INTO THE SOARING SKY

Time to me this truth has taught
('Tis a treasure worth revealing),
More offend from want of thought
Than from any want of feeling.

--Charles Swain
CHAPTER IV
INTO THE SOARING SKY

Wright's poems on social themes can be critically analyzed in many ways. The second chapter is on her early poems and the third is on the poems of darkness. This fourth chapter, which is a study on her poems on birds, is highly symbolical. She has compared the plight of the Aborigines with that of the timid birds that are weak and unopposing and are often subjected to exploitation and torture by the birds of prey. The birds of prey symbolize the mighty and the powerful that tend to suppress the helpless in order to achieve their selfish ends.

Some poems of Wright taken from the book on Birds are critically analyzed here making use of the new criticism particularly the reader-response theory. Every reading results in a new interpretation, agrees Stanley Fish, a new critic.

The type of criticism that once dominated the study of literature and that is still employed in classrooms today is the traditional approach involving an analysis on history and biography. In this approach the work of art frequently appeared to be of secondary importance, something that merely illustrated background. Most of the old critics studied literature as essentially biography or history or some other branch of learning, rather than as art.

The New Critics, insisted that scholars concentrate on the work itself, on the text, examining it as art. They maintained the fact that literature had
an intrinsic worth, that it was not just one of the means of transmitting biography and history. Nevertheless, in their zeal to avoid the danger of interpreting a literary work solely as biography and history, many twentieth century followers of new criticism have been guilty of what may well be a more serious mistake, that of ignoring any information not in the work itself, however helpful or necessary it might be.

From an analysis of Wright’s poems it can be understood that she had strived hard for the Aborigines as well as for the flora and fauna of Australia. Animals of a great variety inhabit the world of her poetry. From the beginning of her work there are poems, which see nature as full of violence and destruction as well as of beauty and diversity, opines Jennifer Strauss (82). Her book on birds is colorful and lively, each giving a new meaning to every reader. It is here that the reader-response theory is applied.

Literature is primarily an art, but it must also be affirmed that art does not exist in a vacuum. It is a creation by someone at sometime in history and it is intended to speak to other human beings about some idea or issue that has human relevance. Any work of art will be always more meaningful to knowledgeable people than to uninformed ones; and many literary classics are admittedly autobiographical, propagandistic or topical.

H.A. Taine, a French Critic bespeaks a hereditary and environmental determinism. Any work of art is a reflection of the author’s life and times or the life and times of the characters in the work, asserts Guerin, who
continues to state that poets have from earliest times been the historians, the interpreters of contemporary culture and the prophets of their people (22). Wright’s poems reveal that she had donned the role of a historian duly recording the clashes among cultures and finally became a prophet leading the natives to liberation. Most readers would probably agree with T.S. Eliot that, “No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone”. (169)

Guerin too agrees with this and quotes Richard D. Altick’s words that “almost every literary work is attended by a host of outside circumstances which, once we expose and explore them, suffice it with additional meanings” (24). His further observations on Ronald S. Crane show that true poetry is always a direct outpouring of personal feelings; its values are determined by the nature of the emotions which it expresses; its distinctive effort is “to bring unthinkable thoughts and unsayable sayings within the range of human minds and ears” (24). Wright’s poems are no exception to this and her poems conceal various meanings, which is left to the readers’ interpretation.

A.D. Hope, the contemporary of Wright, in Australian Writers and their Work says that poems change one’s estimate of the person and the person invades the poem and colours it insensibly so that it seems meaningless or impertinent to have an ‘opinion’ about it. He who had visited Wright, when she was holidaying on the top of Tamborine Mountain in Queensland, in 1954 opined this when he read a poem called “The Cycads” published in the work Woman to Man: “I enjoy and admire “The
Cycads”, but cannot tell whether it is a good poem or not, in the literary sense; I cannot even sort out at this distance of time, which of my impressions come from the poem and which from those moments on the thunder blue edge of the mountain. The things I have to say about Judith Wright, then, are personal impressions in which the writer and her work are mingled” (3). The cycads is the reminiscence of the past. The old tree has lived to see the destruction of nature. The cycads on Tamborine mountain leads the poet’s thoughts to the deep past. Hope, being a man of different thoughts had concluded thus.

The inevitable passage of time, the glamour of the stories and myths that solitary people make, and the harshness of the land encountered by pioneer white settlers are conveyed in many poems. So a writer’s work is of course an outpouring of emotions. A person and a poem cannot be extricated from one another. Assessments are to be left to professional critics.

Wright’s voice for the voiceless Aborigines which originated in the beginning broadens like a river from its source through the third chapter and here it is nature with its birds and animals. Her book on Bird was devoted entirely to portraits of the characters and personalities of individual birds. It is more like a seventeenth century book of Theophrastan characters; ease, lightness and irony runs through the poems in this volume. Though the poems, vivid and accurate in detail, have an element of simple humour and are written for the entertainment of the child, they still have invisible irony
through the lines. There are a lot of poems in her book on Birds. These poems can be classified into two kinds, those on birds of prey or rough, tyrant birds and those on soft, frightened ones like the blue-wrens and the doves. The characteristic qualities of the Aborigines and the British are portrayed through the birds. Many things like the Aborigines' hatred towards the British, the British usurping and overpowering the weak Aborigines, the poet's own feelings about these and her concern for the natives are all highlighted here. The pride and haughtiness of the British are also reflected in some poems. Many poems not only bring out the pathetic feelings, but also point out the arrogance of the dominant.

Creation in poetry is a sort of spiritual mid-wifery; the thing is already there, moving towards light, demanding its birth, states A.D. Hope. The poet creates its image makes it accessible to man as an idea and as a feeling, and it begins to take shape as a fact to form a recognized part of its world. (Aus. Writers 9)

A text does not exist until it is read by some reader. A reader has a part in creating or actually does create the text. It is somewhat like the old question posed in philosophy classes--if a tree falls in the forest and no one hears it, does it make a sound? Hence it is the readers, with whatever experience they bring to the text, who give it its meaning.

Judith Wright had written many volumes of poems and she had highlighted many themes, which include time and eternity, philosophy of life and old age, mother-child relationship, poems on war and death and also
on suppression of the native Aborigines. Since she had dedicated her life to the upliftment of the Aborigines, many of her personal feelings about them are reflected in her poems; she is also a nature poet coordinating herself with Wordsworth. The poems on birds have nature and pity combined in them. To the school children, they are poems on the different varieties of birds found on the highlands of Australia, which may just be beautiful and descriptive; but to a student of literature or a student of humanism or human psychology the poems have an immense depth.

A symbol, in the broadest sense of the term, is anything, which signifies something else. The poems from the volume *Birds* are more symbolical than just being descriptive. The characteristics of the birds described are related either to the British or to the natives. The beautiful expressions of the poems make the reader easily understand what lies deep inside them, provided the reader looks at it pensively. If not, the poems are just peacocks or turkeys or koels.

