appropriate for an autobiography that considers the development of consciousness for it treats the individual in the continual becoming of self, rather than as a complete, fixed personality responding heroically to formative life-events. Also, by using the suggestive word "Ova" to represent herself, Loy connotes both a female allegorical level and an artistic developmental level. The re-naming or displacing of the self de-stabilizes the expectation that authors describe their lives in the first person within autobiographies, as I explained above. Instead, Loy makes her entrance with her birth as Ova, two-thirds of the way into the poem, emerging as a "clotty bulk of bifurcate fat," rather than as a fully developed character, or even an "I" (130).

Loy's concern with reproduction is suggested by the "ovum" connotations of the name. Written a decade before *Anglo-Mongrels*, Loy's *Feminist Manifesto* contains an indication of her interest in reproduction and the role of women:

> The first illusion it is to your interest to demolish is the division of women into two classes the mistress, & the mother every well-balanced & developed woman knows that is not true, Nature has endowed the complete woman with a faculty for expressing herself through all her functions--there are no restrictions the woman who is so incompletely evolved as to be un-self-conscious in sex, will prove a restrictive influence on the temperamental expansion of the next generation; the woman who is a poor mistress will be an incompetent mother--an inferior mentality--& will enjoy an inadequate apprehension of Life. (Lost 154, typography from this edition)

In this piece of writing, which argues that the feminist movement at the turn of the century is inadequate, Loy insists that "NO scratching on the surface of the rubbish heap of tradition will bring about Reform, the only method is Absolute Demolition" (154). Loy's resistence to the outmoded structures of thinking of marriage roles and, in particular, late Victorian stereotypes of women arises from her belief in the possibility of individual change, or, as I will discuss in the next section, "creative evolution." The woman who has undergone such evolution is what Loy describes as "well-balanced," "developed" and "complete." Later in the *Manifesto*, Loy writes, "[e]very woman has a right to

maternity," objecting to a society which allows only the good wife to be an acceptable mother. The notion of reproduction is thus a laden symbol for Loy. When she calls herself "Ova" in *Anglo-Mongrels*, it refers to not only physical reproduction, but also social, artistic, and intellectual reproduction or, as she describes it in her *Feminist Manifesto*, "social regeneration" (157).

Loy's re-naming of the self highlights her awareness of the separation between her self and the representation of her self in art. Autobiography, Friedman indicates, "splits the self telling and the self told" (82). Loy's self-consciousness as an artist creating an abstract poetic rendition of her autobiography is highlighted in the description of an episode from her childhood in which she attempts to "project" her "entity" into "sudden colours":

> The prismatic sun show
> of father's physic bottles
> pierced by the light of day
> extinguishes
> as she is carried away
>
> Her entity
> she projects
> into these sudden colours
> for self-identification
> is lost in recurrent annihilation
> with an old desperate unsurprise (137-38)

Emphasizing the moment-by-moment "annihilation" of the self that she has projected into the colours, Loy illustrates the problem of capturing the "becoming" that is part of reality. Loy here demonstrates a metaphorical counterpoint to what Benstock calls "traditional autobiographies" and their attempts to "seal up and cover over gaps in memory, dislocations in time and space, insecurities, hesitations, and blind spots" (Authorizing 20). Similarly, Bella Brodzki indicates that "the autobiographer is always a displaced person: to write and speak from the space marked self-referential is to inhabit, in ontological, epistemological, and discursive terms, no place" (244). Loy's identity of the memory is constantly projected and erased, just as the Loy within the art--Ova--cannot fully represent the past identity of the "real" Loy.

II. Reconfiguring Subjectivity: Consciousness and "New Thought"

An inter-disciplinary shift in thinking about the defining mechanisms of consciousness affected a range of disciplines from philosophy, pysochoanalytic sciences, to the arts where "we find the shared assumption that consciousness is not fully transparent to itself" (Schwartz 4). Loy and her contemporaries were "being geniuses together," as Robert MacAlmon would say. I want to stress the "together" of that construction, for the artists who are now associated with Modernism were then actively involved in intellectual speculation that had been stimulated, in part, by thinkers such as Friedrich Nietzsche, James Frazer, Sigmund Freud, William James, and Henri Bergson. In the remainder of this chapter I will frequently return to Bergson because Loy's *Anglo-Mongrels* and the discourse of many of her didactic writings draw explicitly from the currents of thought that are associated with his philosophy. Loy's work draws from and

added to the currents of thought that reconfigured notions of the self and of consciousness. These philosophic speculations are reflected in her art.

Henri Bergson was particularly optimistic about the role of art in illustrating the principles of *durée réelle*, since it is "a principal means of recovering immediate experience . . . a mode of writing that reveals the flow of experience beneath the surface of everyday awareness" (Schwartz 30). Bergson's philosophy thus privileges the artist in such a way that offers her and her contemporaries the roles of artistic visionaries. The "physic bottles" passage previously quoted demonstrates the application of Bergson's *durée réelle*, which is "that irreversible succession of heterogeneous states melting into one another and flowing in indivisible process which we experience when we return to our life below, our Being / Becoming" (Burwick and Douglass 4). The child's projection of entity into the sudden prismatic colours is brief and fleeting, but the experience of her sensation--she sees the colours before being carried away--is what is stressed. Loy writes elsewhere that the "Artist is uneducated, and seeing [an unspecified] IT for the first time; he can never see the same thing twice" (285). We see here the gendered language that Loy uses, at once signalling the prejudices of her time as well as the reason why some feminist critics object to her work.

While Bergson's work made up only a piece of the intellectual fabric that made up Modernist influences, his philosophy plays an integral role in Loy's artistic expression. Indeed, Loy was quite familiar with Bergson; for instance, she writes that Gertrude Stein's "reconstructions comprised a philosophy of consciousness as revolutionary as Bergson's" (qtd. in Burke 318). Bergson's philosophy, Loy's biographer suggests, applied particularly well to Loy's situation since in "the realm of pure duration, perhaps,

the contradictions between being Christian and Jewish, British and foreign, respectable and commerical, might dissolve" (Burke 122). His ideas offer a philosophical justification for Loy's concentration on the development of her consciousness, creating a moment-by-moment new self out of her double heritage since Bergson's proposition in his *Creative Evolution* is that "the universe is best understood on the model of the development and elaboration of consciousness" (Burwick and Douglass 4).

Loy internalizes the Bergsonian discursive influence; this is explicitly stated in various examples of her work. In her profile of Gertrude Stein, for instance, Loy points to the relevance of Bergson's philosophy for their artistic environment: "[t]his was when Bergson was in the air, and his beads of Time strung on the continuous flux of Being, seemed to have found a literary conclusion in the austere verity of Gertrude Stein's theme--'Being' as the ultimate occupation" (289). Loy, too, takes Bergson's philosophy about the continual becoming that is involved in being and, with *Anglo-Mongrels and the Rose*, creates a poetic self-portrait that demonstrates her evolution as an artist.

Accordingly, one of the stances of the expanded pamphlet outlining the tenets of Loy's 1919 proposition for an "International Psycho-Democratic Party" is for the redemption of "the Indication of Explorative Being" (276). Her autobiographical *Anglo-Mongrels* that follows a few years later may thus be read as her own journey of "Explorative Being." Loy's political party based on "Psycho-Democratic" principles, which I quote below, further demonstrates Bergson's influence on her thinking (Conover xxxiv). The political application of his philosophy, which privileges the role of the artist as more evolved in realizing the significance of consciousness and intuition, seems the logical step for Loy, as an artistic visionary, to make. Certainly, at the close of the Great

War, history would seem open to direction. Loy's definition of "psycho-democracy" seems an exemplum of the ways in which a being may idealistically and exploratively develop: "Psycho democracy is . . . the Substitution of consciously directed evolution for revolution, Creative Inspiration for Force, Laughter for Lethargy, Sociability for Sociology, Human psychology for Tradition" (277). Loy's biographer Carolyn Burke stresses the mix of spirituality and politics in the party platform and draws a parallel between Loy's original fourteen-point program and the American President Wilson's post-war democratic "Fourteen Points" (269).

