

INTRODUCTION

A “renegade corpuscle in the Australian bloodstream”,¹ Judith Wright is that revolutionary disturbing spirit, whose unhinged rhetoric has not only perturbed the oppressively masculinise ‘home and the world’ but also compelled the ramshackle systems and the mandatory stereotyped beliefs and practices to give a pause and re-consider the embedded history of the vast Australian topoi . At an early stage in her life, she has detected the disease of the nation: “We have not on the whole, looked for the new, but tried to adapt the familiar, whether it came to us from overseas or from within.” (*Because I Was Invited* 51)

‘Born of the conquerors’,² in the early twentieth century (31st May 1915) in New South Wales, under the dark looming shadow of the First World War, she has never enjoyed a blissful harmonious world but confronted at a premature age, the struggle for existence and humanity’s fallen condition. By the end of the Second World War, the bard within her is rekindled like the phoenix out of the molten ashes of pain and suffering. Stifled from her childhood in a claustrophobic domestic world of sexist cultural mores and subjected to imminent segregation for being the ‘weaker vessel’, Wright’s repressed anger and anguish have never come out like volcanic outpour nor has she consumed the poison of life, mutely accepting the socially appropriated role of the voiceless and the inconsequential. Determined to vex the space of the division of cognitive and perceptual categories, she withstands all the lacerations and blows and yet like the fluttering foliage of hope and freshness in a sterile land of guilt and the history of willed amnesia, she ushers in a new definition of Australia by acknowledging the past to shape the future. She is the emblem of life, the epitome of creativity and the gurgling fountain of compassion and love for the land and humanity. Wright has been highly sceptical about educational institutions where men received education and women remained in darkness based on gendered subjectivity. Though devoid of such

higher degrees, she is electrifying in her lectures and orations because of her ennobling capacity to utter the truth. At home she has suffered from lack of love largely due to an indifferent step-mother followed by adolescent complexities which she has been left alone to handle. At work places she has never allowed herself to be subjugated under the phallogocentric rubric of selfishness. Irrespective of an existing codified definition of national literature and the Eurocentric benchmark to enter the literary canon, which perhaps would have been easier for her to adopt, Wright has become a distinct individualist with indefatigable power to protest blatantly against those literature and literary figures that society has patronised as high watermark of excellence and examples of Australian spirit. Her attempts are not as cosmetic as the 'Meanji' or the 'Jindyworobak'³ groups and their poetic ledgers of utopian nationalism, although she is at one point closely associated with the former movement, not as white or black but a suspicious 'brown', seen as a smudge of history's unpunished crimes in the erstwhile terra nullius. Confronting all physical imperatives like osteosclerosis in her early twenties, pelvic injuries that psychologically 'unsexed' her and threatened her motherhood, Wright has realised that to seek economic independence is fundamental to her freedom. She started working as stenographer, clerk and statistician in Sydney and Brisbane (University of Queensland). All this while, like a lonely renegade, she sauntered in the dark by lanes of abysmal existence. For me her entire life appears as a movement from guilt to love, from oppression to freedom and from 'space' to 'place'. Her life is a juxtaposition of path-breaking actions that ranges from shattering the placid dovecotes of Australian white womanhood, remaining alone when the entire world is infuriated and throbbing under the fear of war, taking up her pen instead of needle to shape her identity, venturing into macabre memory and stripping off the unnerving shameful history of her race or entering into undefined relationship and proceeding firmly with pregnancy, to indulging herself in a newly forged relationship with the blacks, helping her jobless husband and supporting the family as the

single bread-earner, or walking miles after miles even before the last day of her life to protect the Australian evergreen world of lushness and purity—such calm and yet revolutionary spirit in Australian literature is exceptional and perennial.

Wright's literary contribution is not only voluminous with more than twenty volumes of poetry, fifteen volumes of prose ranging from memoirs, autobiography and essays or powerful passionate letters, both personal and official, collected and edited in three volumes, but they are also perturbing, perhaps unnerving and to some extent difficult to swallow. Strikingly only a few selective literary pieces that have seemed to be worthy to fit into the canonical paradigm, the politics of selection and censorship has essentialised and drawn attention to some works of Wright. Wright sometimes has strongly detested such appropriation and divulgence which the writer has never intended to represent to the world. Poems like "Bullocky", (*A Human Pattern* 9) is a forceful appropriation of national identity exclusively seen in the light of White Australia's struggle to shape the contour of the space, but Wright's mute protest has been through her silent departure and complete isolation from the world of poetry. Her prose works like *The Generation of Men* which is always celebrated as a prestigious enumeration of the victorious annexation and heroic struggle of the forefathers by a fifth generation successor, are always in vogue but books like *The Cry for the Dead* that consists of an embittered truth is difficult to come across. My own personal search for this treasure house of Wright became difficult even in Australia, her own land. Such handful of canonical works cannot keep her as a minor talent. My exploration of her enthralling works will focus on how Wright unfolds Australian space from the ambiguous inscriptions of history.

