

Verses and Beyond: The Antipodean Poetry of Lola Ridge

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1 Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, America

white sea-foam in the schooner's trail

Sometime between 1902 and 1905 Lola Ridge submitted a manuscript of 46 poems to AG Stephens, literary editor of the Sydney Bulletin, who was bringing out books by promising Australian writers under the imprint of the magazine. Ridge published 14 poems and a short story in the Bulletin between October 1901 and February 1905 but she was not Australian and the poems sent to Stephens begin the job of uncovering a trans-Tasman background that is in many ways typical of the era when the West Coast of the South Island of New Zealand was still easier to reach from Melbourne and Sydney than via the transalpine routes from Canterbury or Otago. This investigation sets out to find the antipodean poet Lola Ridge and to connect her with the American Modernist Lola Ridge who came to prominence in the late 1910s and early 1920s then faded from view in the 1930s. By the time of her death in New York City in 1941, Ridge's work was thoroughly unfashionable and it is only in the last few years that her story and her poetry have come to light again as literary scholars reassess the contribution of politically engaged writers through the first part of the twentieth century. Scholarship knows a version of Ridge's Australian sojourn, based mostly on what she told early biographers; but we know very little about the New Zealand life and work she left behind in 1903 as she crossed the Tasman and entered the literary and artistic milieu of Sydney. Mobility and determination were Ridge's signatures, and the manuscript of poems

that arrived on AG Stephens' desk was part of a plan for recognition beyond the confines of the New Zealand backblocks.¹

Lola Ridge was born Rose Emily Ridge at Dolphin's Barn in Dublin, Ireland, 12 December 1873 and known variously as Rose, Rosa, Rosalie, Dolores and Lola. The birth certificate lists her father's occupation as 'medical student' and from Dublin street directories of the day it would seem that her mother and father, Joseph Henry and Emma Ridge (nee Reilly), were living with maternal relatives in the Reilly household at 1 St James' Terrace when their daughter was born. She was brought to Australia by Emma Ridge in 1877 when she was three years old. Nothing more is heard of Joseph Henry Ridge, nor is it clear when mother and daughter travelled on to New Zealand. The solo Mrs Ridge had a married sister in Australia and married again herself when she reached New Zealand; her new partner was a miner named Donald McFarlane. They were married September 1880 in Hokitika on the West Coast and Rose Emily, now known as Rosalie McFarlane, grew up on the nearby goldfields that were the reason for the town's existence. She wrote and painted (there are poems published in local newspapers from 1892), and was almost 22 when she married Peter Webster 6 December 1895 at the house of 'Mrs D McFarlane' in Hokitika. The bride, whose present and usual residence was given as Hokitika, described herself as a painter. The groom was a 25 year-old miner, born in nearby Kaniere and resident in Kaniere Forks, a mining settlement some 13 km south-east of Hokitika. His father was James Webster, also a miner, and his mother was Margaret (nee Sanderson). Kaniere, 7 km from Hokitika along the river, had been one of the richest West Coast goldfields of the mid-1860s.

Electoral rolls and Post Office directories show that Peter and Rosalie Webster lived at Kaniere Forks, and the poems of the typescript sent to Stephens reference Hokitika, Kaniere Forks and environs. A first child, Paul, was born 9 December 1896 and died two weeks later of bronchitis; a second, Keith, was born 21 January 1900. At some point the marriage foundered. Rose Webster left the Coast and went with her mother and surviving son to Sydney, arriving from Wellington 11 November 1903 by the SS Mokoia. Soon the little family was living on Sydney's North Shore and Ridge told Stephens in a biographical note for the Bulletin 27 January 1904 that she was studying art and working at the Julian Ashton

¹ Ridge's literary executor Elaine Sproat is preparing a full-length biography and a collected edition of her work. For this essay I have drawn on bio-bibliographical material by Kunitz (1931), Guttmann (1971), Quartermain (1993), Drake (1997), Berke (2000, 2001), Allego (2002), Daly (2002), supplementing it with documentary record from Australasian sources (Leggott 2006, 2013). The picture is still incomplete and I am grateful to Ms Sproat for updated biographical and bibliographic data, and for reading the essay in draft. Thanks also to Peter Quartermain who first alerted me to Ridge's antipodean background.

Academy in the city. An annotation in Stephens' hand reads: 'Asked for her married name to be omitted,' which was not an unusual request at a time when pen-names and pseudonymity were prevalent. Ridge continued to write and publish in her new surroundings. Australasian bibliographical sources show that she published mostly as 'Lola' until late 1902 and as 'Lola Ridge' from April 1903, but she was known as Rose or Rosa Webster to her editors. There are poems and prose indexed under Ridge and Webster, but with the exception of one author-illustrated short story and a small number of drawings, records of painting or illustrative work from the period have yet to be retrieved.²

Ridge left Sydney and the southern hemisphere for good in 1907 when she embarked for the North American West Coast shortly after the death of her mother, aged 74, on 2 August that year. She took her seven year old son with her, travelled under an assumed name and subtracted ten years from her age on arrival in California. Rose and Keith Webster disappeared as the San Francisco Overland Monthly of March 1908 introduced 'Lola Ridge, a young Australian poet and artist, who is not without fame in her own land.' (298) By late 1908 Ridge was in New York settling into Greenwich Village and the beginning of an American career that combined anarcho-feminist politics and an interest in educational reform on the one hand with free verse aesthetics and an increasingly mystical utopianism on the other. She knew and admired Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman, designing a cover for Goldman's 1908 pamphlet *Patriotism: A Menace to Liberty* and contributing twice (1909 and 1911) to the radical monthly *Mother Earth*. She was an early supporter of the communist revolution in Russia, published frequently in *The New Republic* and was arrested in 1927 with other literary figures protesting the execution of anarchists Sacco and Vanzetti in Boston. Ridge joined the New York Ferrer Association as it was formed in 1910 and edited the first issue of *The Modern School*, a journal dedicated to educational reforms advocated by Francisco Ferrer, a Catalan radical executed in 1909 by Spanish authorities fearful of the influence his unconventional *Escuela Moderna* was spreading in Barcelona.

Lola Ridge met fellow free-thinker David Lawson (1886-1980) at the Ferrer Association in 1910. The couple left New York City in 1912 and lived variously in upstate New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio and Missouri, settling also for a time in New Orleans and moving to Detroit in 1915. In September 1917 Ridge returned to New York; Lawson followed in

² Marshall (85) has listings of Bulletin contributions 1901-07 and the Australian Literature database adds publication from *The Australian Town and Country Journal* and *The Lone Hand*. Line drawings by Ridge accompany her short story 'The Trial of Ruth,' *New Zealand Illustrated Magazine* 8.5 (Aug 1903): 343-48. Elaine Sproat has found eight drawings from the Australasian period (including a self-portrait) and five later works. (Sproat 12 Aug 2012)

December and they were married 22 October 1919. Lawson records that when he and Ridge reached New Orleans on their southern travels they sent for Lola's son, who was living out West. (Lawson 199) This is a rare public mention of the erstwhile Keith Webster, who would then have been in his early teens.³

Sometime between 1913 and 1917 Ridge encountered Imagist poetics and made them her own, anticipating by a decade or so the blend with Leftist politics that produced Objectivist writing in the late 1920s. In 1918, after the five-year absence from New York that is also the timeframe for her adoption of Imagist techniques, she published 'The Ghetto,' a free verse sequence about conditions on the Lower East Side in the Hester Street Jewish community. It was the title poem of the collection published that year and led to appearances in Harriet Monroe's *Poetry* (Chicago) and Alfred Kreymborg's *Others* magazine. The Ghetto is the work for which Ridge is primarily remembered, but it is her second book, *Sun-Up and Other Poems* (1920), also from the radical publisher BW Huebsch, that concerns us here. Its title poem, another free verse sequence, is a vivid evocation of the years between three and perhaps six of a child who crosses the ocean with her mother to begin a new life in an unnamed but clearly antipodean setting.

I read 'Sun-Up' trying to determine whether it was Hokitika's sandhills the child was looking at, or some location on Sydney's North Shore. Snakes and bluegums tip the balance in favour of Australia, but it is worth noting that the world of the poem is unconcerned with names; it creates a child's consciousness and the beginnings of a poet's cosmogony. It is also a tour de force and in this part of the world it needs to stand alongside Ursula Bethell's sequence of poems 'By the River Ashley,' the poetic prose of Katherine Mansfield's 'Prelude,' 'At the Bay' and 'The Doll's House' and Robin Hyde's sequence 'Houses by the Sea.' All were composed in the 1920s and 30s; all recreate childhood experience in modes the adult woman artist develops decades after the narrative time evoked, letting us in on history that is about remembering what has been forgotten or dismissed. Bethell's 1870s and 80s, like Ridge's, escape Victorian rigidities; Mansfield's 1890s glow with empathetic detail; Hyde's 1910s are gritty and difficult. We listen and we recognise the psychological portraiture being undertaken, as when Ridge's protagonist constructs a view of heaven and hell from the world in front of her and its interlocutions with a life of the imagination:

³ Research by Elaine Sproat has brought to light Keith Webster's subsequent history, and contact with his daughters Gloria and Gladys Bernand-Wehner of Santiago, Chile, was made in early 2011.

You can see the sandhills from our new room.

Butterflies

live in the sandhills

and lizards

and centipedes.

If you keep very still

lizards will think you a stone

and run over your lap.

Butterflies' liveries

are scarlet and black.

They drive chariots in air.

People in the chariots

are pale as dew –

you can see right through them –

but the chariots

are made of gold of the sun.

They go up to heaven

and never catch fire.

There are green centipedes

and brown centipedes

and black centipedes,

because green and brown and black

are the colors in hell's flag.

Centipedes

have hundreds of feet

because it is so far from hell

to come up for air.

Centipedes

do not hurry.

They are waiting for the last day

when they will creep over the false prophets

who will have their hands tied.