I bring up Loy's "Psycho-Democratic" writings because they help illustrate my reading of her autobiographical long poem *Anglo-Mongrels and the Rose*. Bergson's influence on Loy's thinking is explicit throughout the pamphlet, which suggests that she was actively concerned with the transformation of subjectivity. Loy practices the mode that Sidonie Smith describes as "autobiographical manifesto": "[h]istoricizing identity, [it] implicitly, if not explicitly, insists on the temporalities and spatialities of identity and . . . brings the everyday practices of identity directly into the floodlights of conscious display" (193). Loy describes "Psycho-Democracy" as "A Movement to Focus Human Reason on The Conscious Direction of Evolution" (276). Loy's revolutionary statements that borrow heavily from Bergson philosophy are followed less than five years later by *Anglo-Mongrels*, which demonstrates her own "creative evolution" in the development of her consciousness. Loy had social reformation on her mind and was thus a concerned artist, so the "biographical" tendencies in her poetry should perhaps be read as a consequence of this emphasis. Loy offers poetic satires drawn from her life in order to exemplify the ills of the past that need to be transcended. She was able to design

alternative perspectives for viewing society, which, as we shall see in the third chapter of this thesis, are reflected in her use of allusions to literature's fantastic societies.

As noted earlier, even though Loy was writing long poems during the same period as other poets who stressed the "impersonal" as did Eliot and Pound, it seems unlikely that she would embark upon the creation of a long poem involving her double cultural heritage and the development of her consciousness without considering the implications of the autobiographical. Susan Gilmore, in fact, points to how Loy's writing subverts and reverses the poetics of "impersonality" that are associated with Eliot and Pound and advocates reading certain Modernist women's work according to a "poetics of impersonation" (25). For Gilmore, "Eliot's furtive anti-heroes attempt to displace anxieties about the male subject's integrity onto the violated and silenced female body; Loy . . . present[s] gender as a performative category subject to constant renegotiation through the medium of conversation" (23). Unlike Gilmore, I do not wish to completely disregard "impersonality" as a strategy for Loy's work. In fact, I will refer to Schwartz's focus on the term itself and similarly complicate the now-generalized New Critical application of "impersonality." Its use as a concept by Pound and Eliot is quite nuanced and, at times, contradictory: "[w]e have, then, two distinct but complementary oppositions: 1) impersonal abstractions / personal experience, and 2) conventional personality / impersonal detachment" (Schwartz 64). As Schwartz explains, whether I. A. Richards, Pound, and Eliot "emphasize the personality or the impersonality of the author, all three share the essential distinction between abstraction and experience, and without inconsistency pass casually from one formulation of this distinction to another" (64). The impersonality, then, that is often associated with the canonical Modernists does not

necessarily exclude autobiography, particularly when the autobiography demonstrates the investigations into "impersonal abstractions / personal experience" as does Loy's *Anglo-Mongrels and the Rose*.

The "New Thought" that informed Modernist writing provided the nexus of abstraction and experience that characterize much work of the period. Loy's long autobiographical poem, too, draws on these ideas. William Spengemann links modern writing with autobiography when he argues that "the modernist [move] away from representational discourse toward self-enacting, self-reflexive verbal structures and the critical theories that have been devised to explain this movement conspire to make the very idea of literary modernism seem synonymous with that of autobiography" (xiii). Yet Spengemann's description privileges the canonized concept of "impersonality" and effaces the more clearly biographical aspects of autobiographies written by marginalized writers such as Loy. By combining abstraction and experience, the autobiographical details and the abstract poetic expression of Loy's long poem bring together what Schwartz characterizes as the defining features of the philosophical shift at the turn of the century: "an opposition between conceptual abstraction and immediate experience, or, more generally, between the instrumental conventions that shape ordinary life and the original flux of concrete sensations" (5). Loy's abstractions of expression allow her to capture the fleeting sensations that form the development of her consciousness. I will explain in the next section how Loy's abstractions provide a method for her to depict the transcendence beyond experience that is implied by her illumination within the poem.

III. Loy's "Auto-Mythology": Myth and Mysticism

When the life that the autobiographer intends to render is destabilized by a "crisis in consciousness," or shifting notions of conscious subjectivity, an experimental style of autobiography offers a medium for exploring that philosophic dynamism. While Loy once replied to an editor's request for a "Contributor's Note" with, "I don't think anything biographical would be cheerful," this does not mean that she objected to the notion of autobiography (Conover lxiii). On the contrary, I would argue that in her autobiographical long poem Loy refuses to adhere strictly to the truth claims of biography that are implied by both conventional prose narrative biographies and autobiographies that relied on a unitary public self. The move away from conventional notions of biography is consistent with early twentieth century philosophy that focused on the fluidity of experience and consciousness and the correlative Modernist poetic representations of selfhood. In fact, Loy's strategy in her "auto-mythology" is comparable to Eliot's 1923 description of Joyce's use of myth in *Ulysses*, which he calls "the mythical method" rather than the "narrative method" because it provides "a way of controlling, of ordering, [and] of giving a shape and a significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history" (177). Autobiography is a good medium for exploring new methods of thinking about consciousness and, by extension, the "self."

That Loy describes her long poem as "auto-mythology" instead of "autobiography" emphasizes the deeper level of significance of her conscious development. Loy makes the story of her life represent the possibility for illumination offered by Bergson's philosophy and attention to consciousness. At one point in *Anglo-Mongrels*, Loy meditates on what could be seen as the folly of self-centred autobiographical endeavors:

(The drama of)

a human consciousness

(played to the inattentive audience

of the Infinite)

gyrates

on the ego-axis

intoxicates

with the cosmic

proposition of being IT (152)

In the bracketed portion of the passage, the level of theatricality that is added to the poem suggests the self-reflexive nature of Loy's "auto-mythology" (Conover 326). Then, in an amusing, yet brutal, turn, Loy immediately portrays the disillusionment involved in autobiographical efforts to inscribe the unique self:

Till the inconsiderate

competitional brunt

of its similars

informs it

of several millions

"pulling the same stunt" (152)

Ova resists the universal standpoint of a "traditional" autobiography. Rather than producing a work that tells the story of one's life, then, Loy presents the story of the development of her consciousness. The language that Loy uses in these quotes above demonstrates the struggle of consciousness, the fight between seeing oneself as the special

"IT," while constantly being reminded of one's common place among "several millions." What arises out of this antithesis is the unique narratorial stance of this experimental autobiography. Loy suspends her third-person narrator in a stance that is at once marginalized and mythical. The transcendence of the mystical "Illumination" near the close of the poem moves Ova from the "auto-" to the "-mythology" of *Anglo-Mongrels*. Loy's term "auto-mythology" is an appropriate description since Loy's poem tends towards what Suzanne Nalbantian refers to as "mythification," which "involved recomposition and recreation of any life facts that might have been culled into symbolic and universal dimensions" (172).

Loy's long poem applies the elements of Bergson's philosophy that demonstrate the possibility for transcendence accompanying the realization of the significance of consciousness. The way that she decribes the new-born Ova shows the influence of Bergson's writings in her emphasis on "consciousness" and "time and space":

> The isolate consciousness
> projected from back of time and space
> pacing its padded cell
>
> The soul
> apprenticed to the butcher business
> offers organic wares
> to sensibility
> A dim inheritor
> of this undeniable flesh (131)

Bergson's notions of the significance of the role of consciousness in the interpretation of experience are evident in these lines from the poem. The individual "isolate" soul is described in terms that emphasize its limitation: it is "pacing its padded cell" and confined to experiencing reality through the "dim inheritor" sensibility. For Bergson, as he writes in *Time and Free Will*,

> The greater part of the time we live outside ourselves, hardly perceiving anything of ourselves but our own ghost, a colourless shadow which pure duration projects into homogeneous space. Hence our life unfolds in space rather than in time; we live for the external world rather than for ourselves; we speak rather than think; we "are acted" rather than act ourselves. (231-22)

Loy writes about her life, but makes her experience mythological by demonstrating the possibilities for psychic growth described by Bergson. As Richard Lehan indicates, "Bergson challenged at the outset the priority of a mechanistic, Darwinian evolution that robbed the universe of a creative unfolding and man of a corresponding creative power of a deep subjectivity within which the mythic, the primitive, and the intuitive could thrive" (307).