My purpose in this thesis is therefore to study her works in the light of her own enumeration of Australian space yielding to a new understanding. Initially she has appeared as a poet whose poetry has given rise to a variety of critical responses and various theoretical

and philosophical approaches. However, most of them follow predictable trajectories that range from old historical- biographical criticism by authors like Graham K. Smith and Norman Toby Simms,⁴ or Jennifer Strauss's socio political approach who has viewed her in the light of an environmentalist and activist, in relation to her withdrawal from the active world of poetry in her later life. Wright's firm decision to etch no poetry till her last days is often used as a frame to see her in the light of an activist and environmentalist⁵. The twin tropes of Romanticism and Negativity that relate to the dialectic of origin and absence are also used to read her poetry⁶. White Australian guilt and the burden of unforgettable memory is another essential tool of the poetic analysis of Judith Wright as observed in the study of J.J. Healy.⁷ Last but not the least the feminist perspective on her work emerges in many critical observations like Susan Sheridan's "Temper Romantic; Bias, Offensively Feminine: Australian Women Writers and Literary Nationalism" or Shirley Walker's *Flame and Shadow: A Study of Judith Wright's Poetry*.⁸ However, none of these works ever intervened to show how her poetry and prose interrogate the question of allegiance, appropriation, reconstruction of history and above all, how space emerges as a phenomenological imagination in a poetic, emotional and aesthetic way. Wright's works appear to me as unique discourses on an exceptional new definition of space in contrast to imperial discourse that defines space in terms of history, geometry, cartography and technology. David Mc Cooney's *Artful Histories: Modern Australian Autobiography*⁹ is an interesting book that reflects on the importance of place in Australian autobiography, a discussion that my fourth chapter hopes to recast in the light of Wright's autobiography, with its alternative approach to problems of gendered space and a search for the space of the 'other'. No one has yet tackled the emerging definition of space in the works of the Australian bard.

The ensemble of chapters in progress through a series of arguments using works of Judith Wright, both poetry and prose, will have the following pattern. In the first chapter, the focus

is on the emergence of the concept of space ranging from geographers of antiquity like Polybius and Strabo, Isaac Newton's Absolute Theory, George Berkeley's and Leibniz's Relational Theory, Kantian theory of Space to ultimately Australian historian Paul Carter's concept of Spatial History in contrast to Imperial History. Paul Carter's *The Road to Botany Bay* shows 'space' as an object of imperial occlusion and enumerates his own definition of space in his theory of Spatial History. He sees the grand historical millennium of order emerging out of chaos as one of the grand promises of imperial historiography.¹⁰ Carter's concept of the dichotomy of Imperial History and Spatial History is relevant in my thesis because Judith Wright's works appear to me as a challenge to the settled diacritical boundaries of the theorisation of space. The purpose of tracing these theoretical parameters is to create a line of spatial delineation in the background against which Wright, as a twentieth century writer emerges with her own definition of space, sometimes alluding to and sometimes challenging these previous discourses. The chapter also focuses on Judith Wright's arrival in the literary and political scenario of Australia as a white woman writer with a 'difference' in relation to both white and black male and female writers of Australia. Her line of divergence in relation to her biographical and literary readings is followed by such interrogations like the concepts of 'space' and 'place' and their transformation in her works, the phenomenological reflections of space and finally how Wright attempts to discard Imperial History in favour of Spatial History. Is Wright being completely able to transgress the parameters of Imperial History or is it about the paradigmatic conflict between the rulers and the ruled? The search for an answer to this question is what the thesis aims at. Her 'difference' from rest of the writers is reflected in terms of her visualisation of Australian space which instead of being a homogenous extension, is full of variations, intricate with complex psychology, and deeply embedded with a panorama of emotions and hues of life. Wright's objection to homogenisation of the Australian space as dull and dreary is because of

her artistic engrossment within the space with its minute details catalysed by a strong love and passion for the land. In her essay “Some problems of being an Australian poet”, Wright expresses her concern towards this tendency of homogenisation:

This sameness has made us among the most conservative and xenophobic of nations. ‘The river of her immense stupidity’, as Hope puts it: ‘floods her monotonous tribes from Cairns to Perth’; but we find this soothing. With a population so perilously stretched across such an alien distance, divisions are always threatening. We have never really been a society at all, but something much more like a sacred consensus. (*Because I* 51)

It is this concern that I will trace in her writing to show how Wright has argued in her creative outpour that the Australian space with its distinctness is not a uniform object which can be perceived without difficulty. This creative genius has seen the terra nullius beyond the mere rational. The chapter with its logical theoretical development will look forward to see Wright and her emerging critique of space as a gradual process of distancing from the predominant western discourses of the alteration of space with place and time.

The second chapter is concerned with her enigmatic, voluminous, disturbing poetic field and the various spaces like lost space, hidden space, invisible space, panoptical space, spaces of cornucopia and several heterotopias emerging in her poetry. The chapter throws light on both her contradictory and purposely popularised poems as well as the less known and yet most brilliant poetry collections like *The Moving Image*, *Woman to Man*, *The Gateway*, *Two Fires*, *Birds*, *The Forest*, *The Other Half*, *Fourth Quarter*, *Alive Poems* and *Phantom Dwellings*. *The Moving Image* is poignant with lyrics that reflect the Australian space with an uncanny spirit of its own. All these poems are replete with phenomenological effusions which Wright explains in *Born of The Conquerors*:

The country that Aborigines see is very different. In so far as we are beginning to understand a little of their way of seeing, the country is made up of songs and stories, linked across territories and tracks, and of the body of its makers—the ancestral creator animals and heroes, the spirits such as The Great Rainbow Snake, source and controller of its waters, clouds and rains, and the totality of being Aborigines living as dead, as descendant and upholders of the country's continuing existence through their creation of it by ritual and ceremony and song. (*Born of 138*)

Woman to Man, with its powerful and challenging poems perhaps conveys what Wright wants to see in art: “the true function of an art and a culture is to interpret us to ourselves, and to relate us to the country and the society in which we live”. (*Preoccupations In Australian Poetry* xviii) *The Gateway*, her third anthology symbolises the poetic gateway through which one can enter the unperturbed Australian space where the poet will take her readers along with herself to feel the spirit of the place, and its eternal creative force. The entry through the ‘gateway’ releases the Australia space with abundant emotions trapped for centuries, perhaps waiting for a creative angel like Wright to rescue it. Poems from *Two Fires* reveal how the Australian space is threatened by the atomic power and still contains the imperishable energy of life. Judith Wright's *Birds* is unique where her catalogue of poems on Australian birds revives the invigorating mystery of the terra nullius which is beyond the settler's perception. The birds sometimes personify the vast space of Australia in need of humanity's love and caress. Meredith McKinney, Judith Wright's daughter who has written the Introduction in the same book writes:

My mother's love of birds led her to many encounters with them, some of which are commemorated in these poems. She was always rescuing wounded birds, and we would commonly have at least one of them recuperating about

the house. The poem 'Currawong' (p. 16), with its fond description of a bird which so many dislike, was originally addressed to a particular tenacious young currawong (named simply 'Bird') that she reared from infancy, and which refused to leave her even after it had learned to fly. (*Birds* 4)

Meredith's vivid narration of her sensitive mother's love for the birds reveal that unlike her forefathers who could not tame and control the land, Judith Wright has proved how love as the timeless medication can heal repressed wounds. The poems from *Forest* meditate on the exploitation of natural environment. Such vignettes of details evoke a mysterious and philosophical speculation of the Australia space. *The Other Half* consists of poems which are solely from the other side of the margin, where Wright attempts to seek the lost voices of the women of her race through the phenomenological study of the domestic space of Australia. In *Fourth Quarter*, we come across the poetic self-involvement with the Australian space. The self here is the predominant aspect which she visualises as the extension of Australia. *The Alive Poems* and *Phantom Dwellings* are the last two series that mark the departure of Wright from the world of poetry. These mature poems, penned as her last contribution to the Australian poetic world show a philosophical Wright reflecting back on the cycle of possession and dispossession, on the concept of 'dwelling' and contradicting such erroneous concepts as terra nullius and 'virgin land'. The thesis looks forward to phenomenological interpretations of her poems providing an invisible orbit to pre-colonial Australia. Further, the research probes into the psychology of space in relation to self and body politics. Laurie Kutchins in the essay called "A Wild Sound, Wild Wound: Some Thoughts on Judith Wright" comments:

Her poems happen to glance out past the glow of the fire, where they see things moving out there where it is otherwise too dark and shadowy to see anything at all, other than pure darkness and night.....Her poems let me

begin to feel like I have her extraordinary eyes. I begin to see how the earth is ghosted with things we have not acknowledged or integrated over a long time, things we think are gone, or absent, but are indeed present, shadowy, integral, and always moving just beyond our conscious or logical grasp, just past our limits of literal vision.¹¹

She is not simply a woman who has ventured in man's oeuvre, but has emerged as a pioneer of the space of 'alterity'. This chapter will see how Wright attempts to bridge the gulf between the 'self' and the 'place'. She herself has proclaimed about this process:

These hills and plains, these rivers and plants and animals were what I had to work with as a writer, and they themselves contained the hidden depths of a past beyond anything that cities and the history of British invasion had to offer. (*Going On Talking* 51)

I will trace how Wright sets out to change the psychosis of fear, frustration and the ennui of sensibilities. The purpose is to see how Wright passionately reveals that the 'space' as a 'place' inheres the alterities of the spatial and cultural binaries. In this metonymic search, the question arises whether, she is completely successful to revive the Aboriginal essence with the Midas' touch of a poet's mnemonic homage or not. Her journey from troubled heterotopism to poised chronotopism¹² with a totemic effect of her healing poetry will provide the answer for this question.

The third chapter consists of the parallel analysis of two binary prose works of Wright written during two different periods in her life. *The Generation of Men* appeared as a white settler discourse in the shape of a family saga and *The Cry For The Dead*, is an attempt to correct the past. In this chapter the research is pursued to find out how Wright, through these family memoirs, reveals a transgression not only from innocence to experience but also from space to place and a detour from present to past. How does Wright deterritorialise the

colonial space? The thesis seeks the answer in these two works through the analysis of the intriguing issues emerging in her works like wilderness and untamed space, boundary, ownership and identity, anthropocentrism¹³, the metaphors of spatial anxiety extending to cultural anxiety, ideas of nationhood, guilt, repentance and a forged mutuality of existence, the politics of domestic space behind the curtains of colonial mansion, the geopoetics¹⁴ of the family diaries and albums, the development of the townscape and railways, and finally Wright's voluntary withdrawal from the white lineage. The emergence of place in the Australian consciousness from the inchoate spaces of colonial elision and illusion is also focused here. I will also focus on her critical study of the domestic architecture, the function and purpose of such architectonic vertical structure of space induced with the game of power and the politics of photography where women are merely seen within the fractured frames which are atrophied and diminished. For Wright, the photographic and pictorial attempt to legitimise Imperial History brings one to that psychological edge where sheer insecurity probes one to possess the space of encroachment because of the fear of loss. Is the man-made scarring of roadways, settlements, mining and culture seen as development or as hindrance to the rhythmic flow of life? In her controversial prose work called *The Coral Battleground*, published in 1977, which deals with the concern to save the Great Barrier Reef by preventing mining. Wright observes as quoted by Margarita Bowen: "It was easy to see that the shibboleths of growth and progress needed a balancing force, if the future was going to be lived in a world fit for humans."¹⁵ Wright's concern is not anti-science but to protect the natural space of Australia through a science of poetry. The chapter will be reflecting on how in the course of mastering this alien landscape, the space is endowed with erosion, endurance and struggle of the mindscape of humanity. In the course of transformation of the 'space' into a cultural 'place', Wright also interrogates concept of 'home' and 'homelessness'. Like the Aborigines, movement is central to Wright's understanding of place making. At this point to

reinforce the seminal role of Wright as the proponent of an alternate historiography, we return to Paul Carter and his book *Repressed Spaces: The Poetic of Agoraphobia* in which he tours the cultural history of agoraphobia, the fear of the open space. Its symptoms are first described in *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621) by Robert Burton, although it is not until 1871 that Carl Otto Westphal coined the term to describe several of his patients who experienced severe anxiety when walking through the streets. He concludes by proposing a new way of regarding the open space, a view that Wright used to a great effect when she attempted to move away from a Shame-History and a Guilt-History of Australian life in *The Cry For The Dead*.