The British were the mightiest for centuries; they had set up colonies all over the world. Australia, the land chosen by the British for punishing the criminals, was soon colonized by the English Army and their officers along with their family. A land which had so far remained unseen and unexplored by the rest of the world was occupied by the Aborigines who had wandered as nomads and were living peacefully among the untrodden bushes. They had made Australia their home; but the poor black people were driven off into the deep forest and bushes. They had to let go their
hold of Australia. But Wright who was humane to the core does not allow it; she voices out the feelings of the Aborigines through her poems. And the main themes of her poetry—the evocation of the Australian landscape, its people and its creatures, the metaphysical quest with its constant tendency to mystic experience, social comment and social satire are seen in plenty in her poems. She is primarily lyric in her approach. Her themes too are primarily Australian and contemporary. As A.D. Hope had said, she eschews the dramatic stance in which the author lets some other character speak for himself (Aus. Writers 10). The volume containing poems on birds has different birds speaking on different people; some are Wright herself in the guise of birds.

Most of the birds are metaphorically described. In “Black-shouldered Kite”, Wright not only majestically describes the might of the British, but also tells about the English hunger for power, their force and strength:

Carved out of strength, the furious kite
shoulders off the winds’ hate.
The black mark that bars his white
Is the pride and hunger of Cain. (CP166)

The poet has very beautifully begun the poem. The English were all strength to soar high against the mighty wind. The use of the colour “black” and “white” show the poet’s liking as well as the dislike for the British. The word bar, reveals the black mark on the white of the British. Cain’s hunger for Abel is seen in the British hunger for power. “The still eye” of the kite
threatens harm to the weaker birds. It is true that hunger and force made the British beautiful; but it also turned the bird to a “knife-blade”, harming others.

According to George Orwell no one believes that it is possible to overcome force except by greater force (163). There is no law but only power; and Wright’s power lies in her poetry, to shake the society and wake up the Aborigines. She is the greater force supporting them. Just as Orwell says that Kipling does not understand the economic aspect of the relationship between the highbrow and the blimp, Judith too sees in an Aborigine a highly civilized man or an administrator in the place of a coolie.

The British had not only made the Aborigines their slaves; their hunger for power had taken them to Africa, to Canada and had brought them to India, too. The poem has, in a nutshell, the entire might of the British as well as the harm it had brought to many a weak. As an English, she feels proud of the achievements of her people. But as a human, she feels sorry for those who are brought to harm by her men. Wright sees that the central theme of her poetry is the complete humanization of the universe. She sees that Eden is not something that an individual is trying to return to, but towards which the human race as a whole aspires.

In “Migrant Swift”, she once again brings out the characteristics of the swift which soars too high. The swift entirely depended on the air for its survival. Pride made him haughty. Too high in the air, the bird looks down upon everything, the sea and the land. But the pride had a fall and the
stretch of his wing snapped, when he soared too high; and like Icarus, the swift plunged deep down and lay with the broken wing. His useless wings were crumbled together, but his eyes were still bright and his, "head still strove to rise / and turned towards the lost impossible spring." (CP 168)

According to I.A. Richards, "a diagrammatic representation of the events take place when we read a poem" (90). The British as a migrant swift have fallen and are unable to pull themselves up. The jubilant spring days were no more. Days had changed both, for the natives as well as the British.

The appropriate use of words in the poem takes a visual sensation, asserts Richards. They have certain regular companions so closely tied to them. The chief of these is the auditory image (90). When we read aloud the poems of Wright, words take life and the picture springs up before our eyes. The images are tied by the words used. Every reader gets the picture of the struggling swift:

He trusted all to air: the flesh that bred him
was worn against it to a blade-thin curving
made all for flight; air's very creatures fed him. (CP 167)

Such pride as this, once fallen, there is no saving. Whatever struck him snapped his stretch of wing. He came to earth at last, like the enthusiastic Icarus who flew too close to the burning sun:

Like a contraption of feathers, bone and string,
his storm-blue wings hung useless.
Yet his eyes lived in his wreckage— (CP 168)
“Lost impossible spring” has plenty of meaning hidden in it. The British power had waned. They had come to the winter cycle and can only yearn for the lost impossible spring. Days had changed and the various welfare societies for the Aborigines had sheltered them. The English had come forward to free them from their exile. In yet another poem “Currawong”, the bird is described as a thief.

From I.A. Richards’ Principles, it is clear that from the mere sight of any familiar word, a thought of whatever the word may stand for is followed. This thought is more or less the meaning of the word:

The currawong has shallow eyes—
bold shallow buttons of yellow glass
that see all around his sleek black skull.
Small birds sit quiet when he flies;
mothers of nestlings cry Alas!
He is a gangster, his wife’s a moll. (CP 164)

Every description of the bird portrays the boldness and swiftness of the British. Wright remembers the past days, when as a child she saw the currawongs shouting and quarreling on the sea stretch:

Robber then and robber still,
he cries now with the same strange word
(currawong-currawong)
that from those coxcomb trees I heard.
Take my bread and eat your fill,
bold, cruel and melodious bird. (CP 164)
The above lines bring out the usurping nature of the British. The poet is willing to sacrifice her life for the smaller birds which are frightened at the sight of these cruel birds. Through her poetry she thought of changing the scheme of things.

What directly affects the mind is not words on paper; but the thought that flashes in the mind of the reader due to the usage of words. We are able to visualize the Aborigines hiding behind thickets and bushes trying to save their young ones from the hungry British. The poet as a savior is willing to sacrifice her piece of bread to save those suffering from the clutches of her brethren.

A poem usually conveys reason with emotion; and while it is easy to feel emotional about what had happened, the reasons for it must be ascertained. In the reading of poetry, the thought due simply to the words, their sense it may be called, comes first; but other thoughts are not of less importance. Some poems need to be interpreted further, for, more thoughts come flashing into the mind. Such are the poems of Wright, which fill our mind’s eye with immense pictures. The reasons are none other than the poet’s sympathetic feelings towards the downtrodden. There were two choices says to Tony Cornwell in his appreciation of Judith Wright. Either there was something wrong with humans--either innately or through the conscious activity or there was something wrong with the world. In accordance with Tony Cornwell, Judith Wright’s poems are highly emotional.
The "Winter Kestrel" seems to look out to the sun, asking it to light the world so as to help him with his kill:

Fierce with hunger and cold
all night in the windy tree
the kestrel to the sun cries,
“Oh bird in the egg of the sea,
break out, and tower, and hang
high, oh most high,
and watch for the running mouse
with your unwearying eye;

Break from your blue shell,
you burning Bird or God,
and light me to my kill—
and you shall share his blood.” (CP 163)

It reveals the blood thirst of the British. The art of sucking juice and relishing it as in "Parrots" do to the loquats is highly symbolical:

we draw the curtains back and see
the lovely greed of their descending,

To see them cling and sip and sway,
loquats are no great price to pay. (CP169)
In both “Winter Kestrel” and “Loquats”, the British are metaphorically described as blood sucking vampire, relishing every drop of their victim’s blood. According to I.A. Richards, the impulse coming in from the visual stimulus of the printed word must be imagined as reaching some system in the brain in which effects take place, not due merely to this present stimulus, but also combined with other occasions. (65)

Judith Wright’s poems dealing with repeated sympathy for the native blacks fill the reader with emotions and feelings. As I.A. Richards in his “Analysis of a Poem”(87), had said that feelings are commonly signs and the difference between those who see things by intuition or feel them, and those who reason them out is commonly a difference between users of signs and users of symbols. Both signs and symbols are means by which our past experience assists our present responses; and the poet had, had plenty of experiences in the past, as her family settled down in Australia some three generations back. Her usage of symbols in this chapter on “Birds” helps the reader to have a clear idea and picturise the agony that the natives had undergone.