Even as Loy uses her poem to express the development of her consciousness, or the "mental life that exists in real duration," she also uses it to explore the consequences of her racial heritage (Schwartz 283). As I will discuss in respect to Loy's hybridity, she negotiates her identity as an ethnically mixed minority within a culture that is in the process of changing the very meaning of what constitutes such a minority. The myth-making of Loy's "mongrel" spiritual self is manifest in the experimentation with her poetic

autobiographical self in *Anglo-Mongrels and the Rose*. Loy represents the evolutionary creation of Ova as a result of the interaction of two contradictory, perhaps no longer workable, systems of religious thought that are represented by each of the parents. Ova becomes the representative of doubled religious discourses:

> Where Jesus of Nazareth
>
> becomes one-piece
>
> with Judas Iscariot
>
> in this composite
>
> Anglo-Israelite (132)

In these lines, Loy explicitly names the mythological basis for her hybridity, if religions are treated as mythological systems, as Loy seems to treat them. Her mixed identity insinuates that the effect of reproduction and reinstatement of familial, cultural, artistic, and intellectual norms are controverted by the notion of hybridity. She is unable to be both and must therefore evolve. Loy's identity and, therefore, its poetic representation depict the "immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history" (Eliot 177). The autobiographical representation of her hybrid status uses poetic abstraction and the "mythical method," as Eliot describes it, to perform the mystic transcendence offered by the New Thought of her age.

Chapter 2

"The Something Soul Emerges":

Historical Allegory and Mongrel Progeny

While the philosophical environment of her time had great import for her autobiography, Loy's mixed religious and cultural upbringing, as well as her "mongrel" status bore equal weight. Loy's marginalized identity was formed by the historical conditions of her upbringing. These conditions led to the type of experimental autobiography that Loy produced in order to depict the development of her hybrid identity: her "something" soul which "emerges" from her double religious and cultural heritage. Few critics fully consider the implications of Loy's "mongrelism" even though Loy's autobiography hinges explicitly on her mixed ethnic parentage. Historical traditions that arise in her father's Jewish immigrant heritage collide in Loy's poem with the historically allegorical function of her mother as imperial Britain. Taking the racialized and allegorical aspects of Loy's parents into consideration allows for a concentration on her autobiographical expression of hybrid identity and artistic vision. Sociological factors, biological implications, religious differences, and the contemporaneous political dimension of the poem's time of composition all contribute to Loy's "mongrel" identity.

I. The Racialization of Exodus

Loy's portrayal of her father's alterity as "Exodus" illustrates the racialization of Jewish people that accompanied the scientism of the British *fin-de-siècle*. Related to this are the stereotypes that accompany racial discrimination. Exodus embodies different

stereotypes about Jews that were prevalent at the time. He is also, like Loy herself, an outsider and an artist, as Jaskoski indicates: "[i]n the figure of Exodus, Mina Loy develops her portrait of the person who is both outsider and artist, the unique individual standing against the collective and institutional" (351). In the poem, Loy hints at the superiority of Exodus's heritage, since he is Jewish and the stereotypes that Loy draws on for his portrait come from a long written tradition, yet his mother and stepfather are represented as "garrulously inarticulate." In the passages that follow, both the intellectual heritage and the pecuniary stereotypes of Exodus's religion are implied:

> the widowed mother
>
> took to her bosom a spouse
>
> of her own sphere
>
> and hired
>
> Exodus in apprenticeship
>
> to such as garrulously inarticulate
>
> ignore the cosmic cultures (112)

The allegorical implications of this family's conflict are suggested by the following lines from the poem, in which Loy indicates that the Jewish intellectual past is one of the points of difference that led to their discrimination among other cultures:

> The arid gravid
>
> intellect of Jewish ancestors
>
> The senile juvenile
>
> calculating prodigies of Jehovah
>
> crushed by the Occident ox

they scraped

the gold gold golden

muck from off his hoofs (112)

Here, as elsewhere, Exodus's Jewish heritage is linked to discourses of money in conjunction with intellect. He, like his ancestors, is suggested to be simultaneously crushed, yet to profit from the "gold gold golden / muck" of the "Occident ox."

While much of the increase in England's Jewish population, which was coupled with a rise in the nation's anti-Semitism, was due to the Eastern European pogroms of the 1880s, Loy's father emigrated from Hungary prior to these events. In Loy's biography, *Becoming Modern*, Burke notes that though the upbringing of Loy's father was marked by positive events in Hungary, namely the granting of civil rights to Jews in 1848, and political rights in 1867, there were, nevertheless, anti-Semitic demonstrations protesting such moves that indicate the type of cultural unrest that would lead, in turn, to the later pogroms (17). Hungary's anti-Semitism, coupled with an unfortunate domestic arrangement in which Loy's father was apprenticed to work for his own stepfather, led to his decision to emigrate (Burke 17). In the following passage, the "paradise of the pound-sterling" carries on the monetary implications that we saw above:

moves Exodus to emigrate

coveting the alien

asylum of voluntary military

service paradise of the pound-sterling

where the domestic Jew in lieu

of knouts is lashed with tongues (113)

Still, the juxtaposition of Exodus's escape from his apprenticeship with the loaded diction of Loy's poetry suggests that her father merely traded one style of prejudice for another with his move from Hungary to England. Loy's combination of "alien / asylum" and "domestic Jew" highlight the alien status that his father will have in England. Even when "domestic," he will still be "lashed with tongues."

Once in England, Lowy was successful as the "highest paid tailor's cutter in London" (Burke 17). He also enjoyed financial security due to his investments:

> And the God of the Gentiles
> blessed him among Israel
> he had several
> shares in the South Eastern
> Railway and other
> securities (117-18)

His share-holder status demonstrates the role of Jewish financiers in pre-imperialist development, whom Hannah Arendt, in *Imperialism*, suggests were "invited to serve in the placement of capital which could no longer be invested profitably in the domestic market" (15). Despite this prosperity, he still faced discrimination as a Jew in England at the start of a large influx of immigrants escaping the East European pogroms. In fact, just after his arrival in England, and during the time period the poem treats, England's Jewish population grew from 60,000 in 1880 to 250,000 at the turn of the century (Galchinsky 16).

Loy's *fin-de-siècle* upbringing was at a time with much debate regarding the "racialization" of Jewish people. As Gilman indicates, the "view of Jewish immutability is

a commonplace of late nineteenth-century anthropological and medical science" (36). Accordingly, Exodus's "insensitive" perusal of his body mimics the intellectual debate surrounding him:

> Deep in the névrose
> night he
> peruses his body
> divested of its upholstery
> firmly insensitive
> in mimicry
> of its hypothetical model---
> a petal
> of the English rose (127)

While this passage is opaque in its sexual suggestiveness with lines such as, "he / peruses his body / divested of its upholstery," it is clear in its depiction of Exodus as "other" to the "hypothetical model" of national membership implied by the "petal / of the English rose." According to Raphael and Jennifer Patai in *The Myth of the Jewish Race*, Jewish alterity became an increasingly racial distinction in the course of the nineteenth century (10). The religious liberty brought to Europe, in part, by the French Revolution, the rise of scientism, and the rise in popular curiosity about foreign races and places are some of the factors that led to the racialization of Jewish people (Patai 8-9). By the turn of the century, then, Jewish difference was considered to be as much racial as religious. Loy's poem illustrates both levels of alterity.

According to Loy's portrait of her father, once he is in England, he internalizes contemporary stereotypes of Jews. For instance, when Loy describes her father's hypochondria, he demonstrates elements of the stereotype of the "diseased Jew": "[d]isease is a concept closely linked to religion and the exotic. . . . as we shall see, no people is more ancient or more remote or more diseased than the Jews" (Gilman 28). Accordingly, Loy's father's obsessive analysis of his body mimics the scientism of the late Victorian period. The following passage at once likens religion, or "pathological mysticism," to what Loy implies are the limitations of known science as "the only available / branching out of facts" and "the visceral / items he has heard mentioned":

His body
becomes the target of his speculation
His brain ravenous for informative food
spins cobwebs on the only available
branching out of facts
clings to the visceral
items he has heard mentioned
until they ache
under mesmeric concentration
Exodus discovers his nerves
as once Mankind
in pathological mysticism believed
itself to have discovered
its soul (120)

This hypochondria provides a way for him to make contact with a society to which he is an outsider:

> The only personal reality
> he brought from Hungary he takes
> to Harley Street where medicine
> sits the only social science applied to the outsider
>
> The parasite attaches to the English Rose
> at a guinea a visit
> he becomes more tangible to himself the exile
> mechanism he learns is built
> to the same osseus structure shares
> identical phenomena with those
> populating the Island (119)

Here the "parasite" metaphor speaks of contemporaneous worries about Jewish immigration, or "the allegation that the Jewish immigrants into Britain 'will develop into a parasitic race'" (Patai 146). For Jaskoski, with Exodus's hypochondria, "Loy emphasizes that sickness can be a condition constructed out of the self's response to a spiritually toxic environment" (352).