(Sun-Up 16-17)

The authoring child constructs but also deconstructs, and learns that the world may delete a treasure:

Mama never knew about Jude.
You always wanted to tell her,
but somehow you never did.
You were afraid she'd smile
and say he wasn't real –
that he was only a little dream-boy,
because the grass didn't fall down under his feet....
He is fading now....
He is just lines... like a drawing....
You can see mama in between.
When she moves
she rubs some of him out.

(Sun-Up 36)

But 'Sun-Up,' triumph of the new modes though it is, also points back at the selection sent to AG Stephens and headed up 'Verses by Lola Ridge.' The buried antipodean history beyond the carefully lensed childhood of 'Sun-Up' is on view in 'Verses' and no less interesting for being in metrical, rhyming forms. Ridge's practice is as good as that of her Bulletin peers, and better than many local examples in the newspapers of the day either side of the Tasman. Let us look more closely at the typescript and its contents.

2 The Typescript in the Mitchell Library

sun / spurting up gold / over Sydney, smoke-pale, rising out of the bay

The poems Ridge submitted to Stephens were probably holographs and it was Stephens who had them typed up as a 93-page blueprint for a collection. He was also responsible for the functional but unexciting title under which they appear. A contents list was typed, complete with page numbers and alphabetised by title. It shows that Stephens included revisions of two poems sent by Ridge ('The Flame Flower,' 'Song of the Earth Spirit') because both versions

are present, 'Song of the Earth Spirit' with a typed note below its typed signature: 'I revised these pieces last night & as they seem to sound better am sending you the copy.' ('Verses' 48)

It is a nice touch to hear the poet's conversational voice suddenly through the transcription of the typist, and to realise that the selection was being taken seriously by both Stephens and Ridge. But transcription also raises the question of responsibility for the significant levels of error in the typescript. Was Ridge's handwriting bad? (the typescript has 'moka' for 'smoke,' 'Dolorias' for 'Dolorès,' 'premanted' for 'supplanted'). Is her spelling indifferent or is the typist in error? ('flys,' 'skys,' 'mistical,' 'rythm,' 'spangel,' 'gallexeys'). The typist was following closely an instruction to reproduce everything on the original pages. S/he transcribed as interlinear information what must have been watermarks on some of Ridge's stationery: several manufactures of the British paper-making company HM Greville are noted as if they are part of the poem in which the watermark appears.⁴ Someone, probably Stephens, has scored out the intrusions and left other corrections in the text as well as a pencil note on the title page under Lola Ridge's name: 'Born Dublin, Ireland, 1876 / Came to N.Z. as a child / Three of following pieces / published in Bulletin / Others unpublished / – never collected.' A short distance below is a fainter annotation: 'April 1905.'

It looks as if the poems were on Stephens' desk a long time if we take the first part of the note at face value, because Ridge's third Bulletin publication was 'The Three Little Children' (15 March 1902) when she was still signing herself 'Lola' and still resident in New Zealand. The two earlier contributions, also narrative ballads, were 'A Deserted Diggings: Maoriland' and 'By the Mouth of the Shaft'; both appeared in a section of the Bulletin called 'Bards from the Backblocks.' It is possible that three years passed between the original manuscript submission and the annotation 'April 1905' on the typed up poems, and we should remember that Ridge was a recent arrival on Stephens' horizon as he weighed up the chances of book publication.

Alfred George Stephens selected and edited 11 volumes of poetry and two anthologies in his capacity as head of the Bulletin's book publishing department between 1897 and 1905 (Mackness and Stone), but he did not publish Lola Ridge's 'Verses' though more than half its contents appeared in the Bulletin between 1901 and 1907. It is tempting to think that

⁴ See Davies concerning the HM Greville Company. The seven transcribed watermarks appear as variations on a paper styled 'Super Royal 42th' (or '52th').

Stephens backed off because Ridge was too junior to be worth a book in 1905, rather than because her poetry was insufficiently Australian in its markings. He was after all an exceptional advocate of Australasian writing at a time when it seemed likely that New Zealand would join Australia as a seventh state in the Federation of 1901. During Stephens' Bulletin editorship the proportion of New Zealand contributors increased dramatically and among his papers is a list of 172 authors and artists of Australia and New Zealand with place and date of birth and working pseudonyms, and a compilation of 'Australasia Pen-Names, 1890-1925.' (MLMSS 4937/29) Lola Ridge appears in the latter and her 1904 letter to Stephens is filed in yet another list, 'Autobiographies of 231 Australian and New Zealand Authors and Artists, 1901-1924.' (MLMSS 4937/28)

The proposed volume does not hide its origins, though its west-facing, trans-Tasman character is also pronounced and Ridge's own nomadic history is present in its trajectories. It is not possible to tell who ordered the poems, though Stephens seems to have added the two revisions as the manuscript was typed. The structure of the typescript is coherent and whoever devised it had a clear idea of what the volume represented. From personal lyrics to public address, genre romance, idiosyncratic mythography, station verses and gold mining ballads, 'Verses by Lola Ridge' is a book of predominantly New Zealand poems.

Or rather, it is a work in progress; one stage of the journey caught by the archive as a carbon typescript in Stephens' papers. For there was a second typescript that was in the possession of Ridge's Australian relatives for many years before its disappearance in the 1980s. It too was entitled 'Verses' and dated April 1905, but it contained four more poems than the first typescript and was a later compilation, incorporating handwritten corrections from the earlier document and including only the revised version of 'The Flame Flower.' The second typescript was a top copy, typed on a different machine but its connections with Stephens' typescript are close and it provides confirmation that the volume was retyped at least once more by someone in the Bulletin office.⁵

Stephens too was on the move in the second half of the decade; he left his Bulletin position in October 1906 to set up as an independent literary agent and publisher. When the venture failed he took a job on the Wellington Evening Post in 1907, returning to Australia in 1909.

⁵ Elaine Sproat located the revised typescript of 'Verses by Lola Ridge' and received photocopies of some pages from Kathleen Brooks, the daughter of Ridge's cousin John Edmund Miles Penfold. The revised typescript was 61 pp. All but two of the poems ('Forgive dear heart' and 'Song of the Earth') were carried over from the first typescript. The collection ended with 'The Moon Child' (56-57), 'The Scented Garden' (58-59), 'The Insane' (60) and 'Parted' (61). (Sproat 12 Aug 2012)

Nothing further came of his Ridge typescript. The annotated carbon was eventually bound with two works by John Neilson and his more famous son John Shaw Neilson, a poet whom Stephens published in 1919 as Ridge was achieving her American breakthrough. All three typescripts are entitled 'Verses' and are uniform in their appearance: title page with biographical and publishing notes, alphabetised list of contents, holograph corrections and other editorial marks throughout. They are part of a sequence of manuscript and typescript volumes now in Stephens' papers at the Mitchell Library in Sydney.

3 Love and Pain

the hot sky flames above the bush-line dim

Traversing the 1905 typescript reveals a sense of location that is crucial to Ridge's early poetics and the journey can be made using some excellent cross-references. The 43 poems and three pieces of prose published between 1892 and 1908 in *The Canterbury Times*, *The Bulletin*, *The Otago Witness*, *The New Zealand Illustrated Magazine*, *The Australian Town and Country Journal*, *The Lone Hand* and *the Overland Monthly* provide 'Verses' with a generous sample of textual variation. Whether the published versions are earlier or later than their typescript cousins doesn't matter so much as being able to look at the differences between presentation for publication and what editors actually did with the work. Beyond the Australasian publication lies the poet's American oeuvre, five published collections and 80-plus appearances in periodicals and newspapers, a handful of them reprints from New Zealand and Australian sources. It should come as no surprise to find that Ridge's attention to transnational make-over has a textual equivalent. The 1905 typescript confirms that Lola Ridge was a rewriter par excellence with an acute understanding of the operations of time and place on performance. If something could look or sound better, it was revised and sent out into the world again.

Location, then. Lola Ridge's typescript is a textual Google Earth for its day. We come into it and feel the zoom lens adjust, a series of frames over terrain which is both strange and familiar, here and there, now and then. We enter the space of the text that is signalling attention. Forget (but remember) distances, stand in the Kaniere valley on a summer evening and look west:

At Sun-Down

The bush is leaning like a tired child,
Her dear head nestling on the breast of night,
Fast glooming now above the pine-girt height;
The strife of cities & their tumult wild –
I seem to hear it as a far-off fight.

Beneath the flutter of the rising stars,
Beyond the ratas where the red sun dips
Are bays & galaxies of fair white ships;
A dull surf booms upon the distant bars –
The cities call me with a million lips!

The Bush bends o'er me with her wond'rous, long
Wind-loosened hairs on my unquiet breast,
Whose barred thoughts burning to confront the test,
With glowing impulse & endeavour strong
To rise & answer when they call the rest!

The night is coming, & the shadows trail
Like wasted lives across the forest belt;
The red clouds battle on a crimson veldt,
Like storied heroes – how they charge & fail!
And strange forms mingle as they fade & melt.

Ah God: the strife for a remembered name!
I hear the turbulent, dull roar, the din
Of that wide vortex drawing all things in
About its circle to the crest of fame,
Some rise to forfeit & some stoop to win.

The upward shadow of the broad earth meets
The sky-line, golden as a young life's rim,

All dark beneath but bubbles at the brim:
My heart is throbbing for the roar of streets –
The cloister of the bush is screened & dim.

(‘Verses’ 2-3)

This is the ground zero of Lola Ridge’s early poetry, a textual and imaginative act underwritten by a sequence of geographical particulars. Stand here and everything fits into place. No need to explain that the pines on the ridge are kahikatea and that it’s Melbourne and Sydney the speaker can ‘hear’ in the boom of surf on the infamous Hokitika bar. No need to explain the congruence of red sky and flowering rata because the emotional correlatives are clear. The flats and terraces of the river valley occur in other poems (‘Dead Pine Shadows,’ ‘To an Old Playfellow’) and strong Coast weather delays a lover’s arrival from the bush:

I await you: hath the rain-drift,
Sweeping fiercely from the sea,
Met you out across the plain-drift –
Barred you, blown you back from me?