Emotions are primarily signs of attitudes. For, it is the attitudes evoked which are the important part of any experience. Thus we see in most of the poems in this chapter, the attitude of the poet towards her men. In “Parrots”, the bird’s talent in sucking the juice from the fruit is admired here. The art of plundering skillfully can be admired too. The British had sucked the entire Australia where there was life but Wight asserts that:
their greed is brief; their joy is long
for each born with such a throat
as thanks his God with every note. (CP 169)

It may be the English sentiment of thanks-giving which make their joy last long. Though they, like “Magpies” in their well-fitted black and white, put on an air of a gentleman, they become greedy when meal is served. The “Magpie” and the “Parrot” are emblematic. The poet seems to pay a tribute to her clan. Though the “Magpie” and the “Parrot” are greedy birds, their skill ought to be praised. In The Cry for the Dead, Wright describes a country supporting a rich aboriginal life of song and ceremony, trade and social innovation. This life is torn apart, first by diseases and social disorder spread from districts already subjected to European settlement and then by the white settlers themselves and their brutal weaponry.

Wright tells the story both of the resistance of the Aborigines to the destruction of their economy and society and of the consequent extermination of the tribes who stood in the way of the whites’ advancement. In the end, not even their dialects could be traced.

A poem named “Silver Terns” picturesquely describes the fight between the fish in the sea and a flock of silver terns who dive in to catch their prey:

The Sea was packed with sudden silver fountains
where the birds dived so swift and clever;
but some, we saw, stayed down and did not rise.

That shoal the big bonito harried,

and they took fish and diving bird together.

All morning it went on, that slaughter,

with white birds diving, obstinate with hunger;

and some would rise and some would fall. (CP 172)

The blood, the waves washed over the shore, was from feather and scale. The fight went on, each trying to slay the other for survival. The tragedy was not so much an act of deliberate genocide as the inevitable consequence of cultural arrogance and incomprehension, driven by greed that disrupts all native harmony.

Sidney claims that “Poetry is superior as a moral teacher to both philosophy and history, because it does not deal with mere abstract propositions, as philosophy does, but with concrete examples, and as its examples are not tied to the facts it can make them more apt and convincing than anything found in history”. (Daiches 644)

Such are the poems of Wright; she gives immense examples of birds in her poems, but the poems appear a separable whole. It seems at the superficial level, as just poems for school children simple and enjoyable with no deep, serious or philosophical meaning.
But Daiches argues that Sidney is not like Aristotle in saying that poetry is more philosophical and serious. He asserts that the ideal world of the poet shows things as they ought to be, rather than as they 'are', and is thus more conducive to virtuous action in the reader. A poet wrote of what ought to be in a purely moral sense. He is the creator of a world, which leads those who view it, to follow virtue and shun vice. (65)

Through her poems, Wright seems to be moralizing. She imagines a World of Freedom for the Aborigines, where they could breathe freely. Many a reader of her poems had joined hands with her to bring about an upliftment to the world of the Aborigines.

In establishing a replica of European society, the Wrights learnt to use the land, but they felt that they still did not belong to it. The Aborigines had played no part in their story, except as occasional helpers or 'problems', to them, while the British were displacing them from their lands. Just like the koel, which plunders the nest of the crow, the British had pillaged into somebody else's domicile. The coming of the spring and the koel is something gorgeous; but it also reminds the poet of the sins of her forefathers:

And when he calls, the spring has come again,
and the old joy floods up in memory.
Yet, his sad foster-kin cannot forget
the wrong he does them – Cain from his infancy. (CP 179)
The poet accepts things as they are until the system is changed. But no immediate steps besides talking, are ever to be taken to change the system, says Christopher Claudwell. (Scott 157)

The koel is a dark migrant without a home. He is a bird whom so many hate. But still, boldly, though he fears inside, the koel searches its mate. The Biblical references which Wright brings in again and again in many of her poems show the feeling of culpability which she bears in her heart. She feels repulsed by them with a kind of fear that had prompted the white men to kill and kill, not because of the little damage the blacks could do them materially, but because of a threatened deeper damage, the undermining of a precarious way of life that existed by denying what the Aborigines took for granted.

Caudwell says, "He who takes no active steps to change the system, helps to maintain the system" (157) and Wright through her poems naturally takes serious steps to change the prevailing system in Australia where Aborigines are concerned. Caudwell in his view on Shaw's Bourgeois Society feels that Shaw himself had discovered the ruling class to be rotten to the core, and built on the exploitation of the workers. This was seen in Australia where the blacks were exploited and degraded by the then English society. Australia, a vacant and empty land, came into being by the hard work of the Aborigines. Wright takes active steps to improve the existing system for the welfare of both the ruler and the ruled.
In *Generations of Men*, she further intensifies the fact that although the land belongs to her and her people, they cannot belong to the land. In *Cry for the Dead*, Wright sought to overcome this dispossession by retelling the story of settlement as it must have seemed to the Aborigines. Because the Aborigines left no document, she had to use the records of the white settlers. She shows a society founded on crime and punishment, gaining its wealth by the exploitation and destruction of the land and its people.

Poetry illuminates human nature, and pleases and instructs by so doing. By choosing for its chief characters, persons sufficiently exalted in position for their fate to affect whole centuries one can, without blurring the picture of human nature, make the story more arresting and more far reaching in its implications. The poems chosen in this chapter arrest the reader and carry him off in imagination, as Wright had made use of the best techniques of poetry. Her poetry illuminates, pleases and also instructs humanity as I.A. Richards had opined. (91)

In analyzing the experiences of the visual arts, three things can be seen. The first is the picture which comes before our eyes. It is the source of the stimulus. The degree of similarity between the effect of the stimulus and the whole visual response will vary greatly. According to Richards, a painting which is quite unfamiliar to the eye of a person, may at first seem only a field or area of varied light; as the response develops through repeated glances, it becomes an assemblage of plots and patches of colour and becomes articulated. The picture becomes organized into a three-
dimensional whole with the characters, their weights, textures and tensions appearing in it. With familiarity the response is shortened. The final visual stage is reached sooner. The retinal impressions are in fact the seed, from which the whole response grows. (118-119)

Wright’s picture of conflict between the natives and the colonizers must be, to the reader, vague at the beginning; but as the reader goes on with her poems, the picture becomes clear and interpreted correctly. When differently interpreted, an intricately divided ‘three-dimensional space’ occurs.

The picture of the birds appears immediately in the mind’s eye as the poem called the “Lory” is read as:

On the bough of blue summer
* hangs one crimson berry.
Like the blood of a lover
is the breast of the lory.

But, “The heart’s red is my reward,”
the old crow cries
“I’ll wear his colour on my black
the day the lory dies.” (CP 181)

The colour “black” in itself signifies the bad heart of the butcher bird. The crow is always on the alert to pluck off a red feather from the lory’s breast, which is helpless. It is so weak when compared to the mighty birds
of prey. Wright, calling the natives as ‘red-hearted’ lories, shows the love she had for the Aborigines; the Aborigines had given them a warm welcome and had treated them as guests; but they never expected massacre and murder in return.