Exile, too, is manifested in Exodus's psyche, enhancing his ethnic difference. While his portrayal emphasizes his difference, it also indicates that he is unaware of his spiritual level. He represents, for Loy, a "subconscious / irritant of superiority / left in an

aristocracy out of currency" (116). Loy indicates and significantly alters the stereotypical "Wandering Jew" figure, too, in her father's portrait:

> The dumb philosophies
> of the wondering Jew
> fall into rhythm with
> long unlistened to Hebrew chants
> A wave
> 'out of tide' with the surrounding
> ocean he breaks
> insensitized non-participance upon himself (117)

Loy's description of Exodus's exile puns on the notion of the "Wandering Jew." As Jaskoski notes, "[w]hat Mina Loy appears to have drawn on in the folk tradition . . . is the archetypal outcast, the eternal outsider and scapegoat, that the Wandering Jew has represented in Euro-Christian mythology" (353). As a *wondering* Jew, his conscious speculations are emphasized in conjunction with his actual migration. That Exodus is described as oblivious to his consciousness even as Loy provides his biographical details relates to elements of my discussion of impersonality in the previous chapter, which stressed the combination of abstraction and experience. The way that Exodus experiences life has to do with his consciousness, his memories, and his sensations. For Loy, Exodus is no longer attuned to her own partial heritage. The Jewish philosophies are "dumb" and the Hebrew chants "long unlistened to"; according to the poem, then, the "surrounding / ocean" may be either the English nation or his Jewish heritage. Loy's diction in the poem allows for both readings and makes Exodus's status as an outsider dynamic in its

duplicity. Loy portrays Exodus as unaware of his subconscious level of Being: "he breaks / insensitized non-participance upon himself" (117). Exodus's insensitivity to his identity may be linked to the scientism to which he tends. It also stands in contrast to the emphasis on the mythic level that is represented by Ova and by the introspective diction of the poem.

For Loy, her father's body is also associated with artistic expression through his painting. Her father, fascinated by his stigmatized self, brings that marginality to art: the lines "He paints / He feels his pulse" are repeated several times in the poem (119). Loy's father represents the difference that will develop in his daughter Ova throughout the final portion of the poem. His art is a significant expression of his difference, as is Loy's autobiographical poem. In depicting her father's "instinctive urge of loneliness" (116) Loy exploits the racialized idea of Jewish immutability by employing such stereotypes even as the true significance of such stereotyping is suggested by the sympathy of her father's portrait.

II. Allegory and the Imperial Mother as English Rose

When Exodus subsequently meets and courts Alice, the English Rose, their characterizations take on allegorical proportions: "Albion / in female form / salutes the alien Exodus" (123). In this poem, Loy's mother is depicted with uncommon brutality: so much so that an unsympathetic reviewer was moved to announce, "All she was doing was getting back at Mommy again!" (Odlin 56). More significantly, though, Loy makes the Rose explicitly the embodiment of British imperialism. By doing so, she draws a clear

distinction between her mother and her father according to late nineteenth-century conceptions of culture, race, and religion. The "paradox-Imperial" Rose contains the ominous colonial connotations of superiority that presage the Great War (121). Indeed, at the time of the publication of the section "English Rose," in 1923, Loy would have been looking at her parents' courtship through the historical vantage point of the consequences of imperialism and World War One.

Loy suggests that the differences between her parents are not simply relegated to religion. For Loy, it seems, religious belief is internalized, or embodied, in ways that reflect late nineteenth century racialization theories concerning the differences between Jews and Christians. This scientific rationale for racism follows the emergence in Western countries in the nineteenth century of "race-thinking" (Arendt 40). The paradox of the *fin-de-siècle* debate concerning the immutability of "Jewishness" is that with the decline of religion as a founding impulse in marking difference in societies, race became a more scientific distinction in the differentiation of Jews from Christians. The poem responds to this scientism by making the distinct heritages of Exodus and the Rose "instinctual":

> the shocks of intimate impact
> of the instinctive
> murderer and pamperer
> of Jesus
> rattle its sockets
>
> 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 (145)

Loy reduces even her parents' lovemaking--"intimate impact"--to terms of difference and conflict. Exodus is left with only his "pockets" to impress the now "rabid" Rose, which can refer to his profession as a tailor and to the emptiness of the pockets. Their marital difficulties are raised by Loy to a nationalistic level: she can flaunt "the whole of England" in his "foreign" face.

The language of the poem, which emphasizes the genetic and racial differences of the couple, make it seem unlikely that Loy believed that the differences between Alice and Exodus could be erased by religious conversion. At that time, there was a drive for the conversion and assimilation of Jewish people, particularly women, by concerned philo-Semites (Galchinsky 34-35). Such "persuasive conversionism," Galchinsky points out, was not unknown in Victorian England, as there were several "powerful conversionist societies" that operated in the nineteenth century (34). But Exodus will not convert and causes his wife to suffer

a savage irritation

that this Jew

should not invest himself automatically

with her prejudices of a superior

insulation

at the merest hint (146)

Loy charts the British shift in attitude towards Jewish immigrants that came with the rise in immigration following the East European pogroms. After the marriage, "English Alice" becomes "Hebrew Ada," and seems to increasingly resent her position, as Burke explains in Loy's biography: "[e]ven though Lowy had already joined the better class of tailors, a certain taint of exoticism clung to him, and Julia was dismayed by his refusal to adopt either her religion or her prejudices" (19). Analyzing the pattern of American interreligious marriages, Egon Mayer indicates that even with such a rapid increase in Jewish immigration as seen at the end of the nineteenth century, the rate of mixed marriage between Jews and Christians decreases significantly from 30 per cent to 2 per cent (45). The rise in Jewish immigration to Britain at the same time, and consequential rise in prejudice, may account in part for the "savage irritation" that the "Rose" had for Exodus after the wedding.

Prior to the marriage, though, when Alice is first introduced as the English Rose, her characterization has negative connotations that speak of Loy's antipathy towards imperialism. The Rose embodies Victorian prudery with her "self-prun[ing]" and imperial superiority with her "divine right of self-assertion":

> Rose of arrested impulses
>
> self-pruned
>
> of the primordial attributes
>
> a tepid heart inhibiting
>
> with tactful terrorism
>
> the Blossom Populous
>
> to mystic incest with its ancestry

establishing

by the divine right of self-assertion

the post-conceptual

virginity of Nature

wiping

its pink paralysis

across the dawn of reason

As the poem continues, the historical significance of the post-war time of composition becomes more apparent:

A World-Blush

glowing from

a never-setting-sun

Conservative Rose

storage

of British Empire-made pot-pourri

of dry dead men making a sweetened smell

among a shrivelled collectivity (121-2)

Here the macabre consequences of imperialism and the exploitation involved in the subordinating process of colonialism are inferred by the capitalism that arises from the "dry dead men," the victims of the violence of imperialism. Collapsing a view of the results of the Great War with the imperialist politics of her childhood nation, Loy can look back from the time of her poem's composition and see the results of imperial politics, which find their way into the imagery of the poem, particularly in the portrait of her

mother. In her discussion of imperialiam, Arendt indicates that there is a direct link between imperialism and police state action, since the "first consequence of power export was the state's instruments of violence, the police and the army, which . . . [were] promoted to the position of national representatives in uncivilized or weak countries" (16). By characterizing her mother as the "English Rose," then, Loy presents her as representative of a past that needed to be changed.