(‘Waiting,’ Bulletin 28 Jan 1904: 3)⁶

Other poems at the beginning of ‘Verses’ lose no time putting the eastern sky-line on view (‘Dawn on the Mountains,’ ‘The Hour of Dawn’) and establishing the mix of grimness and compassion the land seems to offer those who listen (‘Under Song,’ ‘The Bush’). The mountain Tuhua and the lake which feeds the Kaniere river are mentioned in ‘A Song of the Hills’ and become the setting for a temporary bargain struck between body and solitary poetic soul in ‘Lake Kaniere.’ Looking further, a range of characters people the poems, some of them individualised like the invalid Alice, blonde and beautiful on her crutches in a hospital ward, with only the ‘dead-house’ to look forward to: ‘She touches the band of my ring; // “I’ll never wear one on my finger – / Not that it will matter for much!”’ (‘The Incurable’) Other figures play out community narratives of pathos (‘The Three Little Children,’ ‘By the Mouth of the Shaft’), of lurid romance (‘When the Moon was in Eclipse,’

⁶ ‘Waiting’ is itemised in the contents pages of the Mitchell Library ‘Verses’ (56-57) but the entry has been crossed out and these two pages are missing from the typescript. The poem was present in the revised typescript (32).

‘The Flame Flower,’ ‘The Last Lover’) or of vaudeville comedy (‘Helblatavesky’s Cow,’ ‘Laura’s Holiday,’ ‘The Chronicles of Sandy Gully as Kept by Skiting Bill’). Nobody in the poems is specifically identifiable but a strong impression emerges that any or all of their stories could be found by reading back numbers of *The West Coast Times*, *The Grey River Argus* – or for that matter *The Geelong Advertiser*, *The Ballarat Times* and *The Armidale Express*.

The geo-historical coordinates of Ridge’s poems add resonance when recognisable but are in no way limiting when they aren’t. At their broadest reach they become freely Australasian; sheep run, country town or gold mine either side of the Tasman, exemplified by the deletion of ‘Maoriland’ from the title of ‘A Deserted Diggings’ for its appearance in the typescript. At their most specific, there are pleasures to be had on a sliding scale of local knowledge, as in ‘The Chronicles of Sandy Gully.’ When SP Snares, self-styled mining expert from the city with oiled hair and a forty-acre shirt front, decrees that Bill and Sam’s doctored claim is to be floated in a company called Te Katipo Extended, his partners still think they are in charge of the webs of deceit. They take Snares’ word for it that the katipo is just ‘a little spider that does a little weave.’ Which it is but if he had called it a redback instead, the partners might have realised they were up against a master weaver with a lethal bite. Makes a small sticky web to snare beetles and other crawling insects, as the identification guide says, extending the fun to be had with the poem’s inferences about the ignorance of Australian diggers. (Clunie)

What is to be seen of Lola Ridge’s own history in ‘Verses’? Let’s call it autography, the writing of a self or a series of selves, a term that foregrounds construction. Following hard on the conundrum of the bush cloister in ‘At Sun-Down’ comes ‘On the Track.’ (‘Verses’ 12) It remembers a lovers’ fight (‘Oh! grey were the great bush spaces, / That flung us our wild words back.’) and the parting that followed: ‘I laughed when I heard you sigh it – / “Good-by,” but no word I said, / The blood in my veins ran riot; / I stayed not your parting tread.’ Back in town and unable to sleep, the speaker watches breakers scythe onto a shaven beach and excoriates sunbeams because they once shimmered off a tangle of cones caught in her unbound hair. (The *Bulletin* version is more explicit: ‘For what is their tinsel spangle / To the molten gold they were? / When you strove with the twisted tangle / Of pine-cones in my hair?’). A painful dream of meeting and passing without a word on the sunlit track ‘known to two’ is the poem’s final torment. It is neatly replayed by the short piece that was Ridge’s next contribution to the *Bulletin* three weeks later:

Love and Pain

Know ye not my name is Pain?

I am Love's twin brother.

No art o' thine can break the chain

That binds us to each other.

I let my brother lead the way,

And then his keys I borrow;

Fond heart, you oped to Love to-day,

You ope to Pain to-morrow!

(Bulletin 22 Oct 1903: 13)

An author isn't usually in charge of the order (or timing) of magazine appearances, so the soap-operatic trail of Ridge's poems through the Bulletin September-October 1903 may be coincidental. But the same knot of romantic agony is orchestrated in 'Verses': after 'On the Track' in the typescript comes 'In the Shadow,' where the speaker has given everything for love, forgetting even 'the voices calling – / Calling to me through the air, / For the warm clasp of your fingers, / And your lips upon my hair.' She continues: 'I forgot the pride of lineage, / I forsook the hope of fame – / I'd ha' left the road to heaven / For the magic of your name.' How literally to read implied detail through dramatic convention? According to her New Zealand marriage certificate Ridge's father was a doctor, and plenty of lineal pride seems to have been invoked over the years to cope with the circumstances she and her mother found themselves in after leaving Dublin. Now it seems that being buried in the bush is too high a price to pay for acquiring the beloved's name when 'lips are turned away' and eyes grow 'cold & callous.' He stands accused of not understanding the depth of her love: 'If you loved but as the many, / And my soul you never knew; / All my very life & being / Was but one long thought of you.'

In the narrative sequence of the typescript the speaker leaves, and sends back a version of leaving entitled 'Think of Me Not with Sadness.' But here we will take the Bulletin version because it was published a year after the date on the title page of the 'Verses' typescript, by which time Ridge had remodelled and retitled the poem as a dialogue, doubling the length of

the lines, adding speaker identification and an antiphon in which the deserted one is given a voice:

Parted

THE WOMAN:

Oh, think of me not with sad thoughts bedecked in mourning grey,
But weave ye a woof about me of colors gold and gay;
For if I were all your own, love, we might regret some day.

Streams at their source united have yet diverging flowed,
And mine is the twisted pathway and yours the trampled road:
Who follows uncharted ways, love, alone must bear the load.

In dreaming of me say never – ‘Her love was false and vain
As cloud of a crimson dawning that falls at noon in rain,
As light of a luring mirage that pales upon the plain.’

Think of me with the forest when o’er its ways you see
The sun on the sombre cedars, and flash of bird and bee,
All things that are pure and bright, love, mix with your thoughts of me.

THE MAN:

I dream of you – ’tis sundown, and low a late bird calls;
A slender moon is pacing beyond the forest walls,
And loud amid its boulders the brawling river falls.

I think of you – not sadly, yet with a half-regret,
As of a song remembered whose rhythm haunts me yet –
As of a fairy legend I cannot quite forget;

Your face against the twilight in dusky shadow lies,
And o’er the bush behind her, where home a late bird flies,
A few white stars are shining as cold as wise men’s eyes.

(Bulletin 19 Apr 1906: 40)

She is figurative, ingenuous (this doesn't change from the typescript version); he is measured, cool, wounds (almost) covered over. The poem ties off the story of separation symmetrically, leaving layers of submerged conflict available for analysis in the two speaking positions. In its remodelled form the dialogue is a variation on the old discourse of body and soul that Mansfield and Hyde, among others, reinvented as a complex, sexualised contamination of each other by the binary pair, forever unfinished and unwinnable. The 1906 Ridge acknowledges this with greater sophistication than her 1902-05 counterpart – or perhaps the strategies of provocation are simply different. 'Verses' offers by one turn of a typescript page after 'Think of Me Not With Sadness' the pointed contrast of an address to a childhood comrade from what sounds like the same bush location, detailed and enchanting in its carefully judged nostalgia:

To an Old Playfellow

I remember the far green hill-top,
Where we clung to the rata vines,
And you climbed to the nesting parrots
In the boughs of the Kaurie pines:

And the scent of the tutu bushes
By the bend in the path o'er grown,
Where you wove me a necklace of rushes,
As we sat on the 'Bunyip stone.'

I remember the long bright mornings
When we waded the shallow creeks,
Where the quartz & the mica glittered
In the pools of the stony deeps;

And the day that we roamed the terrace
Mid the tangle of supple vines;
And the tuis sang on the meros
To the locusts' hum in the pines.

But the wind came out of the forest
Like a lost soul's moan in the air,
Till we thought 'twas the great Bush Spirit,
Who would draw us & hold us there;

And the might of our child-hearts failed us
As we fled from the forest door,
With the roar of the pines behind us,
And the known, green flats before.

Shriveled now are the tutu bushes,
That we climbed with our light limbs then;
And the shrine of the hill-side echoes
To the clang of the tools of men:

But the mystical pines lean over,
And their shadows are falling black
Between one on the trampled highway,
And a chum on an old bush track.

(‘Verses’ 15)

This is a different configuration of high road and low road from the one proffered to the lover left behind in the bush (‘And mine is the twisted pathway and yours the trampled road’). Has she mistaken kahikatea for kauri, which doesn't occur naturally on the West Coast; or is kauri an easier word to scan? Otherwise her presentation of indigenous flora and fauna is flawless: the parrots are kaka, the locusts kihikihi (cicada) and the rushes probably raupo. Rata, tutu, supplejack, tui and miro are all recognisable components of the surrounding bush. Mica and quartz glint in the gold-bearing creeks of the valley where the noise of mining machinery will resound. The Bunyip stone is an interesting piece of Australian cross-over, maybe the legacy of diggers from Victoria and New South Wales who named such features as Ballarat Hill and Lake Mudgie in the vicinity of Kaniere and Waimea. (May 194) The ‘great Bush Spirit’ who must be in this context Tane, supreme god of the forest, also sounds Australian. Ridge's knowledge of the Māori tenure of Aotearoa was good enough to reference a Percy Smith-

based version of the early Polynesian navigator Ui-te-Rangiora, ‘with his canoe of dead men’s bones,’ in her essay about the differences between New Zealand and Australian bush. (Lone Hand 1 Dec 1908: 176-77) But perhaps there are times, culturally as well as metrically, when it is expedient to use an Austrazealand register. ‘Bunyip’ does more to signify watery cryptids than ‘taniwha’ (water dragon, guardian of river bends), and it is the conjuring of shared and remembered dread the poet is nosing out beneath the sunny surfaces of the poem. Like the venomous katipo invoked by SP Snares in ‘The Chronicles of Sandy Gully,’ the local alert in this poem operates by means of its Māori name. The cue is tutu, fatal to stock (and circus elephants) who chew its new foliage and to humans eating the seeds of its berries. Country children are still taught not to go near it as the berries ripen. The adult speaker is recalling a series of boundary-tests undertaken by the two children, who are portrayed in equal measure as sweethearts and comrades in arms. In addition to making a comparison with the failed marriage, ‘To an Old Playfellow’ should remind us that the unnamed companion is a prototype for the series of playmates reconstructed in ‘Sun-Up.’ There are the sisters Lizzie and Clara, whose names model an enviable and apparently indissoluble bond:

When it rains
and you are pulling off flies' legs...
mama lets you play houses
with Lizzie and Clara.
Because you are the Only One –
and because Only Ones have to live alone
while sisters stay together,
Lizzie and Clara
give you the dry house
and take the one with the leaking roof.