The fourth chapter's quest is to look into the concept of space in her autobiography *Half A Lifetime* in relation to gendered space. It also explores how her autobiography is a search for a 'Thirdspace'¹⁶ for all her woman predecessors suffering from white woman's burden. In continuation with the third chapter, this chapter also forms a study of contrast between the matrilineal space of her autobiography and the phallogentric space of the memoirs of her forefathers. In her autobiography, her own 'body' as an emerging concept problematizes the patriarchal appropriation of the female body as the object of possession and control and also reveals how this body can be the space of freedom for a woman. She deconstructs such sexist iconography of the feminine body as the archetypal figure of the voluptuous rampant woman destructive to society, the white female body as the space of culture and discipline or the 'shadowy body' that exists as absent-present beside the vaulting ego of the phallic signifier. Wright in her autobiography travels across this bodily space from violence, discipline, punishment to a creative locus which connects the mind and the spirit. The autobiography is junctured by her poetic effusion especially at the beginning of each chapter which will further lead us to ponder over the connection between mind, body and the creative space. Finally this chapter delineates such emerging conflicts in her book like liberated space verses

confined space, spaces of submission and domination, safe and conflicting spaces, and 'topophilia'¹⁷ verses agoraphobia. For Carter the process of recollection occurs through writing and Judith Wright's autobiography revives the places through the memories associated with it. I would also like to read her autobiography as a text where history emerges as an ensemble of narratives of places and as an emancipatory spatial discourse. Her autobiography also reconstructs history as the reconciled space between man and woman.

In conclusion when I arrive at the fifth chapter, it views how the Australian lost time of the pre-colonial Australia, is revived by Wright by 'spacing' time through interstices and spatial metaphors. Her awareness of the oriental studies, the Aboriginal philosophy of life and the influence of the philosophy of Jack McKinney are revealed in her final enumeration of Australian space. This chapter further arrives with the proposition that Judith Wright's literary output has as its project the exploration of a space that unlikely retains its past. Being the fifth generation successor of the coloniser's race who never confronted the conflict between the settlers and the native, Judith Wright can easily remain unperturbed avoiding the guilt that disturbs one's own orientation. On the contrary, she comes across the 'crossroad' teeming with the sense of guilt, brutality, crime, responsibility and irreducible sin awaiting for centuries to mingle with the desire to confess, love and embrace the space. This crossroad is the space of cross-cultural exchange, an encounter with the phantoms of guilt and the deprived wrenched out souls from the past. At this crossroad she encounters the discursive multiple selves confused and baffled, she encounters pre-colonial Australia mocking post-colonial down under. This crossroad is the space in between; a kind of no man's land where Wright knows:

however close our touch
or intimate our speech,
silences, spaces reach

most deep, and will not close. (*A Human* 166)

This poem titled as “Space Between” defines the void, the aporia that the crossroad stands for. Crossroad also signifies decision, a direction that one has to take. In the light of James Clifford’s theory of “travelling culture”¹⁸, it can be said that from this crossroad she will start her poetic detour into an incessant process of ‘being’ and ‘becoming’, in a transcendental process of gaining new identity sometimes like ‘another housewife’ whose hands “with love and blood imbrued”, sometimes as a lost aunt whose “grief too unseen, resentment too denied” died in silence, sometimes like ‘Jacky’ who has died with “unacknowledged yearning”, sometimes as chiding Eve whose “trouble was love”, sometimes like the Flame-tree who knows the art of living or sometimes like the lion with “crystal glance of love” awaiting for the ‘wilderness’. (*A Human* 132, 136, 144, 194, 57) Wright’s works emerge here as an endless journey from present to past in search of future with the burden of memory, forgetfulness and purgation. Bruce Bennett in his essay comments:

The public persona, the Judith Wright who addresses herself to educationists, university students or representatives of government, emerges from her various papers and speeches as a human being whose guiding impulses are both conservative and reforming. She is concerned primarily to reform Australian society by rescuing the living aspects of its forgotten past. Her methods are not those of the rationalist, for she has a deeply held belief in the primal energies of the human heart.¹⁹

The thesis thus reinterprets Judith Wright’s works emphasising the necessity of reading the Australian bard in the light of Spatial History.