III. Mongrel Identity and Hybridity

Loy's sense of racial identity is inscribed as mixed by anthropology--it is "instinctual"--and by religion. Her double heritage is demonstrated in the following passage, which implies the incompatibility of her familial traditions even at her birth as Ova:

> The destinies
> Genii
> of traditional
> Israel and of Albion
> push on its ominous pillow
> its racial birthrights (131)

This description indicates the pervasiveness of the debate that was taking place at the turn of the century regarding the racial characterization of Jewish people. *The Myth of the Jewish Race* describes the historical precedents for such a shift in alterity from religious to racial difference (Patai 10-12). Acknowledging difference, the authors nevertheless disprove, with historical, psychological, and genetic evidence, the existence of a separate

Jewish race. Though this is, presently, a generally accepted fact, the difference in the present attitude and the attitude of Loy's day makes her work even more interesting as an historical document. To Loy and her society, she was considered the offspring of an inter-racial marriage. Now, she would be considered the product of an inter-religious marriage. In the poem, these two elements of difference, racial and religious, intersect as areas of dissension since Loy is constantly betwixt conventional identity definitions. As Jaskoski suggests, the "designation 'Mongrel Rose' refers to Loy's sense of herself as hybrid, mixed-blood, in-between" (363). Loy's hybridity and alienation are expressed within the poem as leading to her "Illumination" and status as an artistic visionary.

The debate about Jewish racialization held Loy's identity in the balance, for the corollary of such thinking was the question of cultural hybridity. "Hybridity" was, in the mid-nineteenth century, distinct from "mongrelism": hybridity had been defined in a more specific scientific sense than its present meaning; it was then the infertile result of the inter-breeding of two species (Young 6-8). Two issues were at the heart of the debate over the use of the term for racial description: whether different races were different species, and whether different races could successfully interbreed and maintain fertility (Young 8). Mongrelism was thus a more acceptable term for a cross between different races, rather than species, at the time. Nevertheless, let my use of "hybridity" in relation to Loy be properly unpacked. I use it consciously to describe the doubling of her identity and the new self that arises from her double heritage, which Loy describes as both "one-piece" and "composite" in the following passage, which I also discussed in the previous chapter:

Where Jesus of Nazareth

becomes one-piece

with Judas Iscariot

in this composite

Anglo-Israelite (132)

When I use "hybridity," then, I use it in its late twentieth-century form to denote a specific mode of being that Loy's amalgamated sense of self inhabits. When I use "mongrelism," on the other hand, I refer to the specific historically racialized sense of mixed-race identity that Loy had, which reflects the terminology of the time. So even as Loy satirizes and critiques stereotyping of Jews in her portraits of her parents, she nevertheless exhibits a historically biased struggle for cultural definitions in her own hybrid self-portrait.

To justify her role as an artist, Loy claims the genius that is implied by her "Jewish brain" that she is granted at the birth of Ova, her autobiographical persona:

The destinies

Genii

of traditional

Israel and of Albion

push on its ominous pillow

its racial birthrights

('Curses for baby

from its godmothers')

Till the least godmother

pipes in her fairy way

"Perhaps you know my name

Survival?

Curse till the cows come home

Behold my gift

The Jewish brain!" (131-32)

Such an endowment speaks of a preoccupation with a different type of Jewish stereotype that Loy characterizes within her self-portrait. Sander Gilman's study *Smart Jews* examines the origins of intellectualized racialization at length and indicates that it is "of little surprise that *fin-de-siècle* Jews--no matter how they understood their Jewishness or Judaism--came to internalize the question of superior intelligence, it being their sign of belonging to the society in which they dwelt" (66). Likewise, Loy displays the racialized sense of identity in her description of her amalgamated self since she describes her brain, rather than her sense of spirituality.

Mina Loy is the product of a historically loaded union. As noted earlier, her father embodies Jewish history in his "exotic" and exilic importation to England, while her mother represents the repressive Victorian tradition of English imperialism in *Anglo-Mongrels and the Rose*. Loy is the "mongrel" result of their coupling. Her autobiographical identity encompasses the theoretical ramifications of such origins, as in the following lines when Loy denies her homeland and describes her art:

So did the mongrel-girl

of Noman's land

coerce the shy

Spirit of Beauty

from excrements and physic (143)

Loy's autobiographical long poem explores her composite identity, critiques it, and demonstrates its relation to her Modernist artistic sensibility. The "excrements and physic" refer to episodes in the poem that take place in the section "Ova Begins to Take Notice." The word "physic" refers to the episode when Ova projects her entity into the "sudden colours" of light refracting through physic bottles (137), which was discussed in the previous chapter. The word "excrements" seems to draw upon Ova's conscious understanding of the word "diarrhea," which, previously in the poem, she had heard in reference to her new-born sister:

And instantly

this fragmentary

simultaneity

of ideas

embodies

the word (141)

Loy's hybridity and culturally mixed upbringing as the "mongrel-girl / of Noman's land" are linked in the poem to the way that she learns how to understand her environment. Her aesthetic, then, is opposed to someone like her husband Stephen Haweis, whose upper-class upbringing is satirized within the characterization of Esau Penfold:

While Esau of Ridover Square

absorbs the erudite idea

that Beauty IS nowhere

except posthumously to itself

in the antique (143)

Esau's concept of art and beauty are antiquated and passed down to him; Ova's visions of beauty, on the other hand, are instinctual and spontaneous. Ova is of "Noman's land": she belongs neither to the masses, nor to the "Ruling Bluff" or upper-class that would be "of Ridover Square" (142). As a hybrid of historical forces, Loy is an outsider. Her Ova character represents the possibility for art to be an aesthetic response to Modern identities.

In *Anglo-Mongrels*, as the "sudden colours" passage shows, Loy critiques her upbringing and the various ways that her consciousness was stifled. Her autobiography must be experimental because she attempts to represent a self-hood that is new in its hybrid mixture of historical forces. If, as she writes in the poem, personality is a microcosm of institutions, then she has a doubled personality that, in being composite, negates the efficacy of either and demands a new course. Writing in the 1920s, after over a decade of involvement with avant-garde manifesto writers and modern artists inspired by "New Thought," Loy would have been familiar with the role of the artist as visionary, blessed with the ability to sweep away decaying social conditions. Loy thus casts herself as the alienated mythological artist.

Chapter 3

"She decides to travel": Looking Forward to Expatriation

In the previous two chapters, Loy's philosophical influences and her mongrel identity have been shown to be influential in my reading of Loy's autobiographical writing. The heading for this chapter, "She decides to travel" is a line that occurs in the poem shortly before Ova's "Illumination" (163). Her urge to escape is repeated throughout the latter part of the poem; it represents Loy's adult migration and is an extension of her marginalization as an intellectual woman, artist, and ethnic hybrid. Not only does *Anglo-Mongrels and the Rose* express Loy's identity as betwixt traditional racial and religious identities, but it also anticipates her geographic and national liminality. Loy escapes single labels: she is neither Jewish nor Christian, neither British nor American. Instead, her identity is an amalgamation of such descriptions; consequently, the poetic representation of her life is abstract and displaced from the type of autobiographical discourse that would simplify a life and represent the self as a heroic unified figure. Ova, Loy's persona within the poem, is the daughter of the exiled Exodus, whose own compulsion to emigrate is a significant factor in the final, third section of the poem. Another expression of Loy's expatriate identity is in the poem's allusions to various places that resonate in the cultural imagination, whether biblical, literary, or historical. The expression of alienation in Loy's poem and the way that such sentiments are compounded by Loy's allusions to fantastic places will return my thesis to a discussion of the implications of the philosophy that emphasizes consciousness, both influencing Loy's self-construction and poetics, and informing her feelings of alienation.

I. Migratory Identities

Geography impresses itself upon the writing of self in Loy's long poem. Edward Said indicates, "[j]ust as none of us is outside or beyond geography, none of us is completely free from the struggle over geography . . . . it is not only about soldiers and cannons but also about ideas, about forms, about images and imaginings" (6). Loy's poem was written a few years after the end of the Great War, but treats the end of the nineteenth century and the height of imperialism. This historical placement of composition makes her treatment of written identity of nationality and geography particularly salient. In this chapter, my methodology will thus be influenced in part by post-colonial theory because it grants me the discourse with which to discuss the *graphie* of Loy's alienation at the same time as I attempt to root her in a poetic exploration of an abandoned *geo*. Loy's life was affected by the geographical uprootedness of her father and by the British imperial authority represented by her mother. In her autobiographical poem, then, Loy's persona, Ova, becomes representative of the problem of nationality for the "mongrel" artist, in representing the anticipation of her geographic migrancy.