(Sun-Up 18)

The Only One is attuned to one-on-one bonds, having a lifetime monopoly on her mother’s attention. It is this she seeks to replicate with another – first the much-beaten doll Janie whom she blindfolds and throws in a ditch, then the white-haired boy Jimmie who shows her startling sexual difference on a dare under the flapping sheets of a neighbourhood washing line: ‘Mabel pulls you in the gate and shakes you / and tells you not to tell your mama... / And you wonder / if God has spoiled Jimmie.’ But ‘Sun-Up’'s perfect playmate is Jude, red-

haired and adventurous, with whom the Only One tries to salvage the drowned doll (no luck) and who shares a secret hut built in a field where the barbed wire is down. Jude deserts when the hideously real boy with a whip and servant appears and claims ownership of the field. By 1920 Ridge knew enough about her relations with the world to allegorise the search for the One and Only who is the Only One's longed-for and beaten-off twin. In 'Verses' the search record is concentrated in the numerous takes on love and rage against self and other that follow on from the poems outlined above. There are plenty of clinging hands, pleading eyes and tumult thrust down 'To the padded cell in the soul of me.' ('My Care') Rivers will run to mountain tops and the sun stand still before a final farewell is possible; but (next stanza) hell will freeze over before love ignites again in this particular location: 'When possums mount on moon-shine bars, / And glow-worms hidden in the mine, / Shall leave their caves to mock the stars – / Oh, then my lips shall meet with thine!' ('The Parting') There is something refreshing about that gleam of black humour. Not too far ahead of it chronologically is the political bravado of 'The Martyrs of Hell' which ends:

To the Outlawed of men and the Branded,
Whether hated or hating they fell,
I pledge the devoted, red-handed,
Unflinching heroes of hell!

(Mother Earth 4.2 [Apr 1909]: 34)

4 Preserve, Renew, Invent

her shut heart closes on its hidden things

Location and autography figure strikingly in Ridge's 1905 typescript. The rewriting of remembering may have very short intervals and disclose significant variants, as in the differences between typescript and published versions in the *Bulletin* and other periodicals. Or it may travel the much longer distance between metrical and free verse; more broadly still between nineteenth and twentieth centuries, one life and another. 'And through the uncurtained window / Falls the waste light of stars, / As cold as wise men's eyes . . .' ('The Ghetto') catapults us from Hester Street back to the imagined nightfall in the bush at Kaniere Forks with the stunning force of repetition and the chasms it opens between one time and

place and another. A few lines on in 'The Ghetto' the young men of the tenements are sleepless in the hot summer night; their minds churn ('Wars, arts, discoveries, rebellions, travails, immolations, cataclysms, hates . . . / Pent in the shut flesh'). They twist on their beds:

And they gaze at the moon – throwing off a faint heat –
The moon, blond and burning, creeping to their cots
Softly, as on naked feet...
Lolling on the coverlet... like a woman offering her white body.

Nude glory of the moon!
That leaps like an athlete on the bosoms of the young girls stripped of their linens;
Stroking their breasts that are smooth and cool as mother-of-pearl
Till the nipples tingle and burn as though little lips plucked at them.
They shudder and grow faint.

(The Ghetto 22)

'She is yellow & blond & bare' is the opening line of 'Moon-Struck' in 'Verses,' spoken by the maddened lover for whom the moon is a faded femme fatale, lolling on a mountain rim and leaving at dawn 'With a soul in her strong, white bars, / And a mindless hulk below.'

Sometimes the palimpsest takes a less obvious form. 'Lake Kanieri' is perhaps the most interesting poem of 'Verses' technically speaking because it alone of Ridge's known Australasian work attempts blank verse. An extended metaphor of the beautiful lake as wide-eyed child of its guardian mountain allows the speaker to insert herself on the substitute maternal lap of the lakeshore and hold the world still:

Lake Kanieri

Blue veined & dimpling, dappled in the sun
Lies Lake Kanieri, like a tired child
Wide-eyed, close clinging to the spacious skirts
Of old Tuhua, the big brawny nurse
On whose broad lap I lie. All else is still.

A bird's near whistle is the only sound
That in the silence beats into my brain
Insistent, shrill. Now is no need to serve
Or suffer or regret: it seems life holds
No future & no past for me but this
Sun-lighted mountain & the brooding bush.

Ridge has other peans to the sublime effects of natural surroundings but nothing quite like
this, which sets out to measure (accentually) the systole and diastole of the earth mother:

Nor art nor history nor written page
Could touch me now; it is enough to be
And feel the slow & rhythmic pulse of earth
Beat under me; & see the low red sun
Stoop o'er the massive shoulders of the range.

Then it all pours out as the speaker, calmed by the cradling earth, looks again and
distinguishes orders of suffering and past upheaval that mirror on a giant scale her own
predicament:

Oh, lone, heroic, melancholy Hills!
Your dim, gaunt peaks stand in the after glow
Like Duty, stern, implacable & cold;
Remote from the harsh clamor of the plains,
And murmur of men's cities all unheard.
Oh, still & calm; Oh, pure & wise & strong!
My restless heart from your locked hearts shut out,
Leans on your strength & craves the peace you hold –
Peace born of conflict. Ye old Stoic Hills!
Yield up your secrets. On your furrowed fronts
Are scars of fierce upheavals; in your grave,
Deep breasts what dreams are shut? Ye seem to stand
Like pale, impassive monks, whose chill looks hide
Forbidden memories of clinging lips,
Of passion conquered & of pain repressed

Within their breasts congealed. With outlines dim
The hooded slopes, like meek nuns grouped in prayer,
Kneel in the screened cloister of the bush
Dark robed & secret; & the laughing lake,
Smoothed by the slow, cool fingers of the Dusk,
Has coiled herself to sleep. The light is gone,
Save on those heights where Day, grown weak & old,
Close by the dying embers of the sun
Sits like an old man musing on his past.

(‘Verses’ 6-7)

The lake is suddenly less anthropomorphic coiling herself for sleep; part of the ultimately inscrutable terrain. The scene is otherwise consistent in its human/inhuman figurations. The dying day is an old man by the embers of his fire. The lower slopes are hooded nuns, the tops a group of stone-faced monks as the light fades. Thirty years later Ursula Bethell, who was also a painter and Ridge’s contemporary, observed that the tussocked Cashmere Hills seen in the distance had the texture of paduasoy. Then, because her poem, like Ridge’s, lifts off from the prosody and content of Psalm 121 (‘I will lift up mine eyes to the hills’), she continues:

These lines, at night-fall, melting into the arable,
Enclosing wine-tawny and grape-violet shades,
Affect us as a faint air might, played upon a virginal,
So long ago that all pain it held then is allayed;
Or clarinet, so far distant it brings us but a memory
Of healed lament, in the dim twilight dying away.

These hills at dawn are of an austere architecture;
Claustral; like a grave assembly, night-cold numbed,
Of nuns, singing matins and lauds in perpetuity,

(Bethell, ‘Levavi Oculos’ 34)

The powerful image of the nuns appears elsewhere in Ridge’s poetry. They, the tired child, the sexual potency of the land and its understanding but hidden heart that must be sought out

by the supplicant seem to be rewritten in 'Lake Kanieri' from poems such as 'At Sun-Down,' 'Dawn on the Mountains' and 'The Bush.' All circle parts of the same narrative. 'The Bush' calls out to old-timers: 'Oh men! heart-tired of un-quiet days, / Of sad lives sundered, & strong purpose bent,' urging them to share in 'the largesse of her clean content.' But it is the following stanza that cements the poem emotionally to the meditation beside the lake:

And weary women who have seen love droop
In lust & laughter, till thy bruised hearts yearn
Some help that stooping shall not seem to stoop,
Seek peace & counsel in her ways of fern.

('Verses' 8-9)

The dark night of the soul implied in 'Lake Kanieri' is picked up across the free verse divide in Ridge's work. The rewrite (or reinterpretation) was published simultaneously in Poetry (Chicago) October 1918 and in The Ghetto and Other Poems, and like any variant text elucidates its precursors in the gaps that open between one version of events and another. It seems that the speaker's bid to find peace out on the mountain may have extended beyond finding solace in a sunset. The 1918 repetition puts it like this:

The Edge

I thought to die that night in the solitude where they would never find me...
But there was time...
And I lay quietly on the drawn knees of the mountain, staring into the abyss...
I do not know how long...
I could not count the hours, they ran so fast
Like little bare-foot urchins – shaking my hands away...
But I remember
Somewhere water trickled like a thin severed vein...
And a wind came out of the grass,
Touching me gently, tentatively, like a paw.

As the night grew
The gray cloud that had covered the sky like sackcloth

Fell in ashen folds about the hills,
Like hooded virgins, pulling their cloaks about them...
There must have been a spent moon,
For the Tall One's veil held a shimmer of silver...

That too I remember...
And the tenderly rocking mountain
Silence
And beating stars...

Dawn
Lay like a waxen hand upon the world,
And folded hills
Broke into a sudden wonder of peaks, stemming clear and cold,
Till the Tall One bloomed like a lily,
Flecked with sun,
Fine as a golden pollen –
It seemed a wind might blow it from the snow.

I smelled the raw sweet essences of things,
And heard spiders in the leaves
And ticking of little feet,
As tiny creatures came out of their doors
To see God pouring light into his star...