The colonizers are referred to as ‘black-crows’, who claim to have the red-heart of the natives. Plunder, death and mass-murder had not satisfied them; they wanted to wipe out the whole clan.

David Daiches has discussed the study of poetry by Plato and Aristotle in his Critical Approaches. If Plato was against poetry, Aristotle defends it, saying that poetry is a different thing with a different kind of value. The more the critic has to resist discussion of poetry as a kind of history, or a kind of moral philosophy or a kind of science, the more likely he is to press the search for the differentiating qualities of poetry, its unique and essential nature. (143-144)

Daiches further continues, “Imaginative literature can be broken down into so much psychological insight, so much historical truth, so much agreeable sound, so much reflection of the author’s personality and a given work can be discussed as though it were the sum of these things.” (144)

Imagery too, is a common subject of investigation. Recurring images of a certain kind can naturally give a characteristic tone and echoing meanings; and naturally, we see it in Wright’s use of the ‘bird symbol’ to characterize the men.
The bird imagery is carried over to show the timidness and fright of the Aborigines over the arrogant British. Hidden inside the small framework of the poem “The Swamp Pheasant”, the Aborigines get a fright on seeing the English, pounce on them in the form of a cat. “The swamp pheasant looks and sees / a tiger made in pheasant-size / runs to the fence and scrambles out.” (CP 165)

Though the Aborigines can sense the fact that the British are also human like them, still there is something like the look of the fierce tiger in the British cat they see. It is not the size but the tiger in the cat, which scares the natives. They want freedom, though they had been used to slavery and hardship after the arrival of the whites. Voices of humanists like Wright had given them the courage to raise their voices and rebel against the English colonizers. Years of captivity could worsen their emotions as in “Dove--Love”:

The dove purrs – over and over the dove
purr its declaration. The wind’s tone
changes from tree to tree, the creek on stone
alters its sob and fall, but still the dove
goes insistently on, telling its love
“I could eat you”.

And in captivity, they say, doves do. (CP 167)

All things tend to change, but years of captivity in their own land go on from generation to generation without any change and when the
Aborigines could stand it no more, the dove tells its love that it could eat it out of fury, in being caged.

In *Australian Literature: An Introduction*, John McLaren declares that while the memories of the past make the country their own for the white inhabitants, the Aborigines remain outside the new consciousness (78). Like little Josie in Wright's "Half-cast Girl", buried under the bright moon, they are shut out of the present day by the stone walls of a history that denies them even succession. At the heart of Australian History the Aborigines remain a dark absence.

Like the "Wag tail" the British seemed so elegant and neat with collar as clean as innocence. The wag tail also sang beautifully not to entertain his kith or kin but to kill:

So elegant he is and neat
from round black head to slim black feet!
He sways and flirts upon the fence,
his collar clean as innocence.

The city lady looks and cries
"Oh charming bird with dewdrop eyes,
how kind of you to sing that song!"
But what a pity—she is wrong.

"Sweet-pretty-creature" — yes, but who
is the one he sings it to?

Not me — not you. (CP 170-171)
The bird sings sweetly to the moth and the gnat, who symbolize the natives. Unaware of the trap, the insects forget themselves in the song and become a prey to the bird. Snip-snapping, swallowing and hurting the tiny birds become a characteristic of the mighty arrogant ‘big birds’.

Like the Indians who had struggled to free their land from the clutches of the British, or the Canadians or the Africans who had to fight against the colonizers, the Aborigines, too, had a tough fight to withhold their land from the intruders.

The bird in the poem “Brush Turkey” tries to overcome its difficulties when the hunters in the form of the colonizers arrive. It pretends in mockery to beg the charity of the hunters and learn to live on the scraps and crumbs of food thrown to him. Though the hunters even threw stones at him, he learns to live on what the moment gives:

Cunning and shy one must be

to snatch one’s bread

from oafs whose hands are quicker

with stones instead. (CP178)

Charred log and shade and stone accept him. Though his forests have shrunk by the cruelty of the chasers he evades the crowd and flies into hiding. The poet ponders over the act and feels that the bird must really be stupid; for, he had trusted the hunters when they threw bread at him; at the same time he flies into hiding into the forest, which is no longer green to give him shelter. The poem reflects the past history, when the English first
settled on the island, sending the natives into hiding out of fear. It picturises the destruction of nature and also brings to our memory the trapping of the natives. The poem sympathizes the innocence of the Aborigines and also throws a light of humanism on the later generation.

The feeling of humanism in Wright gives a new energy to the natives; her encouragement, words of putting up a ‘saver-wall’ which cannot be broken by the usurpers and propaganda to free them from the chains of bondage, may have given the natives a new inspiration to live:

And yet the lovelier distance is ahead.
I would go farther with you, clock and star,
though the earth break under my feet and storm
snatch at my breath and night ride over me.
I am the maker. I have made both time and fear,
knowing that to yield to either is to be dead. (CP 4)

Wright always has a feeling that time will bring a change. As days pass on, what she felt came true. Time alone changed the minds of the whites, with philanthropists blowing the trumpet for the freedom of the blacks through poems, talks, conferences and agitations.

Wright is ashamed of her fellow men and their dastardly action. In her early years, when she had been young she could do nothing to help or save the natives. She was too young for a social reformist and could remain only a silent spectator, leaving things to the Creator. She was waiting for a fortunate time when her voice for the voiceless Aborigines would open the
door to their freedom. Never did she fear that her agitations would be a failure. She had hope and was highly confident. She was aware that the English had become too proud and arrogant and she could only look up to God for their redemption:

Nothing left but to pray, God save us all;

nothing but the tick of the clock and a world sucked dry;

nothing; till the tide of time come back to the full

and drown a man too sane, who climbed too high. (CP 4)

In his climbing high, he had not only forgotten himself but had also terrified the poor natives; the hapless natives were dwarfed by the darkness encircling them. All they inherited was a handful of dust and a fragment of stone. The music of the English was heard behind them, around them and before them. There was sound in silence. The life of the natives had been silenced by the unruly, uncouth sound of the British who were mad with joy. Wright says in the Moving Image, “It is the mad men singing, the lovers, the blind; / the cry of Tom of Bedlam, naked under the Sun.” (CP 6). But the British, who had found a new colony, were blind to the plight and agony of the natives.

The rude treatment of the Aborigines by the English settlers planted the seed of sympathy in Wright’s heart. The seed soon sprouted out into a plant, branching out its feelings in all ways. Her poem “The Beasts” is highly symbolical as it shows both the natives and their usurpers in the guise of beasts:
The wolf’s desire pace through his cage
and try the long-neglected bars.
There is a meaning in his eyes,
a knowledge in his rage.
Therefore the wolf and lion rise

to prey upon my sighing sleep.
There is a purpose in their eyes
and in the tears I weep. (CP 185)

The wolf is the native, who is trying his best to come out of the iron
cage. The lion is free outside the cage and can strike the wolf at times. Both
the beasts come as nightmares to the poet and she struggles to unite both the
beasts by offering love as food for both:

I take love’s food in either hand,
and travel searching through the wild
till beast and man are reconciled. (CP 185)

Both the white and the black are men with qualities of beast in them
at times. As she ages on, she takes steps to work for the freedom of the
Aborigines. She takes “love” as food for the cruel beasts. She is sure to
search for reconciliation through the wilderness till beast and man is united.
Ageing makes her heart bright. She is not only made bright, but also lights
others by her brightness. The “Five Senses” is a mature poem in which the
poet says that a web is growing within her. The web has been built out of
the dark and shining elements, out of the elements that are "still and moving". These elements make her five senses spin with sound and silence. Wright is not aware of the web which grows beyond her:

follows beyond my knowing

some pattern sprung from nothing –

rhythm that dances

and is not mine. (CP 187)

The poem gives a new meaning with the binary words like "dark and shining" and "still and moving". It signifies the fact that the poet has spun a web for the natives to dance upon. She has given a home and in their song and dance her heart springs up with rhythm.