Ova's parents are bound to notions of place. This is apparent in their names and in the titles of each of the sections that deal with them. Loy's poem is in three sections: the first, "Exodus," looks at the the life of her father, who is represented as Exodus; the second, "English Rose," introduces her mother and represents the courtship of her parents; the third section, "Mongrel Rose," treats the childhood of Ova, Loy's persona in the poem. The story of Exodus is that of displacement, the settling of the outsider on foreign soil:

This jovian Hebrew "all dressed up
and nowhere to go"
stands like a larch
upon the corners of incarcerate streets
deploring the anomalous legs
of Zion's sons
with the subconscious
irritant of superiority
left in an aristocracy out of currency (116)

Subsequently, in the second section of the poem, "Albion / in female form / salutes the alien Exodus" (123). The meeting of Loy's parents is thus linked to nation, or, more specifically, to the ability to identify oneself with a nationality. Indeed, the final stanzas of the second section of the poem, while almost flippant in their satire, speak of Loy's awareness of the allegorical significance of nationality in the portrait of her parents:

There reigns a disproportionate
dis'armony
in the English Hanthem
And for further information
re the Rose---
and what it does to the nose
while smelling it

See Punch (130)

This comic reference belies the seriousness of Loy's allegorical topic. In the poem, Loy's parents represent the variances of alliance with English nationality. The father is a foreigner; the mother a caricature of the nation.

When "Ada Gives Birth to Ova," in the third section of the poem, Ova seems destined to be alienated in her geographic homeland since her father represents Exodus and her mother the restrictive elements of England. Loy presents the kinds of alienation that would later find her an expatriate and emigrant from England. What this means for my study of her work as an autobiography, and, more specifically, as an experimental autobiography, is somewhat complex. From her birth, where Ova emerges as a "clotty bulk of bifurcate fat" (130), to the later section in which Ova's consciousness has "the soul's foreverlasting / opposition / to disintegration" (170), Loy frequently relies on images of fragmentation in order to describe her subjectivity. In *Anglo-Mongrels*, I would argue, just as Loy meditates upon her mixed racial and religious possibilities for subjectivity, she also investigates how nationality shapes her identity. Though she has been associated with American Modernists--this is particularly emphasized by such critics as Kouidis in *Mina Loy: American Modern Poet*--and though Loy herself declared New York the "only modern city," she seems in this poem to make a more deliberate inquiry into the meaning of her "homeland." She associates herself with the geographic liminality that is her father's heritage and that is, furthermore, resistant to the British imperialism that is represented in the figure of the mother.

Due to her transnational migrations up to the time of this poem's composition and publication, Loy cannot be simply described as a citizen of one nation or another. Loy was born in 1882 and raised in London, but between 1900 and 1925 lived variously in

Munich, Florence, New York, Mexico, Berlin, and Paris. Indeed, even among her company of foreigners in Paris, she seemed far more uprooted than the other expatriates. After the publication of *Anglo-Mongrels and the Rose*, Loy would end up in the United States, eventually settling down and becoming a naturalized American citizen, writing patriotic, celebratory poems like "America A Miracle," which may be exemplified by the lines "America, pace-maker / outvying empires / in your enterprise" (227). In the mid-twenties, however, when *Anglo-Mongrels* appeared, Loy was still migratory.

Loy's lack of geographic homeland is mirrored in the poem by Ova's developing sense of alienation throughout the third section. Loy portrays Ova as an inheritor of the emigrant spirit of her father:

> So this child of Exodus
> with her heritage of emigration
> often
> "sets out to seek her fortune"
> in her turn
> trusting to terms of literature
> . . . . . .
> So on whatever day
> she chooses "to run away"
> the very
> street corners of Kilburn
> close in upon Ova
> to deliver her

into the hands of her procreators (171)

The manifestation of Loy's later emigration, her displacement, figures in the poem as Ova's alienation and as the history of emigration that starts the poem with Exodus. Loy's own adult expatriation is thus not foregrounded in her autobiographical *Anglo-Mongrels and the Rose*; however, as a member of the family "EXODI," she is born into a state of cultural liminality as an Anglo-Mongrel (144).

Loy's personal losses prior to the composition of this poem may have compounded her sense of dislocation by adding to her already displaced national, religious, and racial sense of identity. Five years previous to the first appearance of this autobiographical long poem in 1923, Loy had experienced the disappearance and presumed death of her beloved husband and fellow wanderer, the dada writer Arthur Cravan (whose real name was Fabian Lloyd). In addition, her first husband, Stephen Haweis, had taken their adolescent son from the care of his caretaker, against Loy's wishes, to live with him in the Caribbean in 1921, where the child died in 1923. So fifteen years after the loss of her first daughter on her first birthday, Loy lost her second husband, then her son. Loy was left with her two daughters, Joella and Fabienne, one from each marriage. In comparison to lesbian women writers such as her friends Gertrude Stein and Djuna Barnes (Barnes included Loy as the sole heterosexual character "Patience Scalpel" in her *Ladies Almanack*), then, Loy may not appear marginalized due to her sexuality.

Loy was never forced to leave her country, but according to her biography, and apparent in her autobiographical *Anglo-Mongrels*, is the sense that she did not feel at home there, with either the maternal or the paternal sides of her parentage. Clearly, Ova desires escape from the recurring humiliations to which she is subjected by both parents:

She has left behind her forever

Liar whatever

it is

and Japanese fishes

She decides to travel

a hand upon her shoulder

jolts her

with mocking laughter

bolts her

to smoulder

once more

behind the door (167)

Ova, still a child, is not allowed to leave, and is once more described as restrained within the poem. Susan Stanford Friedman, when describing H.D., captures the sense of "alienation" with which I describe Loy's state, and uses it to describe the "exile" from which artists create: "an artist's survival depends upon an internally imposed exile--upon, in other words, alienation--the state of being alien, that is, foreign, outside, exiled from belonging to the larger *communitas* of family, religion, and nation--to which we might add class, sex, and race" (Exile 88). Rather than calling Loy an "exile," however, I prefer to describe her simply and more accurately as an "expatriate." Her adult migrancy is prefigured in the alienation of the character Ova.

II. Lands of Cultural Imaginations

Loy's allusions to lands that have import to the cultural imagination of the early twentieth century map a fantastic topography that exists beneath the surface of the more explicit expressions of alienation and emigration throughout her autobiographical long poem. Many of the literary or cultural works to which Loy alludes involve an element of fantasy. More often than not, this fantastic element is that of another, often imaginary, land. Though each reference differs in significance and frequency in the poem, there are similarities that bind the allusions that appear in *Anglo-Mongrels and the Rose*. These places resonate in the imagination, due to, in some cases, biblical, poetic, or ill repute. Places like the Promised Land, Swift's Lilliput, the garden of *Romance of the Rose*, and Lewis Carroll's *Wonderland* all participate in a vision of an alternate geography and, concurrently, of an alternate society.

The title of my thesis, "'The Mongrel-Girl of Noman's Land': Mina Loy's *Anglo-Mongrels and the Rose* as Autobiography," quotes from a significant section of the poem that perfectly emblematizes this imaginary place. To take the title of the section, Ova has "Opposed Aesthetics" in contrast with her environment:

> So did the mongrel-girl
> of Noman's land
> coerce the shy
> Spirit of Beauty
> from excrements and physic (143)

It is with "Noman's land" that Loy associates herself and, equally important, from this place that she finds her art: in "excrements and physic," as I discussed in the previous chapter (143). It is, similarly, a resonant place since it is simultaneously real and imaginary. Geographically, it exists, but has been renamed as a result of historical circumstances. Also, in Loy's appropriation, there is another level of meaning that inserts itself: she inhabits "Noman's land" as a woman. The historical significance and symbolism of no man's land are why I refer to it as a place of the "cultural imagination." The liminality of place and name of "Noman's Land" offer a dynamic space in which places can exist more profoundly and symbolically within the cultural imagination than they do in reality.