... It seemed life held
No future and no past but this...

And I too got up stiffly from the earth,
And held my heart up like a cup...

(The Ghetto 91-92)

Looking back at the cluster of 1905 poems that seem to address parts of the same story, we find an explanation for the strange final stanza of 'Dawn on the Mountains' that imagines sunrise as a beautiful dead girl:

Down the day-coast one is borne –
Dawn with golden eyes fast closéd,
And the sun-webs round her drawn –
Dawn with fair white limbs composéd
On the bier of morn.

('Verses' 4)

It is possible, then, to shuttle back and forth between free verse and metrical versions and find ourselves better informed about both. There is one more major nexus, the connection between the lullaby 'Sleep, Dolores' and the singing mother in 'Sun-Up':

Every night
mama sings you to sleep.
When she sings, O for the light of thine eyes Dolores,
there's a castle on a cliff
and the sea roars like lions.
It leaps at the castle
and the cliff knocks it down
but always the sea
shakes its flattened head
and gets up again.
The castle has no roof
so the rain spins silvery webs in it,
and Dolores' face
floats dim and beautiful
the way flowers do when they are drowned.
Step by white step
she goes up the castle stairs,
but the stair goes up into the sky
and the sky keeps going up too,

so none of them ever get there.

(Sun-Up 14-15)

The child braids Molly Whuppie-like laterals into the content of the song she is listening to, making the experience ever more fantastic as she drifts towards sleep. The mother's singing takes the same direction as the stairs of the castle with no roof, 'and when she has finished singing / her song goes up off the earth, / higher and higher... / till it is only as big as a tiny silver bird / with nothing but moonlight around it.' The singing storytelling is important in 'Sun-Up' and no less so in some of the fables from 'Verses' and the Bulletin which feature the same straying and often moonlit (or moonstruck) characters. But what, exactly, was in the Dolores song? The earlier poems supply a darker version of the protective, prescient maternal charm:

'Sleep Dolores'

'Sleep Dolores,' my mother sang to me
When Life was like a rose, dear,
Just opening round & red;
Quaint, fantastic, wayward melody –
Now life is dreary prose, dear,
And all its songs are said!

'Sleep Dolores; the grey wolves ride away!'
I saw them in a far line
Across the looming plains –
'Sleep Dolores! Sweet slumber while you may, –'
(Gaunt shapes athwart the star-line,
That broke their bridle reins.)

'Sleep Dolores!' In that old world o' mine
Where fancy vainly lingers,
Were palaces to let;
No gates, toll gates, nor title deeds to sign,
Nor tangle of cold fingers

That never should have met!

‘Sleep Dolores.’ I thought the shining stars
Were lamps along the Night-coast
Of cities far away;
Head lights, red lights that flashed among the spars
Of schooners on the White-Coast
A-down the Milky Way.

‘Sleep Dolores,’ & tranced in slumber song
Bright wond’rous things I saw dear
My starry cities in
Child dreams, wild dreams that recked not right or wrong?
And Love was over Law, dear,
And knew not sex or sin.

‘Hush Dolores, the wolves are near the town!’
A thrust, a thin red knife line –
The blade is sharp & keen:
‘Wake, Dolores! the grey wolves ride thee down –
Gaunt shapes athwart thy life-line,
And not a league between!’

(‘Verses’ 33-34)

Rose become prose indeed; the besetting evils of legal and property rights are evidently at the door. Mama’s voice comes through the intervening years, sounding an alarm that wakes the daughter to present danger. The song (your mother) will let you go to sleep only as long as the wolves are at a safe distance.

5 The Legend of the Mother

pale as star-light on a gray wall...

Emma Reilly Ridge McFarlane (c1833-1907) must have been a remarkable woman. From public records in Ireland and New South Wales we know that she and her sister Maria (1831-1913) were the daughters of John Reilly, a Collector of Customs, and his wife Maria, nee Ormsby. The family seems to have moved about, from Galway where daughters Maria and Emma were born, and perhaps to Drogheda, County Louth, where at the age of 28 Maria married Henry Nicholson Levinge 8 January 1859. There were no children, and after Levinge's death Maria married again in 1867, this time in Dublin, and had two sons in 1868 and 1870 with Richard Alfred Penfold (c1828-96). Sister Emma was also in Dublin when she married Joseph Henry Ridge in 1871 and would have been about 40 in 1873 when Rose Emily was born in Dolphin's Barn at what appears to be the house of her Reilly grandparents. A woman named Sarah Kinsella, of 28 Cole Alley, signed the registration form with an X ('her mark') and was noted as having been present at the birth of Rose Emily Ridge.

The Penfolds emigrated to Australia about 1874, and when circumstances in Dublin changed for Emma Ridge she and her daughter followed Maria, Richard and their two sons to Sydney. 'Sun-Up' is elliptic in its coverage of the child protagonist's earliest memories, but in moving from one side of the ocean to another, Betty leaves her beloved Celia (a nursemaid in the household) and goes on a voyage with Mama after the death of her grandfather. Her father is absent, her mother has suffered trauma or illness and the journey itself is compressed into a few lines. In the new place, a city, Mama takes up seamstress work; there is little money and no family save one glimpse of an aunt who is literally the image of the mother: 'Mama's face / is smooth and pale as tea-rose leaves. / That ivory oval of aunt Gem / you sucked the miniature off / had black black hair like mama.'

We don't know anything about life in Sydney for Emma and Rose Emily Ridge but it seems that the North Shore became family headquarters as the Penfold cousins Richard Alfred and John Edmund Miles grew up, married and had families of their own after the Ridges moved on to New Zealand and Emma's marriage to Donald McFarlane at All Saints Presbyterian Church in Hokitika, 16 September 1880.

It is her second marriage that makes Emma Ridge a real-life Alice Roland (The Story of a New Zealand River) arriving in the bush with a young daughter who will grow up socialist and libertarian, disliking her stepfather's line of work while admiring his energy and personal tenacity. Jane Mander's novel, written and published in New York in 1920 and made over by film director Jane Campion as The Piano in 1993, is set in the kauri milling districts of

Northland in the 1880s and 90s. It was reviled by local critics for its treatment of sex and religion but well-received in New York and London. Geographically closer still to the Ridges' story is *The Denniston Rose* (2003), a popular novel by Jenny Patrick about a five-year-old girl (Rose) brought by her mother to the West Coast coal-mining settlement of Denniston in the 1880s. These instances of fictional mother-daughter duos negotiating the conditions of resettlement and (in Mander's book) first wave feminism in the new land emphasise the importance of recovering the occluded history of both Ridge women. They also contextualise the constructive, autobiographical achievement of 'Sun-Up.' The poem leaves us in no doubt about the strength and character of the mother, or her dry humour: 'When you tell mama / you are going to do something great / she looks at you / as though you were a window / she were trying to see through, / and says she hopes you will be good / instead of great.' *Sun-Up and Other Poems* has a prefatory poem dedicated to the poet's mother and the first poem of its Portraits section is entitled 'Mother' (69):

Your love was like moonlight
turning harsh things to beauty,
so that little wry souls
reflecting each other obliquely
as in cracked mirrors...
beheld in your luminous spirit
their own reflection,
transfigured as in a shining stream,
and loved you for what they are not.

You are less an image in my mind
than a luster
I see you in gleams
pale as star-light on a gray wall...
evanescent as the reflection of a white swan

shimmering in broken water.

(Sun-Up 69)

The images are allusive, poignant, gesturing at hardship rather than foregrounding it. There is no doubt that life on the West Coast goldfields was tough for all concerned: 'A good deal of my childhood was spent in the N.Z. bush,' Ridge wrote in her 1904 biographical note for the Bulletin, 'In one place I had to walk (daily) ten miles of lonely bush road to school.' Later she claimed in a diary written 1940-41 now among her papers at Smith College that the family lived in a three-roomed shack; also that her stepfather was a runaway sailor turned prospector on worked-out diggings who recited Shakespeare to her, told stories from Homer and destroyed the furniture during periodic drunken binges (Drake 187-89). He was, she noted, the one who comprehended something of the moment one night when she heard in the sound of the running creek outside how poetry was to be made:

An ache fell on me and I looked at my mother . . . the pure pale cameo of her face – unmoved, disdainfully still sadness . . . she did not hear my waters trebling. [My stepfather], brooding and staring at the log fire [heard nothing], but as though I touched him he glanced up at me . . . [His eyes expressed the defensiveness of a small animal at the mouth of its burrow, his habitual stance. Then his look softened, and he] said in a low grave voice, 'I am thinking of my dead sister Jessie.' (quoted Drake 188)

No age is given but the child is old enough to be working out arithmetic problems in a copybook. After hearing the creek talk, she writes her first poem and shows the page to her mother.

Donald McFarlane (c1832-1906) was born in Scotland, spent 42 years in New Zealand and was among the earliest miners on the goldfields at Kaniere. He is on Westland Electoral Rolls in the 1890s but his name does not appear on his stepdaughter's marriage certificate as the head of the house where the wedding took place because by 1895 he was an inmate of Seaview Mental Hospital in Hokitika. The asylum records show that McFarlane was diagnosed with symptoms of Mania in late 1894, and after a possibly suicidal episode while on probation he was readmitted to the hospital early in 1895. He remained there ten years, suffering hypochondriacal delusions according to the Chronic Case Book notes, requiring little or no medical attention and taking an intelligent interest in newspapers and events of the day. The notes also disclose that he went to sea at 14 and was a sailor for 18 years. His wife is mentioned once, in 1901, reporting that her husband is still convinced he will commit suicide if released. At the time of his death 14 January 1906 from pneumonia she, his

stepdaughter and his grandson had been in Sydney for two years, a move which we can view as a return to Penfold family environs.