Before the thesis delves into spatial discourses from various branches of knowledge and Judith Wright’s own delineation of space, it is essential to have a brief idea about the Aboriginal culture and its cosmology which has influenced Judith Wright’s reflection of the

Australian space. The Aboriginal culture can be traced back to fifty thousand years before the colonial settlement. The orientation of their culture is rooted in the Dreamtime stories that not only entail the genesis of the native culture, but it also elucidates in detail the various ways by which the space of Australia can be seen as Dreaming Tracks that trace the process of Ancestral 'being'. Dreamtime refers to that mythological time when the entire space of Australia is induced with life. Dreamtime is known as 'Ungud', 'Wongar', 'Altyjerre', 'Bulurru' and in various other names among the heterogeneous tribes. Dreamtime sets out the identity of individual life, it shapes and structures the society and it also reflects the Aboriginal cosmology when ancestral spirits embark on epic journey and dwell on earth to form land, river, hills, various fauna and flora. The Ngarrindjeri tribe believes that Murray River is formed when Ngurunderi, an ancestral spirit has chased a fish that has widened the space of the river's course. Hence in a lizard they believe a spirit called Tjati dwell, Kuniya in Python and Mala in wallaby. These spirits possess human traits and dwell eternally in a cyclical pattern in the form of various phenomena in the space. Aboriginal legends, songs, dances and body paintings depict how these sovereign spirits embody the space with their emotions, colour and structure. For example spirits called Mimi are thought of to be tricksters and mischievous, dwelling inside rocks and barks. They are very thin and sharp and have the power to disappear and hide quickly leaving their shadows behind, which is often captured in the form of paintings. They are still mystifying figures and hold immense interests for the archaeologists. The Mimis love chasing emus, dancing and dwindling among rocks and crevices. They have a strong connection with the wallabies and it is believed that their spirits dwell among the wallabies. Another very significant spirit is the Rainbow Serpent, that mainly dwells in water bodies like lagoons, billabongs, lakes and rivers and it is believed that the Rainbow Serpent for the first time has ushered in the dry land with water and life. They are called serpent because they are snake-like in shape and their Dream Tracks mark a gliding

wave like pattern reflected on innumerable water bodies. It is a very strong powerful spirit that represents both creative and destructive energy incorporated in the Australian space. Another ethereal spirit, called Wandjina is an intriguing spirit that is believed to be born out of the milky ways. They represent themselves as powerful spirits almost beatific and God like, holding immense power and control over the Aborigines. They have no mouth because their words are redundant in contrast to their powerful silence. The animal emu is also found in Aboriginal mythology and is believed to be the seven sisters who have become the Pleiades. This spirit exists in various living creatures like birds and animals and is believed to play a vital role in shaping the sun, the source of light and energy of this world. In the mythology of Dreamtime, emus appear in various forms, sometimes like falcons exhilarating in the boundless sky, sometimes with vivacious energy dancing and singing in the air till the spirit landed on earth at the cost of losing her wings.

In the Aboriginal cosmology, the entire space of Australia is filled with an imperishable spiritual power which the natives can sense in the pulsating life on the land. For them, the significance of the living space is not evaluated in terms of material benefit, utilitarian purpose or in terms of measurement, distance or size. The Euclidean spatial dimension is beyond their imagination and instead the significance of space is reflected in terms of their Dreaming location. The space comprises of also Skyworld (heaven) and Underworld (hell) that stretch beyond the terrestrial landscape and atmosphere of the earth. It encompasses the celestial bodies, the emotions and attachment of their existence with the other living creatures. In the Aboriginal world, there is no such sharp distinction between past, present and future because of a cyclical process of time that blurs such disjunctions. The totemic significance of this space is also revealed in Wright's works for whom the present and the future are inextricably interlinked with the past. The realm of Aboriginal cultural praxis interweaves the ancestral, the living and the unborn into one crucible and hence time as an

abstract linear concept is insignificant. Unlike the western grids and maps, for the Aborigines, the space is scattered all over with Dream Tracks which an Aborigine can discern only. Such significance of the Dream Tracks is hinted in the 2002 Australian drama film called *Rabbit Proof Fence* directed by Phillip Noyce mainly based on the book of Doris Pilkington Garimara titled *Follow the Rabbit-Proof Fence*. The figure of Jacky, an Aboriginal boy who repeatedly appears in many Australian writers' texts, has become the metaphor of the geography of Australia. Jacky has reappeared again and again in Mudrooroo Narogin or Colin Johnson's texts representing humanity at the fringe, in Patrick White's *Voss*, in Jack Davis' poetry and last but not the least in Judith Wright's poetic canvas. Jacky disowns all such division between self and the other but his body represents primeval energy withstanding the test of time although the body is subjected to brutality and violence. The Aboriginal art of rock painting is often transformed into body painting as represented by Jacky, elaborating the significance of the body as the cultural space and the reservoir of primordial energy.