The use of the web imagery on which the natives dance signifies the slight loss of hope in the poet on her road to the freedom of the Aborigines. The natives sing and dance, but Wright is not sure whether the web will last.

Her search goes on and on till she gives immortal happiness to the natives. The use of imagery in the symbolic aspect creates a psychological interest. That is why certain images and symbols affect the reader as they do. Daiches observes that Maud Bodkin in her Archetypal Patterns in Poetry, explores the significance of recurring images and situations which, by making contract with some primitive and elemental aspect of man, always have some effect (Daiches 168). The ambivalent, suggestive and symbolic aspects of poetic language relate to more primitive ways of knowledge and
communicating, than is represented by ordinary prose. It is believed that the recurring use of the animal and the bird imagery certainly will have a positive effect on those to whom the poems point out. Symbols are more effective when used in poetry and are a better means of communication than when used in prose. Poets as moral teachers, choose to symbolize because they want to change the society of its immorals and Wright is no exception.

The Aborigines are the wounded night birds; when the poet bends down to caress the wounded bird with a broken breast she gets a stare from him. They were all eyes, furious, meaning to wound; and the poet means to heal when she says:

And I, who meant to heal, took in my hand
his depth of down, his air-light delicate bone,
his heart in the last extreme of pain and fear. (CP 170)

The Aborigines at first did not believe in the kindness of Wright. Their eyes flare terror into the eyes of the poet. But the poet longs for their love. In “Brown Bird” she says:

Brown bird with the silver eyes,
fly down and teach me to sing.
I am alone, I will not
touch you or move.
I am only thirsty for love. (CP 172)

The reluctant natives were at first suspicious. They could feel her genuine thirst for love but would never sing a soothing song for her. Her
heart sounds too strong for them and her love was like a desert to them, which they could not accept.

"The poet’s strategy of projecting the animal world (as opposed to the human) to identify the ‘other’ is reinforced by the well represented hostility of the land to its people in Australian Literature’, opines Annamma Joseph. Thus the animal world and the land they inhabit become for the poet powerful tools to reach after the invisible other. By being outside the field of power constructed by human beings, they provide metaphor for the presymbolic world or suggest the possibility of another order of reality, a reality which suggests the intransigent nature of experience which is raw, violent and beautiful, is what she feels. This world that sits astride the imaginary as well as the real readily permits a critique of human culture which is invariably constructed around the viewpoint of a specific class or race of people. It allows the history of the other by preserving recorded events of a past hitherto unrecognized by the history of the dominant race.

Joseph in her “Search for Enigmatic Dimension of History in Wright’s Poetry”, continues that it is a discourse with the ability to subvert the tradition of writing tied to a political discourse of dominion even as it conceals itself in natural metaphor that resists violence. It further suggests the possibility of alternative literacy which would allow alternative political viewpoints. (402)

Poems do not merely reconstruct events, but recreate the enigma of the origins and the motives that provoked them; and hiding inside the skins
and wings of animals and birds, Wright has shown with authenticity the actual happenings in her country. She has also pictured the haughtiness of her people in many poems.

As years rolled on, days changed better for the natives. Humanitarians like Wright worked for the betterment of their lives. This gave them courage to face their tormentors; however, they gave in to the British, but not out of fear. Like the bird in the poem “Dotterel”, which keeps its distance and runs alone, the natives kept away from the colonizers even after they were free:

It runs, but not in fear,
and its thin high call
is like a far bugle
that troubles the soul. (CP 180).

The Aborigines could move anywhere without fear of the whites, be it land, water or air. But they like the dotterel, just ran and ran; their running was not out of fear for the whites. A freedom to move everywhere must have made them run in joy.

Too much of slavery and confinement has made the blacks forget what freedom is. In spite of the Government declaring them free, they do not want to be free amidst their masters. So they hide themselves from the whites as far as possible.

The fact is that the blacks were actually driven into the sea or bush to die; in fact if the Aborigines could leap into the air, they would have jumped
up to the moon also. Wright's poem, "Full Moon Rhyme", when read with pre-formed thoughts, will bring before the reader the image of the colonizer and the native. The imagery is that of a dog which chases the frightened hare into the moon. The dogs, not able to jump up to the moon, howl to the hares on the moon to come down. The arrogance of the whites is well portrayed in the lines:

"I chased that hare to the sky,"

the hungry dogs all cry.

"The hare jumped into the moon
and left me here in the cold.
I chased that hare to the moon". (CP 105)

The lines signify the truth that the natives did not trust nor believe the poet in her fight for their freedom. In fighting for their liberation, Wright could not go easy with her people. She stands all alone like a fish out of water, unable to pacify the natives nor advise her fellowmen. In the midst of such difficulty only did she work for the aboriginal rights. Her poems were a propaganda and people with humane consideration did support her in her tremendous task.

Daiches in his Critical Approaches observes that poetry is the record of imaginary events, but the events must be described in a lively and persuasive style. While discussing Sir Philip Sidney's views on what poetry is, he opines that lies can be shown to be good and valuable if they are used as allegorical ways of teaching moral doctrines and if a lively and passionately expressed invention can be employed as a means of conveying
historical or moral truths, then poetry is justified as one among many ways of communicating kinds of knowledge which are themselves known independently to be valuable. (52-53)

Wright as a moral teacher and philosopher is correct in choosing poetry as a means of communication. She enunciates three chief concerns of her work. The first is the nature of time, the notion of flux or change. She is resolute that through love she can defeat many hindrances. The second is an attempt to resolve into a harmony or a creative paradox the basic antinomies of human existence—man and environment, person and person, past and present, soul and flesh. The third is the Australian landscape and its appropriate expression and sublimation in language. The third matter, with its relative concerns for the preservation of the natural environment and for the Aborigines, the original protectors of the land, flows over into her later political activities, especially as President of the Wild Life Preservation Society of Queensland.

If the availability of his past experience is the first characteristic of a poet, the second is what we may provisionally call his normality. "Experience should tally with the communicators; if not, there will be a failure", says I.A. Richards (149). For successful communication, a number of impulses with their effective stimuli must be common to the communicators and further the general ways in which impulses modify one another must be shared (149). This is true in the case of Wright and other humanitarian who share the same impulses with reference to Aborigines.
Richards continues his statement on effective communication saying that situations and responses cannot be expected to be common; within limits, the disparities can be overcome by imagination; but what Wright and her supporters experienced were common situations and in Wright’s imagination the situation carries the reader of her poems to the animal world which is highly symbolical and communicative.