Lola Ridge's relationship with her stepfather is not manifest in her poems, unless we count some of the generic portraits of miners in the ballads as indicators. More sobering is the evocation of violence, mental and physical, on the goldfield in the melodramatic story 'The Trial of Ruth', published 1903 in *The New Zealand Illustrated Magazine* with line drawings by the author. Ruth Dove, dark-haired and pale of face, arresting in her demeanour rather than conventionally pretty, captivates and then marries Paul Sullivan, a lapsed student of law prospecting at Jacob's Flat. Out on the field and living in a two-roomed slab hut, Ruth's happiness implodes as she realises she has married a drunkard. Complications arise when Sullivan's feckless partner Harry Dunn propositions Ruth then takes matters into his own hands by sabotaging the claim in order to remove his rival. A climactic scene involving dynamite, the unconscious Sullivan and Ruth's last-minute dash to pull out the fizzing fuse sees the couple reunited. The treacherous Dunn has taken to his heels, much to the astonishment of Sullivan who cannot understand why his partner has disappeared when their claim is about to pay a handsome return. Ruth keeps her own counsel; her courage and wit have saved the day, her man is reformed ('We'll leave the diggings and open a clean white page in the Book of Love') and the proceeds of the strike are all their own.

Between the lines of Ridge's story we may read something of life with Donald McFarlane in the mining settlement of Kaniere Forks and guess at Emma McFarlane's predicament during the 24 years she and her daughter lived in New Zealand. To the child and to the poet she became, her mother was a queen ('[I am] a descendant on my mother's side of a very old Irish race the Princes,' she wrote in her 1904 biographical note for the *Bulletin*) and it is not surprising that the poet fashioned a sense of her own legend that was intensely matrifocal. The prefatory poem of *Sun-Up and Other Poems* puts it like this:

Dedication

(To my Mother)

Let me cradle myself back

Into the darkness

Of the half shapes...

Of the cauled beginnings...

Let me stir the attar of unused air,
Elusive... ironically fragrant
As a dead queen's kerchief...
Let me blow the dust from off you...
Resurrect your breath
Lying limp as a fan
In a dead queen's hand.

6 Losing Children

The mothers shall reach their kingdom when the sea hath her own again

Mother. The calling out is preliminary to but also part of the authoring construction. You resurrect your mother in the old images of childhood or storytelling, beginning the weave learned as you listened to her voice and made your own visions from what she was saying. Folklore plays its part and perhaps a shared predilection for strongly feminised narrative in keeping with your immediate family situation and (later) the social forces around you that are shaping the late nineteenth-century struggle for the rights of women to educational, economic and political equality.

In 'Verses' the weave of personal and political concerns manifests in poems that work out the speaker's relationship of intimacy and distance with land, sea and sky. As we have seen already, Ridge's universe is animistic, anthropomorphic – and powerfully sexualised. Solar rays penetrate, gullies enfold, the moon is naked and blonde, and winds 'fondle with the maiden Bush / Who sways & quivers in their close embrace' ('The Bush'). Sunrise resembles a peepshow: 'Light & laughter in the air, / As each roving sunbeam pushes / Prying fingers everywhere; / Eyes obliquely through the bushes / Darting here & there' ('Dawn on the Mountains'). Sometimes the Bulletin editors intervened; 'sex & sin' became 'shame and sin' ('Sleep, Dolores') and 'The Bush' was published one stanza short of its typescript version: 'The rival sunbeams their bold fingers thrust / Amid her guarded & most secret sweets; / They steal & nestle on her swelling bust, / And view unhidden all her chaste retreats.' That we are looking at editorial rather than authorial revisions seems likely when the same thing happens to 'Song of the Earth Spirit,' the poem Ridge revised a second time for the typescript. Both typed versions have 8 stanzas, but the Bulletin publication 16 November

1905 stops at 7 after the Earth's wish for an ocean 'To flow over and fondle and fold me / Till our joy be complete!' In the omitted last stanza rough play and extra fluids have been excised: 'To inundate me, saturate, press me, / Over mountain & fen, – / Oh, arise in your strength & possess me / From the cities of men!' Given the geophysical origins of New Zealand, what the poem has lost is a glimpse of retributive tectonic apocalypse. Earth, weary of the offences of men to her surfaces, wants to go back to the sea. The Tarawera eruption of 1886 is also on view in 'Two Nights' but without the eroticised elemental voice present in 'Song of the Earth Spirit.'

The female sexuality of the planet is nowhere more vividly realised than in the creation stories Ridge invents in two of her longer poems, 'The Legend of the Cross' and 'The Magic Island.' Neither is quite what we might expect from its title, and each is specific to a South Pacific location. 'Verses' is curiously devoid of religious poems, apart from pantheistic apostrophes to elemental forces and the occasional, non-denominational call on 'God' as an intensifier for strong emotion. Rather than a reworked Dream of the Rood, 'The Legend of the Cross' delivers a story of earth-sky procreation in which a comet-like star is in love with distantly beautiful Earth ('the dusky maiden'). He travels from beyond the galaxy and falls into her embrace: 'Her breasts, two mountains swelling, / Rose soft & round & white, / Her heart's loud clamour quelling / She clasped the son of Light.' But he leaves her for the glitter of the Pleiades, speeding off through the Milky Way which is 'Hung o'er the roof of heaven / Like nebula of pearls.' Earth is desolate: 'Dull wak'ning of the "after" / That she who loves must learn'; she is also pregnant with five star-children. 'Sweet Mercy sister Dusk' acts midwife and protector, then more female help arrives:

And Night the swarthy mother,
Drew on her sable glove –
Old night the foster Mother,
The screener o' light love!
Where never moon-beam ripples
Down hollow caves she crept,
And from the Earth's warm nipples,
Where clinging still they slept;

She drew each star-child glowing
And dewy from its nest,

The waking eyelids throwing
A halo on her breast;
And covering their faces,
Upon the pale moon bars,
By lone & secret places,
She mounted through the stars.

(‘Verses’ 35-37)

Night places the babies in the southern sky where Earth watches them open their eyes one by one and grow into the bright guide lights of the Southern Cross. Christianity doesn’t enter into it; this constellation is about a different sacrament of love and loss, with a marked emphasis on midwifery and palliative female wisdom. The poem seems to synthesise Gaia and Uranus with aspects of the primal parents Ranginui and Papatuānuku, whose children were born in the darkness of an embrace that had to be torn apart in order for life to unfold.⁷ Contemporary versions of Māori star-lore may also have influenced Ridge’s narrative. She doesn’t appear to be remaking any known version of the Polynesian understanding of Māhutonga (Crux), but the five fire children of Mahuika, younger sister of the Dawn Maid, are associated with a comet, Auahi-turoa (‘long smoke’) who came to earth bringing fire as a gift (Best). The beauty of Matariki (the Pleiades), whose dawn rising begins the new year in June, may also have been transposed by Ridge: Matariki means ‘the small eyes’ – and Crux is the smallest constellation in the sky. Elsewhere in ‘Verses’ it embodies protection for those who love outside convention (‘When the Moon was in Eclipse’) and its implied paradoxes of agony and ecstasy are those of a Storm Fiend urging an abject speaker to ‘Take up the cross of the longing & loss’ and make art like the great souls of the past. Is it because ‘The Storm Spirit’ comes half a dozen poems after ‘The Legend of the Cross’ in ‘Verses’ that some muted personal undertones of longing and loss seem apparent? Here we might recall the only untitled poem in ‘Verses,’ a crying out to some beloved presence:

Forgive dear heart, dear love, Forgive!
That I so lean upon your strength
For in your soul my soul would live
And leaps & strains its bridle length

⁷ See ‘Te Ao Maori Tawhito’ (2001) for a summary of korero tawhito, the stories that provide explanations and reasons for certain chains of events that anchor the world view of Māori.

Through all the busy noon I fend
A dream of you that sits apart
But when the hours their labours end
It knocks & enters in my heart

And there the long still night; it lies,
So closed & warm upon my breast,
As bird that flies to alien skys
At even flutters to its nest.

(‘Verses’ 29)

When the poem was published 26 July 1905 in The Australian Town and Country Journal it appeared without the first stanza and under the title ‘Beth.’ Child? Lover? Friend? The same referent as its typescript version or remodelled to fit later circumstance? The specifics are unidentifiable but the pattern of agonised repression is familiar from many of the personal poems of ‘Verses.’

‘The Magic Island’ is another synthesised creation story. Its internal referents and its position as the final poem in the typescript identify the island as a version of Aotearoa, but not Te Ika a Maui, the fish pulled up by Maui-Potiki with a magic jaw-bone and cut up without permission by his brothers. Instead the island is birthed out of the (female) Pacific ocean. A protean, shaman-like grey wizard has impregnated the barren ocean, and watches the island grow ‘till the hills of it peak by peak, / Like the leaves of a flower unfolded from the soil of the untilled deep.’ The wizard assures the mother sea that the island is at a safe remove from ‘the race of pigmy men’ who would despoil it. He is therefore displeased when white-skinned invaders arrive from the north and start modifying his pristine creation. The northerners, sailing under ‘a strange White Cross,’ don’t understand where they are and cut down forests to build a city and sell lumber for profit. The wizard lures the children of the new arrivals into the sea and drowns them all. Their fathers attempt a rescue and a battle ensues in the breakers with the wizard who ‘swam as a sea god swims.’ The pigmy men are torn limb from limb in the surf and their blood stains the sea. The mothers, maddened by grief, mourn their lost children and wait on the beach for word of their return from the enchanted caves of the sea; news which the narrator of the poem will divulge, having heard the whole story from the lips

of a whispering sea-shell. Exchange 'wizard' for Tangaroa, god of the sea, and the story of trespass is not dissimilar from aspects of korero tawhito designed to establish protocols for respectful behaviour towards land and kin. But Tangaroa isn't usually the progenitor of islands and it is made clear that the wizard's next move will be to send his creation back under the waves, in the style of Hy-Brasil and other vanishing islands. He guards the island against despoliation but there is no mention of its inhabitation by tangata whenua ('people of the land') before the arrival of those who swarm over the beaches and flaunt a 'flaring flag' over their city. As a critique of imperialist and commercial ambitions, 'The Magic Island' is a fable well ahead of its time. As a pattern for retributive justice, it proposes a breathtaking symmetry between natural resources and kinship protection. The wizard revenges the harm done to his child island by killing the children of the despoilers, and leaving the doubly dispossessed mothers to wail out eternity: 'The mothers shall reach their kingdom when the sea hath her own again.'