The reference to the Great War's no man's land provides many rich denotations. By conflating her birthplace of England with "Noman's land," a double exclusion of her national heritage is effected. The England where she was born is replaced by the image of the muddy, forlorn, war-torn land of another nation. Ova is not a child of England; rather, she represents the expatriate Loy, a citizen of "Noman's land," an uninhabitable place named by reputation rather than legislation, filled with mud and carnage. As Gilbert and Gubar attest, "World War I virtually completed the Industrial Revolution's construction of anonymous dehumanized man. . . . he was no man, an inhabitant of the inhumane new era and a citizen of the unpromising new land into which this war of wars had led him" (259). By associating herself as well with no man's land, then, not only does Loy thus refer to the war, but she also refers to the historical forces that resulted in the war: forces that are, in part, represented in allegorical form by her parents, as I discussed in the previous chapter.

Appropriately, *Anglo-Mongrels and the Rose* begins with allusions to the Bible's Old Testament with "Exodus" as the name of both the first part of the poem and the character who represents her father. Loy's genesis is thus mapped over a culturally understood and accepted biblical lineage. "Exodus," the first section of the poem, which chronicles her father's emigration to England, alludes primarily to the stories of the Bible's Old Testament. When describing her great-grandfather and grandfather, for instance, Loy writes,

> Of his riches
> a Patriarch
> erected a synagogue
> for the people
>
> His son
> looked upon Lea
> of the people
> she sat in Synagogue
> her hair long as the Talmud
>
> her tamarind eyes ...
> and disinherited begat this Exodus (111)

Such references to Loy's heritage suggest the lands, Promised and otherwise, that are named in the Bible's Genesis and Exodus.

Indeed, the very first lines of the poem allude to the birth of Moses that starts the Bible's Book of Exodus, in which his mother "[w]hen she could hide him no longer . . . got a papyrus basket for him, and plastered it with bitumen and pitch; she put the child in it and placed it among the reeds on the bank of the river" (Exo. 2.3). Similarly, Exodus of *Anglo-Mongrels and the Rose* is described as

> having leapt from the womb
>
> eighteen years ago and grown
>
> neglected along the shores of the Danube
>
> on the Danube in the Danube (111)

Although Loy does not make the Exodus character's life entirely parallel that of Moses, there are certain similarities. For instance, in the Book of Exodus, God appears to Moses and tells him of the Promised Land:

> I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them up and out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey. (Exo. 3.7-8)

In the poem, Exodus rejects the servitude to his step-father, under whom he is apprenticed and abused, which "moves Exodus to emigrate" (112). Exodus, however, arrives in England rather than the Promised Land.

The attention to the books that deal with the exodus of the people of Israel reinforces the effect of alienation that is felt throughout the poem in the references to Exodus's displacement and Ova's longing to travel:

> sharpened and blunted he

bound for his unformulate

conception of life

makes for the harbor

and the dogged officer of Destiny

kept Exodus

and that which he begat

moving along (114-15)

Through references to Israel, to Moses, and the suggestion of a "Promised Land," Loy emphasizes her father's Jewish heritage. This is also in keeping with typical Victorian autobiographical writings since, as Heather Henderson indicates, "the stories of Moses and Job, Jesus and Paul, provided models on which autobiographers could build, shaping their own life stories to emphasize significant parallels" (3-4). This paralleled the work of typological exegesis, which "stressed the parallels between distant events (Jonah swallowed by a whale and Christ descended into Hell), discovering patterns of repetition in order to connect particular occurrences to a larger framework of religious and historical significance" (Henderson 5). The Biblical allusions that appear throughout the autobiographical long poem, particularly in the descriptions of Exodus and Ova, while phrased in free verse, would have been familiar territory for readers of the period.

These references, however, also refer to the political situation of both the time that is described--the late nineteenth century--and the time of composition--the early 1920s. The attention to the Bible and to the lands of the Bible also have an interesting political background since, when this poem was composed in the 20s, the political atmosphere surrounding what would become the nation of Israel was in upheaval as the British Prime

Minister was in the midst of negotiating Palestine's transformation. This doubling of histories adds particular salience to the political possibilities for the readings of Jewish history into the biography of Exodus and the autobiography of Ova since this period saw the rise of anti-Semitism and the simultaneous move towards establishing the nation of Israel. Loy draws from cultural imaginings of the nascent state of Israel that were politically relevant and also reflective of her split religious upbringing.

Other allusions to culturally resonant literatures are less prevalent throughout the entire poem than are the allusions to the Bible, but their function is no less relevant to my emphasis on and understanding of the lands of the cultural imaginations. There are hints of other literatures such as the allusions to *Gulliver's Travels*, the Rabelaisian language that is used to describe Colossus, the references to *Romance of the Rose* and *Alice in Wonderland*, and the similarities in structure and theme to Thomas Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus*. Taken separately, the sources listed here do not seem to bear any resemblance to one another. Collectively, however, a similar trope appears, that of an "other" land or philosophy. While I would not go so far as to use the term "utopic," for this denotes a variety of symbolic references that do not apply in all cases to Loy's work, there is a sense of "fantasy" in all the works to which Loy alludes. By using the works listed here, as she has done similarly with no man's land and the Biblical allusions, Loy emphasizes the role of the imagination in creating alternative societies. What is also noteworthy is that, in these cases, much of the works are allegorically satirical rather than utopic. Loy's allusions to these works, while subtle, nevertheless creates a fantastic topography that adds to the satirical direction of the allegory with which she treats her life and the lives of her parents.

At the start of the poem when Loy describes Exodus resting during his journey, she uses the name "Man-Mountain," which the Lilliput citizens had called Gulliver:

> An insect from an herb
> errs on the man-mountain
> imparts its infinitesimal tactile stimulus
> to the epiderm to the spirit
> of Exodus
> stirring the anaesthetized load
> of racial instinct frustrated
> impulse infantile impacts with unreason
> on his unconscious (113)

This insect wakes the sleeping Exodus,

> sharpened and blunted he
> bound for his unformulate
> conception of life
> makes for the harbor (114)

These comparisons of Exodus with Swift's Gulliver suggest the various aspects of Swift's social satire from which Loy draws in her own allegorical depiction of Exodus. Like Gulliver, he is also an outsider and a traveller. Similarly, Loy's persona Ova will later share this alienated and migrant spirit as her "consciousness . . . makes for the / magnetic horizon of liberty" (170).

The alternate societies that are depicted in *Gulliver's Travels* are examples of what I call "lands of the cultural imagination." Lilliput and the other lands of Swift's tales

were common knowledge to Loy and her contemporaries. As such, these alternate places were part of a cultural vocabulary for the period. A reference to Exodus as the "man-mountain" in her poem would therefore place a British contemporary reader in the perspective of a foreigner, through the eyes of Exodus. Exodus, however, is an outsider:

> The spiritual tentacles of vanity
> that each puts out towards the culture
> of his epoch knowing not how to find
> and finding not contact he has repealed
> to fumble among his guts (119)

Loy suggests that the "exile / mechanism" (119) of Exodus is to become a hypochondriac, to focus on his body. Swift, too, uses physical difference to emphasize the outsider status of Gulliver as he visits alternate societies. Thus, with a simple reference to *Gulliver's Travels*, Loy underscores the migrancy and alienation that accompanies the portrayal of her father as Exodus and herself as Ova.

The second section of *Anglo-Mongrels and the Rose*, "English Rose," describes the meeting of Exodus and Alice / Ada by alluding to *The Romance of the Rose*. Indeed, the final lines of the first section introduce the next with a direct reference to this medieval romance:

> Exodus knows
> no longer father
> or brother
> or the God of the Jews
> it is his to choose

finance or

Romance of the Rose (120-21)

Within the second section, then, Loy's mother is presented allegorically as the "English Rose." This is evident even at the start:

Early English everlasting

quadrate Rose

paradox-Imperial

trimmed with some travestied flesh

tinted with bloodless duties dewed

with Lipton's teas (121)

Loy's mother thus not only represents the antiquated ideas of romance that are associated with stereotypical ideas of the Victorian era, but also the late nineteenth century British imperial attitudes.