She had experiences of natives crouching and clinging at her feet, weeping blood. The poet was ready with an answer to their grief in the poem “To a Child”. The poem begins with the poet becoming one with the natives. As a child, the poet sees a burning bird in a tree, which may signify the destruction of flora and fauna. The lines, “I see became I am, / I am became I see” (CP 106), highlights the feelings the poet had for nature. This naturally leads on to her sympathy for the Aborigines who were also victims of such destruction. She makes the blacks believe that not all whites are atrocious. There are virtuous people in the world who are willing to wipe the tears of the grieved. Wright assures the natives that those who have died as martyrs for the sake of their fellow natives believe that, “all is consumed with love / all is renewed with desire.” (CP 106)

The lives which had been lost on the Australian soil were all that of martyrs who sing in joy. If not for the cruel activities of the British, certainly social reformers like Wright would never have come into being. The sacrifice of the early Aborigines had certainly led to a happy life of the later ones.
While discussing the views of various writers on the duties of a poet, Daiches remarks:

“The business of a poet is to examine, not the individual, but the species; his character requires that he estimate the happiness and misery of every condition and observe the power of all the passions in all their combinations and trace the changes of the human mind, as they are modified by various institutions and accidental influence of climate or custom” (82).

The white colonizers, Wright feels must have been changed of their supreme nature due to accidental influence of landing in the island and were modified due to the climate and custom of the Aborigines.

Poets are also expected to know what is right and what is wrong in a country. Laws and rules do not disturb them because they are above all these. In fact, they are not normal human, but good angels who give their opinion about the constitution.

Wright as a poet fits into all the above rules and her poems are proofs for it. She further knows the manners and customs of the people of her times and conditions, not because it is her duty to make clear to the reader the ways in which people have lived and behaved in her time; she lives up to Daiches’ views that a poet should not be taken in by surface differences and should be able to penetrate to the common humanity underlying these. (83)
Wright had lived through three generations, before voicing out as a poet; she penetrates deeply through the society of the Aborigines, learning their customs and hardships and voicing out their feelings.

In “Thornbills”, Wright very seriously looks up to God for the tiny thornbills, for whom traps are set by the hungry hunters: her prayers are for the safety of the thornbills for whom the hungry hawks are waiting. Human nature is essentially unchanging. The same passions and emotions are seen again and again throughout history. What Wright felt for the Aborigines then, is what the reader feels today when Wright quotes:

Wherever a trap is set may
they slip through the mesh of the net.

Nothing should do them wrong. (CP 165)

It is essentially the enhancement of life and the propagation of human value on the part of Wright. Literature should not convert the readers or influence their views, opines Peter Barry. They should slide into the views of the poet. Wright had seen and heard for three generations the plight of the natives and her heart, filled with sympathy and pity, swells up to burst into beautiful poems in support of the natives. From her early years she had found consolation in poetry and through it she felt she could change the attitude of the whites towards the natives, and of course, she succeeded in changing the hard rocks in the English heart into soft snow.

Some poets live as characters in their work. Wright is a poet who explores the deep and troubled depths within her own identity. She is now
the wise woman from the land past joy and grief. Her verses have a beautiful sense and flow; the mood is compassionate and thoughtful. Her themes are the contemplation of anything and everything in the world of her immediate experiencing. If Slessor was her soul-mate in the early years, it was R.D. Fitzgerald with whom she shares her view in her later years, states Hope in his *Australian Writers*.

In “Unknown Water” she becomes one with the natives. The life of a particular old man had dried up; once upon a time the old man lived by the benison of water; but his sons and grandsons did not know about the flourishing of that fount. To them, all water holes were dry; they lived on drought. But Wright assures them of another creek, when she says, “....But I know of another creek, / You will not understand my words when I tell of it. / You do not understand me; yet you are part of me.” (CP 109-110).

The poet is so forsaken as the natives do not try to understand her. She asserts that the natives were a part of her or she a part of them. She sees them not as a human, but as a God, for it is a belief that God lives within the deserted. Daiches agrees with Sydney that poets are moral teachers in leading mankind to a better living. “It is the highest possible function a poet could do. Nothing else does what poetry does, and that is why poetry is so valuable – not simply for what it does, but because what it does is unique” (56-57). Poetry invites attention, in a way no other kind of discourse can and we can see Wright making use of poetry for this purpose. She pours out her heart through the poem “Unknown Water”. The country Australia
was not like her country England. As she grew up she accepted Australia as her country; she became Australia in her taking and liking for the country and the Aborigines became her kith and kin. She very devotedly works for their welfare. Like Moses, she leads the natives to a land of happiness:

I am not you,

but you are part of me. Go easy with me old man

I am helping to clear a track to unknown water. (CP 110)

Since poets are designated as moral teachers, Wright paves a way for the freedom of the natives. She feels that usurping their land is a great sin, but greater still is not giving them freedom. She feels she is a walker in a dark land. The land may now be hers, but she feels a stranger there. The natives had been just shadows for whom even night had seemed to burn. By acts of genocide and plunder, the British had lost their heart’s light. Wright stands as a British colonizer and shouts out in anguish:

Walker in darkness, the sun has gone out in my mind.

You carry your heart like a star, like a lamp in your hand.

But where shall I look for my light, and how shall I find.

my heart in your dark land?. (CP 110)

T.S. Eliot opines that the author of a work of imagination is trying to affect the reader wholly, as a human being, whether the reader knows it or not; and the reader is affected by it as a human being whether he intends to be or not. Eliot further argues that just as whatever people eat has some
effect on them than merely the pleasure of taste and mastication, so too all that people read affect them in some way or the other. (Richards 50)

Wright’s poems though an outpouring of her emotions, affect the readers in some way or the other. Poems are the best tools she uses, not only to soften the heart of the whites but also to make them realize that the blacks were in no way inferior to them.

The moral approach to literature as Eliot puts it is that it is the literature that we read for ‘amusement’ or ‘purely for pleasure’ that may have the greatest and least suspected influence upon us. It is the literature that we read with the least effort that can have the easiest and most insidious influence upon us. (Richards 50)

The literature of Wright may be read for pleasure or entertainment, especially her poems; but it gives not just aesthetic enjoyment; the reading of her poems never affects the readers simply on the surface level; it affects them as entire human beings; it affects their moral and religious existence. And what writers do to people are not necessarily what they intend to do. It may be just an outpouring of feelings, emotions recollected in tranquility. People exercise an unconscious selection, in being influenced.

Most poems of Wright, though short, have a lot of meaning to convey; her word power and usage of symbols and binaries are found to be excellent. The usage of words “light” and “dark” in the poem “Walker in Darkness” have various meanings to convey. The poet speaks for her fellowmen. She is ashamed that her light had been put out in the dark land
of the Aborigines. "Dark" may refer to the skin of the natives, or the unknown, uncivilized land. It is natural for light to lighten darkness. But the poet says that by their inhuman acts, she and her people had put out the beacon from their hearts. It is with great difficulty that the lost light can be restored and then alone can it light up the others. Till then, she has had to walk in darkness only.

Judith Wright has not only got back her lost light but had lit up the entire land of Australia by her burning torch. The ancestors who had all given up their lives for freedom of the later generation sleep peacefully in their grave:

That sad, pre-history, unexpectant face –
I hear the answering sound of my blood, I know
these primitive fathers waiting for rebirth,
these children not yet born – the womb holds so
the moss-grown patience of the skull,
the old ape-knowledge of the embryo.