Mythography is one kind of map, but stories about mothers resound in Ridge's writing from its outset. The voice that calls for three small children to be cooeed into tea is the first cue in the drama of their disappearance in the bush ('The Three Little Children'). In the 1902 Bulletin version of the poem the children are toddlers, unnamed and undifferentiated; in the typescript revision they are identified as Bertie, Laurie and Fan ('The Babes of the free selector are lost on the Kendall run!') and carefully distinguished in age so as to heighten the pathos of their imagined ordeal in the wilderness as the community tries and fails to find its lost lambs before the hawks do. In another poem, a mother's voice summons a family member (probably her husband) home from the races in town because a young child is seriously ill ('Baby's Sick'), and in 'The Moon Child,' Monica's mother is given the last word about the disappearance of a wilful daughter lured by moonlight and removed to the lunar field:

'Whist ye,' Monica's mother said,
'Those white, quiverin', creepin' rays
Make me think o' Monica's ways;
Make me dream o' Monica's hair,
Pale an' flaxen, a-shinin' there;
An' some night when the large moon lies
Like a flower in the fadin' skies,
Haply Monica 'll come to me –

Lave the stars for her mother's eyes;
Nestlin' close like she used to be,
Warm cheek lyin' against my knee.'

(Bulletin 12 Dec 1907: 34)

It's a fairytale, and an Irish one, but the grieving mother at the cottage door watching the moon and untangling its light with a silver comb, is closely related to the mad mothers of 'The Magic Island' who see the eyes and hair of their drowned children in sea pools.

Probably the most disturbing of Ridge's variations on custodial trauma is the story 'A Returned Hero,' published mid 1904 in the Bulletin and set up as a before and after tale of love on the sandhills under yet another moon. Max returns from the Boer war three years later to find Mona's mother at her cottage door with a grandchild and the news that her daughter took her own life out on the sandhills on Mafeking Day, after giving up hope of hearing from the lover who is now forced to take over the care of his child. He flees for Melbourne with the little girl but manages to lose her permanently and horrifically along the way. The story foreshadows Ridge's infamous poem 'Lullaby' (The Ghetto) which replays an incident from the East St Louis race riots where a black baby was thrown alive into a burning house by a group of white women. In 'The Fifth-Floor Window' from *Red Flag* (1927) the same unfaltering gaze informs the view of a child's body in the snow of a tenement courtyard and the open window from which her father, deserted and unemployed, says she has fallen.

7 Social Witness

From the fetters of Caste & Custom

Ridge was regarded by her early American critics as a true 'poet of the people' because her immigrant background and chosen subject matter seemed readymade for the role, and because she consistently exposed the grimness of industrialised life and its human fallout. An equal and opposite impulse to ameliorative images completed her credentials as a socially engaged artist. Early signs of this consciousness are present in 'Verses' and form part of its continuum with the work published in America.

Perhaps the goldfield ballads provide the clearest example in Ridge's early poems of an emergent social conscience. They are retrospective, looking back on the glory days of the West Coast from a present still much involved with mining and mining communities. 'I was married in Hokitika Westland,' she told the *Bulletin* in her 1904 note, '& saw a good deal of life on the West Coast gold diggings, where my husband was mine manager for some years.' Peter Webster (1870-1946) was a shareholder in the sluicing claim of Lemain and Party established in 1891 at Kaniere Forks, according to the Westland section of the *Cyclopedia of New Zealand* (1897). The entry includes photographs of Peter Webster and the sluicing claim, and observes that he is married to 'a daughter of Mr Daniel [sic] Macfarlane, one of the earliest settlers at Hokitika.' Peter's father James Garden Webster also has a *Cyclopedia* entry noting his arrival from Scotland in 1860 and service in the Waikato Militia 1863-65, and linking him to the first miners at Kaniere in 1866. Family records show that James and Margaret Webster had 13 children, and by the time Rosalie Ridge married their second son, his brothers and sisters were beginning to produce large families of their own around the district. (Clarke)

The 1905 typescript has section headings 'Voices of the Bush,' 'Songs of the Sluicers' and 'Humorous Verse,' and it is under the last two that the ambience of gold rush days is evoked. The ethnic diversity of the diggers and the rough justice of goldfields yarning shows up in satirical pieces like 'Helblatavesky's Cow' and 'The Chronicles of Sandy Gully' which fictionalise events in places already colourful in their own right. Out on the fields near Kaniere and Waimea were Liverpool Bill's, Greek's No 1, Greek's No 2, Italian's, Callaghan's, German Gully, Maori Gully, Red Jack's Creek, Mackay's Creek and the Scandinavian Lead. In the hastily-built towns diggers could spend their money in establishments such as the Victoria Dancing Saloon (Greymouth), the Café de Paris (Hokitika) or the Casino de Venise (Charleston) (May 194, 310).

'By the Mouth of the Shaft' dramatises the recovery of a young man's body from old workings he has been prospecting alone. Here and in 'A Deserted Diggings,' Ridge's knowledge of mining technology and its impact on people and land alike is evident. Apart from huts like dead men's bones and a ruined forge, the scene of the deserted gully includes an overgrown truckway leading to a tunnel mouth, a rotting windlass, gravel dams and tailings, a disused gauge, flooded swamps with dead trees, axes discarded on heavily felled hillsides, rusty shovels and sluicing boxes lying as they were left when the claims 'duffered out,' and also:

O'er grown by matted bushes
 Is the race,
Close by a ruined flume,
Where black pipes hissed the water
 On the 'face',
And swart & sweating sluicers
 Drenched in the flying spume.

(‘Verses’ 62-64)

There would have been no shortage of derelict machinery in the area. By 1867 the combined length of Kaniere’s water races totalled 82 miles (May 227) and ground sluicing had reduced the auriferous river terraces to a fraction of their original height. In a contemporary parallel with Ridge’s nostalgic scene-setting, a historic walkway the length of a surviving race between the lake outlet and Kaniere Forks takes in the remains of large sections of fluming, gates, bridges and gantries from mining days. ‘A Deserted Diggings’ ends with a predictable salute to the men whose labour and folly built ‘the sinews of a nation’: they are ‘old comrades’ gone before, cast in heroic mould around a rata fire singing songs from many lands, in particular ‘Auld Lang Syne.’

Ridge’s evolving socio-political narratives also appear in ‘On Zealandia,’ where late-nineteenth century New Zealand, a ‘cold-eyed stranger’ at the door of nationhood, is asked for a watchword by those already in the club. The reply comes back from the land itself, then from the sun shining over the ‘far, bright island’ where community order could be different:

Up, oh Child of the great Pacific!
And arise from your morning sleep;
Though the feet of a nation stumble,
Let the heart of a nation leap –
 On Zealandia!

Ye are one of the fearless vanguard,
Where the free Battalion leads
Ye shall stoke at the blazing furnace,

Where the fuel is thoughts & deeds –
On Zealandia

When the thrones of the world are fallen,
And your word shall be weighed & known,
As the voice of a mighty people,
Of the tribes to a nation grown –
Young Zealandia.

From the fetters of Caste & Custom
And their faiths & their symbols free;
From the bonds of their old traditions,
That are sunk in your circling sea –
On Zealandia!

(‘Verses’ 31-32)

Ridge’s proto-socialist anthem was published 25 August 1892 in *The Canterbury Times*, in the year after John Ballance’s Liberal Party came to power, promoting the cause of Universal Suffrage among other social reforms. The poet at 19 years old was too young to vote when women were enfranchised in 1893, but the tone and outlook of the poem foreshadow the anti-authoritarian toasts of her *Mother Earth* contributions of 1909 and 1911:

Let men be free!
Hate is the price
Of servitude, paid covertly; and vice
But the unclean recoil of tortured flesh
Whipped through the centuries within a mesh
Spun out of priestly art.
Oh men, arise, be free! – Who breaks one bar
Of tyranny in this so bitter star
Has cleansed its bitterness in part.

(‘Freedom,’ *Mother Earth* 6.4 [Jun 1911]: 97)

Ridge and her mother lived on the West Coast in the era of Richard John ('King Dick') Seddon, 'the miner's friend' and larger-than-life champion of the rights of ordinary working people. Seddon became Member of Parliament for Hokitika in 1879 and took over from Ballance as national Premier 1893-1906. It was his Liberal government that passed into law the Universal Suffrage Act (1893) and the Old Age Pensions Act (1898). Seddon was also an advocate of Pacific imperialism and like most MPs of the day fiercely opposed to Chinese immigration. It is sobering to remember that radical sympathies of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century had deep racial biases connected with economic as well as eugenicist beliefs. Ridge's poem 'The Half-Breed' was published in the *Bulletin* and is one example among many contributions to the magazine that reflect entrenched anti-Asiatic sentiment. Lola Ridge, who spoke up for the outcast and those oppressed by capitalist systems and religious orthodoxy, nevertheless shared the widespread prejudice of white, working-class Australasia against 'Chinamen' who were perceived as a threat to jobs and the high living wage that trade unions had fought to secure. In Australia it was feared that Chinese and Melanesian (Kanaka) indentured labourers brought to work on the sugar plantations of Northern Queensland were the leading edge of an invasion that would swamp the thinly populated continent. So great were the political pressures brought to bear that the first piece of legislation passed after Federation was the Immigration Restriction Act of 1901 which put in place for half a century the policy informally known as White Australia. New Zealand had similar restrictions from 1899 and a poll tax.

Did Ridge's later experience of the American labour movement confirm or revise the anti-Chinese prejudice in her Australasian work? The depiction of Chinese in 'Sun-Up' is generally neutral, even positive: Ling Ho the fruit and vegetable man sells mama loquats and a marvellous green and white cabbage. Only the nightmarish visions of the small girl's fever have 'yellow faces with leering eyes / drifting in a greeny mist . . .' The detail wouldn't rate attention except that the bogey of Ridge's story 'A Returned Hero' is a clawed yellow fiend who terrorises the two-year-old with his gibbering overtures, causing the child to leap to her death from a moving train in a wild attempt to escape his clutches. An infant's perception in a melodramatic story is backed up by adult beliefs about racial purity in 'The Half-Breed,' which uses a figure of infectious disease to demonise the threat of miscegenation in the backstreets of Sydney. Low black hulks glide between the Heads and moor in the gleaming bays of the city; its bustle epitomises Ridge's vision of urban vitality ('Crowds that sever & surge & meet – / Crowds that clamor & sound along') but the schooners have landed unwelcome goods:

Up the Strand where the white girls go,
Down the lanes where the Half-Breeds play –
White & yellow, yellow & grey –
One there creeps like a shade of woe.