In the vast expanse of Australian space, the intensity of bondage between the Aborigines and the various phenomenological existences reveals an intricate intertwined attachment. Hence, an Aboriginal mother during her pregnancy is said to have engaged in a pre-birth communication, indulging in a spiritual bondage with the child. Such effervescent feelings can also be seen in Judith Wright's poetry like "Woman to Man", "The Unborn" or "The Child" where she endows herself with this extraordinary power. So the union of man and woman leading to the birth of the child is invested with spiritual significance which Wright also reflects in her poetry. They call this unborn baby as 'spirit-child' and are interpreted variously from tribe to tribe. According to the Ngalia tribe, the spirit-child sits under the gum tree eating the gum and searching for a mother who suits her. The Tiwis view the spirit-child as too small like two or three inches and cannot be seen easily. The Western Australian

Aborigines compare the spirit-child with walnuts while central Australian Arunta tribe observes the child as red pebble. What is significant is that, the child has its root in ecology and the Aborigines believe that they are born out of the sky, land, river and air that comprise the space. Humanity does not exist hierarchically in a superior position in the ecological pyramid, but rather they form a chain of life along with the other living forces. This marks the fundamental difference between Aboriginal concept of space and the western concept of space as explained by Paul Rodaway:

These aboriginal peoples did not have a concept of space as an empty void which might be filled with objects, but it was a space already filled, an acoustic space. This contrasts to the Western concept of space. This is graphically illustrated in the tale of the Inuit hunter who when told that an oil can was empty, struck a match and peered inside and bore the scars for life! 'Empty' space made no sense to them. All space has life and living forces of some kind, therefore all space has sound, or voices, which define it.²⁰

This sense of close bondage and kinship is almost like the life force that keeps them together. The totemic essence that one inherits during the time of initiation generates spiritual bondage. At the time of death, they indulge in ceremonial worship of the ancestral spirits to merge the spirit of the deceased with the entire space. Even the various ceremonial practices like dances, songs and initiations reveal a deep reverence for the space and a reflection of the self within the space. The ceremony with all its magical effect almost becomes the healing procedure to drive out pain and sufferings of life. The folk lore, songs and dances accompanied by such antique instruments like boomerang and clapsticks are traditional ways of celebration of their culture. This acoustic space of music and rhythm are reflection of Aboriginal heritage. Judith Wright's book *The Cry For The Dead*, reveals such attempt among the natives which appears to the European mind as a perilous monstrous act. Judith

Wright is fascinated by the rich indigenous culture and ethics of living. Though she is a pure white blood descendent, yet Wright's conceptualisation of Australian space unconsciously reflects the subtext of Aboriginal concept of time and space. Poet Fiona Capp has observed Wright's gradual inclination towards Aboriginal philosophy so that at one point in her life, she is no more afraid of death because she has realised that death is not the end of life. Capp explains:

In her early to middle phase, when she was in the first flush of love and more intent on celebrating life than thinking deeply about death, Judith often invoked death as an abstract state of non-being, the necessary darkness out of which life springs, part of an on-going cycle. Later, the idea of death served as an occasion to reflect, in a very Buddhist fashion, on how fiercely we cling to notions of 'self' or the 'I' and thus live in terror of our own end.

Life and death were defined by the flow and transformation of energy. Each individual life was a kind of pathway along which energy flowed. Each followed 'unguessable routes' but all ended at the same point...²¹

Her celebration and incorporation of her existence within the primeval space of Australia is much like the ritualistic epiphanic Dreamtime, which involves the process of perpetual transformation, an incessant process of becoming and merging the self with the space. Judith Wright's reflection on the Australian space is embedded in anguish and love. The thesis will thus explore how space in her works is never haunted by onslaught of time but is endowed with a distinctive culture and essence with an existential consciousness. Through a shamanistic perception, she performs a ritualistic ceremony in order to heal the wound caused by amnesia in the nation's history. She is drowned in the hypnotic rhythm of the birds, the

rejuvenating rhythm of corroboree or the chants by annihilating time and through an organic solidarity between the self and the space.

NOTES

1. Bruce Bennett, "Judith Wright, Moraliser", *Westerly* 21, (1976), 1976: 76-82.
<http://www.austlit.edu.au/common/fulltextcontent/pdfs/brn426/brn426.pdf>
2. Judith Wright, *Born of The Conquerors: Selected Essays* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press 1991) title.
3. Meanjin is an Australian literary journal that has appeared in 1940 in Brisbane. When Wright is about twenty eight years, while working in the University of Queensland, she has started working for this journal in 1944. Along with Clem Christesen in Brisbane, she has contributed earnestly to bring this literary magazine in to the limelight. However, in her later years, she is disgusted by the political propaganda that influenced Meanjin. Honest to the core, Wright has openly criticised the journal in her letters. For further details see, Judith Wright, *With Love and Fury Selected Letters of Judith Wright*, ed. Patricia Clarke and Meredith McKinney (Canberra: National Library of Australia, 2006) 97-98, 110, 355.