Their silent sleep is gathered round the spring
that feeds the living, thousand-lighted stream
up which we toiled into this timeless dream. (CP 111)

Yes, it was the timeless dream of the ancestors to have a land free to themselves, where they can walk, eat, live and even breathe freely. Their lives were dawning past the midnight. The Aborigines were waiting for a glorious rebirth. In “Midnight”, the poet says:
Darkness where I find my sight,
shadowless and burning night,
here where death and life are met
is the fire of being set. (CP 59)

Wright’s poems reflect the atmosphere of the age and society and we can realize that it was a tough fight she had and it is reflected in her usage of words from poems such as “Double Image”. As an English she takes indirect part in relishing the blood of the native; but at the same time as a philanthropist she sheds tears of compassion along with the natives who had lost their dear ones. She cries:

I drink his murder’s choking blood,
and he in ignorance sheds my tears,
The centuries bind us each in each –
the tongueless word, the ignorant ears.

Till from those centuries I wake,
naked and howling, still unmade,
within the forests of my heart
my dangerous kinsman runs afraid. (CP 196)

In many such poems as this, she attacks the English—but for a good cause. The English had with ‘pride’, ‘greed’ and ‘arrogance’ walked and saw what lay beyond. But as days passed on, they were sad for ‘victim’ and ‘oppressor’. The day had come when they stand with closed eyes and hand,
recollecting, "vision and action know their proper limits / and knowledge taught him more humility".

To the English, Wright's poems may be bad, as she attacks them with ignoble metaphors and symbols. "But, there is a great deal of good bad poetry in English", says George Orwell (Scott 173). But these poems are capable of giving true pleasure to people who can see clearly what is wrong with them. One could fill a fair-sized anthology with good bad poems, if it were not for the significant fact that good bad poetry is too well known to be worth reprinting. True poetry can be acceptable to the mass, only when it disguises itself as something else. 'Poetry', is not usually relished by people of this century, as a piece of music is. But Orwell feels that good bad poetry can however get across to the most unpromising audiences if the right atmosphere has been worked up before hand. He asserts that a good bad poem is a graceful monument to the obvious. It records in memorable form, some emotion which very nearly every human being can share. The reader is bound to find himself thinking the thought the poem expresses. It keeps coming back into the mind, much better than it did before. Popular poetry is then usually gnomic or sententious. (Scott 175)

The poems of Wright reflect the inner life very closely, may be in a sense, a sort of autobiography; it is after all only a reflection and should not be questioned too closely for what it will not tell us, says A.D. Hope in his Reflections on Wright. Wright certainly fits into the new reflection theory of the Marxists, as her poems reflect the social conditions of her age; they
are also didactic. Guerin observes: "Poetry is an incurable passion and the poems of Wright had taken a strong hold and had absorbed the activities of her society, drawing nourishment from them to bring forth reflective poems" (329). Most of her poems seem to be reflections of her early life, particularly about her movements with the Aborigines.

The acts of injustice by the British, the feelings of the natives, the urge to save them from the clutches of the British had been there from the days of Shaw Neilson and Kenneth Slessor; but it was Wright who boldly came out in support of the natives. Hitherto, the poets had looked at the local scene from a distance and moved towards it. Now at last we have a poet who takes it for granted because it is a country in the heart, says Hope (Aus. Writers 9-10). Australia for Wright, is not a world she aims at; it is some thing she aims from, for, she and the land become one. She rarely writes about anything that is not rooted in personal experience.

The very warmth of Wright's original attachment to the place taken by her pioneering ancestors has lent a peculiar authority to her determination to declare the truths she has discovered in pursuing the history of those ancestors. She had been rigorous in her pursuit of history rather than anecdote; she was much more vigorous in her actions to ensure present policies, remedy past injustices. Jennifer Strauss observes that the prolonged failure to reach a settlement of aboriginal land rights, was disappointing in itself. She further says: "Beyond that, there was particular distress in the divisions that began to appear between forces that she believed should be
inextricably linked—the campaigners for conservation and those for land rights. Wright’s discouragements with the progress of the conservation movement was increased by a perception that conservation groups would not always meet her standards on aboriginal issues; she was also bitterly critical of the Wilderness Society’s land rights policy, slating it publicly as a “confirmation and endorsement of the terra nullius judgment”. (23)

The land rights to the Aborigines as per the judgment was just a nullification, Wright felt. She was fighting for two causes—conservation of land and return of the land to the natives, which the whites had earlier plundered. But she could see that it was all done to just pacify the humanists. In reality, the Aborigines did not get any land nor were they free.

The double disappointment has surely been a major factor in the erosion of Wright’s sense, that the writing of poetry is not only valuable but possible. She has explained to her friend Richard Glover about this, saying that writing poems need a lot of emotional energy—a compulsion which really springs from physical passions, a sort of overflow of feelings and energy. The state of mind enunciated here as a final outcome is detectable in her Collected Poems.

In his discussion on psychological theory, Daiches refers to Plato and Richards. According to Richards, “A poem is a vehicle for transferring a valuable state of psychological balance from author to reader” (132). This is the Platonic method and the method of Sidney and Shelley as well (Daiches
132), which Wright has employed. One method of transferring the state of
mind from writer to reader is through the use of images. While looking
technically at the poems quoted in chapter IV, we can see a lot of imagery
used. John Crowe Ransom calls it Physical poetry. Wright can also be
called an imagist. According to Daiches, imagism resembles naïve poetry of
mere things; it is motivated by a distaste for the systematic abstractedness of
thought. Imagists wish to escape from science by immersing themselves in
images (147). The poems herein are effective as the poet exhibits what she
wants to say in a set of images, which occupy the foreground of the reader’s
attention. The imagery is exhibited to be enjoyed; it is the basic constituent
of any poetry. When we are more than satisfied with physical poetry, our
analysis will probably disclose that it is more than usually impure, says
Ransom, which is very much true of the poems of Wright. (Daiches 147)

When analyzing the poems of Wright we see that it is also Platonic.
Two great forces persistent in Plato are the love of truth and the zeal for
human improvement. If what Ransom calls “Platonic Poetry” did not exist,
the task of the critic seeking to discover the essential nature of poetry would
be easier, asserts Daiches. (150)

Now coming to the technical devices used by Wright: the first device
of a poet is metre. It is the most obvious device of poets. But modern
poetry does not strictly follow a rhyme scheme. Very rarely can we see
rhyme scheme in Wright’s poems. The poem “Pea Cock” has for example,
four stanzas. In all stanzas the first line rhymes with the third and the
second with the fourth; but the last stanza is different with the first rhyming
with the fourth and the second with the third:

Shame on the aldermen who locked
the Peacock in a dirty cage!
His blue and copper sheens are mocked
by habit, hopelessness and age.

The weary Sunday families
along their gravelled paths repeat
the pattern of monotonies
that he treads out with restless feet. (CP 161)

This is true of most of the other poems too; words rhyme in
accordance with the poet’s mood. The “Thornbills”, has three stanzas with
five lines each; but a sixth line too joins to end up the last stanza. We can see no rhyme scheme or metre.

“The Full Moon Rhyme” is one poem where we can see a certain sort
of iambic pentameter; here too, we have the first line rhyming with the
second and third with the fifth, while the fourth stands all alone. In other poems, there is no rules followed for a certain rhyme scheme.