City, see where the Half-Breed stands:
Vain the guns at your harbour mouth!
Spawn o' the East & the hot, red South
Holds your heart in her unclean hands.

Fetid foul to the sweet-breathed sea
Blows the blast from her burning lips
Floating out to the anchored ships
Drifting down on the winding Quay

Sears the kiss of her loathsome mouth –
Spreads the blight of her poisoned veins,
Gorged & full with the blood she drains;
Ah the blood of the fresh young South!

(‘Verses’ 69-70)

That the terms of deformity and female horror are identical with those used elsewhere to describe self-loathing indicates the thoroughly conventional nature of the language of hate and its close connections with repression and fear. In ‘My Care’ a psychological burden is made intimate and monstrous:

Sleep deep, my Care, in the soul of me.
Ah God! she stirs; for she knows I wis
No eyes are near us to scorn & stare
The foul misshape that her shadow is –
Crouch low in the gumtrees shade, my Care.
[. . .]
You are not meet for my friends to see:

I thrust you down with your breast all bare
To the padded cell in the soul of me;
The world is up & awake my Care.

(‘Verses’ 26)

The images of madness here, pathological and precise, are different from the more generalised romantic tumults of other poems in ‘Verses.’ They link to a poem probably written later in Ridge’s Australian years because it isn’t in the Mitchell Library volume, though it did appear at the end of the revised (and now lost) typescript, along with the rewritten ‘Parted.’ The address is public, as to a group of social or political conspirators:

The Insane

Near by a canary is singing,
 Whistling and singing with glee;
By the railing the prisoners are clinging –
 They, friends, who are even as we.

As we, but the world does not know it,
 The secret is ours to keep;
To guard that our eyes may not show it –
 That our lips may not babble in sleep.

For, friends, they would take us and bind us,
 Not heeding nor answering why.
In place of a world they would find us
 An acre of garden and sky.

Oh! we are the merry and glad men,
 Ye crazed, irresponsible things,
Who brand us and bind us as madmen,
 And pose as our rulers and kings.

Ye – wandering blind through the ages,

And dazed with your schisms and schools –
Know we are the wise men and sages,
And ye are the children and fools.

And what of the laws of your making?
Ye say: 'It is thus – it shall be';
And rise in your wrath at their breaking,
Because ye are stronger than we.

But your rules are the ravings of fevers,
Bred of shadows fantastic and vain,
That are spun by the little white weavers
In the mystical loom of the brain.

They are born of your minions and creatures,
Of the phantoms and shapes that ye saw;
But ye pose as our prophets and teachers –
Till ye make your insanity law.

And so we are careful and cunning,
Because ye are stronger than we,
By the railings the prisoners are sunning,
And lo! it is sweet to be free!

(Bulletin 11 Jan 1906: 3. NSW)

The poem is a masterpiece of inversions, moving from an outsider's view of inmates 'clinging' to the railings that separate them from the free world to the 'we' who are looking at them 'sunning' themselves on what might be the right side of the same railings to be on. The 'prisoners' have escaped from the world of madmen and fools who would enslave them, and whom 'we' must also treat with cunning and care in order to escape capture. 'An acre of garden and sky' is not only the boundaries of a mental institution, it is the land you will spend a working life to freehold, effectively chained down when you could have chosen to walk out in the world. The prisoners have found a way to be free in their topsy turvy world. Their example, extreme and disturbing, reminds us that we must find a way to do the same. The

sound of Lola Ridge packing her bags for North America and the opportunity to begin over again is unmistakable.

8 The Transnationals

throwing an ephemeral glory about life's vanishing points

It is Wednesday 11 November 1903. On Sydney harbour the Mokoia, inbound from Wellington, is approaching the Union Steam Ship wharves at Margaret and Sussex Streets after a four-day crossing in unsettled conditions. For two of her passengers, mother and daughter, the moment reprises an earlier arrival, when one brought the other from Dublin to Sydney as a child. Waiting for them then were aunt, uncle and cousins for the little girl; sister, brother-in-law and nephews for the mother. Waiting for them now are widowed aunt and grown-up cousins with children older and younger than the three year old boy who travels with the two women. 'I am an Australian by sympathy & association,' his mother will write to the Bulletin editor a few months later, invoking the years between three and perhaps six that remain so clear in her memory; watching her son begin a transplanted life of his own. They will not stay in Sydney but it is the place more than any other that has allowed passage between worlds, an entrepôt she is glad to be stepping into again.

The Shipping Masters Office begins its tally of those disembarking the Mokoia, saloon class first. Mesd. Quirk Govett McFarlane writes the clerk. And four lines later in the same boxed column: Mesdames Watson Master Webster, adding & infant below the last name ('Mokoia'). The women and the child come ashore into the early summer heat and are lost to view. Years later, in the same collection that houses her double-lensed poem of antipodean childhood (for Keith Webster ghosts Rose Ridge as surely as Jude shadows Betty), Lola Ridge names the city where memory, ever parenthetical, moves in overlapping circles:

The Dream

I have a dream
to fill the golden sheath
of a remembered day....
(Air

heavy and massed and blue
as the vapor of opium...
domes
fired in sulphurous mist...
sea
quiescent as a gray seal...
and the emerging sun
spurting up gold
over Sydney, smoke-pale, rising out of the bay....)
But the day is an up-turned cup
and its sun a junk of red iron
guttering in sluggish-green water--
where shall I pour my dream?

(Sun-Up 43)

Questions remain. What is the extent of Lola Ridge's Australasian production? Is there more publication in unindexed periodicals and newspapers? Are there more paintings and drawings in New Zealand and from the four years of art-making in Sydney? What was Ridge reading in these years and who was she writing or talking to apart from AG Stephens? These and other questions will be answered by ongoing biographical and bibliographical research, and by the appearance of a *Collected Poems* that takes account of the formative years spent in Australia and New Zealand.

Meanwhile it is clear that Ridge elided her New Zealand life after leaving the country and her marriage, and that she had reason to further conceal herself and her son as they moved towards North America in 1907. Perhaps it was also necessary to conceal the poems that pointed to New Zealand. Ridge claimed that she destroyed a poetry manuscript after leaving Sydney (Guttman 158), but if she did so, it didn't prevent her from contributing poems from 'Verses' to the *Overland Monthly*, *Gunter's Magazine* and *Ainslee's* 1908-11 (10 poems) and 1920 (one poem).

Lola Ridge is a transnational figure whose full outline we are now beginning to see. In America she has been grouped with women artists of the Left and with literary Modernists, but how interesting it would be to compare her work and career with, for example, that of

Emma Goldman (1869-1933) and Gertrude Stein (1874-1945), each of whom moved from first worlds (Russia, the United States) that continued to inflect their experience of a second world (the United States, France). In Australia Ridge's work needs to be compared with that of other Bulletin contributors: Henry Lawson, Banjo Paterson and Adam Lindsay Gordon are near contemporaries; Will H Ogilvie, EJ Brady, Arthur H Adams, Roderick Quinn, Victor Daley, Hubert Church and Bernard O'Dowd all published first collections under Stephens' Bulletin imprint. But perhaps there are women artists and writers of the period who mirror Ridge's remarkable bolt for personal and artistic freedom: Louise Mack (1870-1935), the only woman to have a volume of poetry published by Stephens, offers some parallels, as does Miles Franklin (1879-1954).

In New Zealand it is possible to make out some generational connections that emphasise the importance of transnational identity: Frances Hodgkins (1869-1947), Blanche Baughan (1870-1958), GB Lancaster (1873-1945) and Jane Mander (1877-1949) all performed variations on the need to escape home ground and social conventions in order to write or paint. But the most resonant comparison to another woman artist lies elsewhere. A lifetime of movement between countries and aesthetic breakthrough into a congenial Modernism followed by a return to traditional metrical forms are characteristics also of Ursula Bethell (1874-1945), whose first book *From a Garden in the Antipodes* (1929) is considered one of the touchstones of modern New Zealand poetry. Ridge's means were different but the achievement of *The Ghetto* and *Sun-Up* holds a similar position in American traditions of the literary Left. In Bethell's archive too is evidence of the pre-Garden poet, writing and painting in the 1890s and early 1900s but much taken up by social work and spiritual directing until the apparent serendipity of the free verse poems enclosed with letters to friends in England that set in train her first book publication. The major difference between Bethell and Ridge is one of background and education; but it would be instructive to map Bethell's genteel North Canterbury upbringing against Ridge's altogether rougher years on the West Coast, and to count not one but two incipient Modernists transiting an adoptive country.

Ridge's voice drifts back from New York, addressing a company that extends across one continent and looks back even as it projects a future that is liminal, lucent and inclusive:

To the Others

I see you, refulgent ones,

Burning so steadily
Like big white arc lights...
There are so many of you.
I like to watch you weaving--
Altogether and with precision
Each his ray--
Your tracery of light,
Making a shining way about America.

I note your infinite reactions--
In glassware
And sequin
And puddles
And bits of jet--
And here and there a diamond...

But you do not yet see me,
Who am a torch blown along the wind,
Flickering to a spark
But never out.

(The Ghetto 73)

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2. ‘The Dream,’ Sun-Up 43
3. ‘At Sundown,’ Bulletin (10 Sept 1903): 16
4. ‘The Bush,’ Bulletin (29 Sept 1904): 16
5. ‘Mother,’ Sun-Up 69
6. ‘The Magic Island,’ Bulletin (14 Dec 1905): 26
7. ‘On Zealandia,’ Verses 32
8. ‘Manhattan,’ The Ghetto 29