Jindyworobak is the name coined by Rex Ingamells for a society of Adelaide based Australian poets whom he has found in 1938. Their deep believe in environmental values has become the main source to define the culture of a nation. For details see Kenneth H. Gifford, *Jindyworobak Towards an Australian Culture* (Melbourne: Jindyworobak Publications 1944).
4. Norman Tcby Simms, *Judith Wright: An Appreciation*. (English Dept. University of Waikato, 1976); also see Graeme Kinkross Smith, "Judith Wright 1915-." In *Australia's Writers*, (Melbourne: Thomas Nelson Australia, 1980) 289-96.

5. Jennifer Strauss, *Judith Wright* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1996).
6. Paul Kane, *Australian Poetry: Romanticism and Negativity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).
7. J.J Healy, *Literature and the Aborigine in Australia* (St Lucia, Queensland: University of Queensland Press, 1989).
8. Susan Sheridan, " 'Temper, romantic; bias, offensively feminine': Australian women writers and literary nationalism" *A Double Colonization: Colonial and Post-Colonial Women's Writing* (Peterson, Kirsten Holst; Rutherford, Anna, 1986) 49-58; also see Shirley Walker, *Flame and Shadow : a Study of Judith Wright's Poetry* (St Lucia, Qld. Australia: University of Queensland Press,1991).
9. David Mc Coeey, *Artful Histories: Modern Australian Autobiography*. (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1996)
10. Paul Carter, *The Road to Botany Bay: An Essay in Spatial History* (London & Boston: Faber and Faber, 1987) 12.
11. Laurie Kutchins, "A Wild Sound, Wild Wound: Some Thoughts on Judith Wright" *Local-Global: Identity, Security, Community* 3, (2007) 42-51. 17 Aug 2011<<http://search.informit.com.au/documentSummary;dn=132735008266448;res=IELHSS>> ISSN: 1832-6919.
12. This term 'chronotope' is coined by M.M Bakhtin to explain how language describes the interaction of time and space. Bakhtinian scholars like Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist have explained it as "a unit of analysis for studying language according to the ratio and characteristics of the temporal and spatial categories represented in that language" To know further see M.M. Bakhtin, "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel: Notes toward a Historical Poetics." trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. *The Dialogic*

Imagination: Four Essays. Ed. Michael Holquist. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981. 259-422.

13. Anthropocentrism refers to human chauvinism or an attempt to reveal human supremacy. The word is interchangeable with humanocentrism. Alfred Russel Wallace propounded 'anthropocentric theory' stating that the universe is created primarily for mankind. The term is used mainly in environmental study. See Gary Steiner, *Anthropocentrism and its Discontents: The Moral Status of Animals in the History of Western Philosophy*. (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010).
14. Kenneth White, a Scottish-French poet has coined the term "géopoétique" first in his personal diary and then publicly disclosed it by creating "Institut international de Géopétique". The discourse indulges in a critical study of the western practices in separating mankind from natural world. It indulges in searching a new space by means of poetry. To know further see "Defining Geopoetics" by Par Federigo Italiano at <http://trans.univ-paris3.fr/spip.php?article256>.
15. Margarita Bowen, "Judith Wright—a tribute," *Wisenet* 34, (1994): 13-14 March 1994 <http://www.wisenet-australia.org/profiles/JudithWright.htm>.
16. The term refers to Edward Soja's coinage in his book *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places*. Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1977. The concept is delineated in detail in chapter one.
17. Yi Fu Tuan in his book has dealt with this concept which is discussed in chapter one in details. See *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes, and Values*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1974.

18. James Clifford, "Traveling Cultures" *Cultural Studies* ed Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson, and Paula A. Treichler (London: Routledge, 1992) 110.
19. Bennett, *Westerly* 76-82.
<http://www.austlit.edu.au/common/fulltextcontent/pdfs/brn426/brn426.pdf>
20. Paul Rodaway, *Sensuous Geographies: Body, Sense and Place* (London: Routledge, 1994) 113.
21. Fiona Capp, *My Blood's Country: A Journey Through The Landscape that Inspired Judith Wright's Poetry*. (New South Wales: Harper Collins Publishers Australia, 2010) 17.