To be brief, I will leave out an extended examination of Loy's use of *The Romance of the Rose* and simply note the effect of the allusion, as I did with *Gulliver's Travels*. In *The Romance of the Rose*, the Dreamer tells the story of his vision and the courtly seduction of the Rose. As seen above, Loy's poem begins with the sleeping Exodus. Similarly, *The Romance of the Rose* contains the story of the encounter of the Rose within the dream vision of the Dreamer, who imagines waking by the river. In describing the meeting of Exodus and the English Rose, Loy alludes to the entry of the Dreamer into the Garden of Mirth:

And Jehovah strikes

through the fetish

of the island hedges--

Exodus

who on his holiday

(induced

by the insidious pink

of Albion's ideal)

is looking for a rose (122)

As *The Romance of the Rose* shifts from the more idealized portion written by Guillaume de Lorris to the section attributed to Jean de Meun, there is a move from courtly love to "scholastic love" (Dunn xvii). In *The Romance of the Rose*, the type of satire that is directed towards women in Jean de Meun's portion of the poem parallels the contempt that Loy shows for the conventional role of a wife in marriage and the ideology of a society that would both demand and accept such subjugation.

By alluding to *The Romance of the Rose*, Loy once more makes a reference to a place that exists as an allegorical representation. The "garden" that the Dreamer enters within his dream vision is described in paradisal terms. In this garden, the Dreamer becomes the Lover and falls in love with the Rose. What is important for me, however, is the context of the imaginary land that is suggested through the invocation of the medieval garden. In Loy's poem, however, the Dreamer becomes "This Hebrew" and the allegorical dream landscape becomes the exilic English landscape from the outsider's perspective:

Amorphous meeting

in the month of May

This Hebrew

culled by Cupid on a thorn

of the rose

lays siege

to the thick hedgerows

where she blows

on Christian Sundays (123-24)

The medieval use of the garden in dream visions has a specific allegorical and mythic meaning that Loy draws upon in her own allegorical portrait of her parents. As with *Gulliver's Travels*, she alludes to an imaginary place that is rich in signification for an audience that would be familiar with such tropes.

In a similar way, by calling the mother Alice, Loy refers to *Alice in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass*, which contain, once more, literary dream worlds with satirical and allegorical meaning. Though Alice is only used once, as she is called Ada after her marriage to Exodus, the reference to Lewis Carroll's "Alice" does not seem to be a misplaced association since Loy has made this reference elsewhere. In a later article on the abstract art of Joseph Cornell, Loy writes of surrealism that its "theoretical contrivance for sumersaulting reasons into an 'Alicism' world of topsy-turvy logic greatly entertained me" (301). Loy's reference to her mother in the poem as Alice fits into the allegorical framework of Exodus's love for the "Rose":

Alice the gentile

Exodus the Jew

after a few

feverish tiffs

and reparations

chiefly conveyed in exclamations---

a means of expression

modified by lack of experience---

unite their variance

in marriage (126)

Once Exodus has met the Rose, she becomes Alice; after marriage, she becomes an "abstracted Ada" (127). In *Alice in Wonderland*, Alice had mused, "[b]ut if I'm not the same, the next question is, 'Who in the world am I?' . . . I'm sure I'm not Ada . . . for her hair goes in such long riglets, and mine doesn't go in ringlets at all" (37). The scientific method that Alice attempts to use to determine her identity thus becomes part of Loy's satire of marriage. Even Carroll's "topsy-turvy logic" is further abstracted; in Loy's world, Alice is not only not sure that she is not Ada, but becomes an "abstracted Ada." Since Ada is the Hebrew equivalent for Alice, it is an appropriate transformation of name for Alice once she marries Exodus (Muller, Self 14). Here, too, a literature that contains fantastic elements is used, thereby emphasizing the "other-world" aspect of Loy's poem that allows for the re-naming and re-negotiation of identity.

Indeed, the possibilities for re-naming and re-negotiating identity in fantastic autobiographic writing had already been established in 1833 by Thomas Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus*. In the final portion of Loy's *Anglo-Mongrels and the Rose*, there is a return to

the story of Exodus with the section "The Social Status of Exodus," but he is now called the "Tailor":

> And there rose another
>
> greater than Jehovah
>
> The Tailor
>
> the stitches of whose seams
>
> he is unworthy to unloose (174)

As Melita Schaum notes, Loy makes many references to *Sartor Resartus*: "Both in Carlyle's penultimate chapter on 'Tailors' and in this final section of *Anglo-Mongrels*, the figure of the Tailor is at first vilified, emasculated, and ethnically stereotyped, then deified --for Carlyle ironically and redemptively, for Loy diabolically " (274). Even though *Sartor Resartus* does not offer the same fantastic geography or dream visions that are present in the other allusions, there is an element of fantastic philosophy that is in keeping with the other works. Here, as in the other "lands of the cultural imagination," the alternate philosophy that is at the centre of the story is explained. In this case, it is the thinking of the fictional Herr Diogenes Teufelsdrockh, whose ideas are presented by a fictional editor: Teufelsdrockh's "clothes philosophy" suggests that everything "that man has woven for himself must in time become merely 'old clothes'; the work of his thought, like that of his hands, is perishable; his very highest symbols have no permanence or finality" (Hudson v, xiii). While Carlyle's spiritual autobiography is also, like Loy's, partly satirical, there are many similar elements in the autobiographical explication of the authors' growth, education, religious instruction, illumination, and final retrospection. As in the other cases, Loy's allusions to *Sartor Resartus* emphasize her dissatisfaction with

the Victorian and imperialist society in which she grew up and her continual focus on alternative possibilities for thinking and being.

Throughout *Anglo-Mongrels and the Rose*, Loy anticipates her adult departure from England. Her alienation from the society in which she grew up is evident in her identification with her father as Exodus or the Tailor. Her autobiography takes its sources in the fantastic landscapes of the various literatures that offer alternate societies, ideologies, and philosophies. Such allusions, when combined with Biblical allusions, suggest the symbolic, allegorical, and, ultimately, mythical level of Loy's autobiography. She writes her autobiography as an expatriate from England, living away from her homeland after the close of the Great War. By writing only about her parents and her childhood, Loy confines herself to the geographic and chronological space of Victorian England. Nevertheless, the alienation and the allusions throughout the poem express the artist's impulse to migrate. This impulse is evident in the poetry in terms of Loy's explicit proclamations of Ova's determination to travel as well as the allusions to other literatures.

> The lonely peering eye
> of humanity
> looked into the Néant---
> and turned away
>
> Ova's consciousness
> impulsive to commit itself to justice
> (to arise and walk
> its innate straight way

out of the accidence of circumstance)

collects the levirate chattels
of its will
and makes for the
magnetic horizon of liberty
with the soul's foreverlasting
opposition
to disintegration (170)

In *Culture and Imperialism*, Said discusses the implications of the "other" nineteenth-century alternative to the narrative of disillusionment (227). He critiques the triumphalism of such works that reinforce the positivity that surrounded notions of Empire and imperialism. I contend that part of the effect of Loy's poem is to play with such ideas of final triumph in geographic colonization. Instead, we see in this post-war work the true disillusionment in politics that is reflected in Loy's own pseudo-political polemic writings in her "Psycho-Democracy." The end of the narrative here does not see the hero's return home; instead, the poem returns to the alienated Exodus as the Tailor, whose wandering tendencies will be inherited by Ova.

Conclusion

Analyzing Mina Loy's *Anglo-Mongrels and the Rose* primarily as an autobiography has allowed me to focus on three aspects of Loy's poetic exploration of her identity. In the course of this thesis, Loy's philosophical influences, ethnic heritage, and sense of dislocation have been analyzed as elements of her autobiography. Looking first at the poem alongside both the methodology provided by recent autobiography theorists and the contemporaneous intellectual trends that influenced Loy's autobiographical subject, I was then able to focus more particularly on the identity politics of "mongrelism" that resulted from Loy's racial and religious identity. Finally, I addressed the issue of Loy's alienation and the expression of this within the poem in terms of the ways that she uses allusions to other lands and the use of the trope of migrancy. This long poem is worthy of such lengthy discussion, and demands further analysis. Among other positions, Loy's Ova performs the developing consciousness that must negotiate, though perhaps never resolve, the contradictory identity that comes with her parentage and double heritage of English and Jewish cultures. Ova is Loy's abstracted self-portrait, which fragments and multiplies in order to transcend attempts to mirror surface reality in self-representation. In so doing, this poem attempts to reveal the inner consciousness of the subject. Loy thus applies Bergson's philosophy in her poetic autobiographical depiction of her ethnically hybrid and geographically displaced self.

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