But, in many poems, a lot of binaries are used; in “Black-shouldered Kite”, we see more meanings in the polarical line, “the black mark that bars
his white / is the pride and hunger of Cain” (CP 166). Other such words used are “beast and man”, “dark and shining”, “stillness and moving” etc.
Dialogic structures occur through most of her poems. It is an indirect way of expressing one’s feelings. People living in this world experience two things at a time. One is reality and the other is their world of imagination. What Wright sees in the real world she puts into imagination as an animal world.

Wright’s feelings for the Aborigines are so great that she wishes to protect them. A lot of poems express these thoughts through the imagery of birds:

I hear in the blowing trees –
the sudden tune of their song.

Pray that the hawk not sees,
who has scanned the wind so long
for his small living food. (CP 165)

Wright has seen and heard for three generations the plight of the natives and her heart filled with sympathy and pity swells up to burst into beautiful poems in support of the natives. From her early years, she had found consolation in poetry and through it she attracted a lot of humanitarians who joined her in her venture.

She did not feel homely in Australia, but was like a walker in a dark land:

Men stand like trees asleep, a shade in a shade;
their fruit ripens and falls in the hot sun of the night.

for him to find and eat. (CP 110)
The above lines show that the natives had been just shadows, for whom even night had seemed to burn. By acts of genocide and plunder the British had lost their light and were in the dark, the darkness of their heart.

The history of Judith Wright has been mainly the history of her writing. Besides poems, which happened to be the main course of her life, she has written works on literary criticism, a book of short stories for children, a history of her forebears and some publications in the field of conservation of the environment.

Like Wordsworth in England, we see romanticism in Wright also. She has written a lot on nature and its conservation. Even when she laments for the Aborigines, she takes care to describe the natural surroundings too, as in “The Blind Man”, “Bora Ring” and “Nigger’s Leap, New England”. But the poems dealing with nature also speak about the loss of flora and fauna caused by the British. Much of her time in the last few years has been taken up with traveling, lecturing, writing and interviewing not only for the preservation of native wild life and vegetation, but for all the aspects of environmental control. This has often meant hard battling, personal confrontation, lobbying and political action such as joining in protest marches. Perhaps all this has interfered with the writing of poetry to some extent.

Her friends and critics feel that by her plunge into what E.M. Forster once called, “the world of anger and telegrams”, she may not be involved in poetry. But possibly, they do not realize, how deeply the active and
contemplative life may combine in a poet, remarks Hope in his studies on Wright (25). Her involvement in conservation is no new thing in her life. Her father, Philip Wright, was a conservationist and she grew up with the passionate love of and involvement in the life of the country and all its creatures, which is at the root, both of her poetry and political involvements. It needs a slight acquaintance with her poetry to see that her delighted insight into the creatures of the Australian countryside and their people, long preceded her practical efforts to help them survive when she found that they were threatened.

Her feelings, and an urge to save them, are all thrown into the pages of books in the form of poems. It is not possible to distinguish the poet and the conservationist; she never sacrificed poetry for propaganda, as both are intertwined in her. Poetry is an incurable passion, which absorbs all other activities and survives in it. In the “Forest”, she has introduced autobiographical elements mixed with nature:

When first I knew this forest
its flowers were strange.

Their different forms and faces
changed with the seasons’ change-

........................................

Now that its vines and flowers
are named and known,
like long-fulfilled desires
those first strange are gone. (CP 185-186)
Having learnt about the country, she realizes that she has got a more important work. She has an urge for learning about the life of the natives which later on, led her to voice out for their sufferings. She says that her search was to know beyond the flowers and learn the truth about the blacks.

Not only had nature seemed strange, even the natives had been strange; but as days passed on, she grew acquainted with the land and the people; she wanted to search deeper, beyond nature, to dig out the immortal happiness in the flowers, as well as in the people. That had been her aim in which she found success.

During the course of the struggle the poet had had many a tough fight. In “The Traveler and the Angel”, she very elaborately and concisely narrates her experiences, the agonies she faced and the difficulties she encountered with her men before overcoming all.

The angel in her had helped her through her good work and she had found triumph, after repeated defeats. The angel in her gave her courage and a new strength to fight her people, “...and all that fight was joy. / shall I ever know joy fiercer?” (CP114), she exclaims. But in her immature years, she had also felt the sudden weariness, the fall of strength and a sudden darkness descend on her philanthropic thought. It was then, she felt that she had become doubly strong:

our battle

leaves you doubly strong.

“Now the way is open

and you must rise and find it”--(CP 114)
Gathering strength, Judith had paved a path to freedom and bliss for the Aborigines. Though she feared criticism from her men, the joy she brought to the Aborigines made her happy.

We have another animal imagery in the poem “Halfway”, where a tadpole stands halfway between the land and the water. The Aborigines are referred to as tadpoles, which are halfway between freedom and confinement. They are not yet frogs to leap out of water and jump about freely on the land. The line, “he seemed to accost my eye with his budding hand”, shows the confidence the Aborigines had on Wright.

Guerin opines: “it is the readers, with whatever experience they bring to the text, who give it its meaning. Whatever meaning it may have inheres in the reader, and thus it is the reader who should say what a text means” (356). While doing so, they go in partnership with psychologists, linguists, philosophers and other students of mental functioning, observes Guerin quoting Jane Tompkins.

Wright is a psychologist as well as a philosopher who reveals to the reader, the position of the Aborigines amidst the whites. Her poems are philosophical through which the reader learns a lot. Many a time doubts arise in the minds of the Aborigines as to their freedom:

“Is that world real, or a dream I cannot reach?
Beneath me the dark familiar waters flow
and my fellows huddle and nuzzle each to each
while motionless here I stare where I cannot go.” (CP 291)
Wright remembers this tadpole later on, while writing poems and had created one for it. The days have all passed now, when the Aborigines were seen clinging between death and life. It was ageing which made Judith boldly voice out her feelings. Though not too late, she still regrets for having begun her social work late. During her middle age, she was not bold enough, except to express her feelings through poems. In a poem “Two Dream times” she is much worried when she says:

A knife’s between us. My righteous kin
still have cruel faces.

Neither you nor I can win them,
though we meet in secret kindness

.............................................

The knife’s between us. I turn it round,
the handle to your side,
the weapon made from your country’s bones.
I have no right to take it. (CP 317-318)

Her poems tell us of the enormous difficulties she had in freeing the Aborigines. It was not an easy task. Her beginnings were more of dedication. She pays a tribute to Kathy, a native girl in the poem “Two Dream times”:

But both of us die as our dream time dies.
I don’t know what to give you
for your gay stories, your sad eyes,
but that, and a poem, sister. (CP 318)
T.S. Eliot, in his * Tradition and Individual Talent*, asserts that a poet or any artist for that sake does not give his complete meaning alone. “No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone. You cannot value him alone; you must set him, for contrast and comparison, among the dead” (169). Every literary work is attended by a host of outside circumstances which, once we explore and expose them, suffuse it with additional meaning. Wright’s poems reveal to the reader a lot of hidden meaning. Kathy and Purkiss, the bullock driver in the “Bullocky” stand as symbols alone. She laments for many such Kathys and Purkisses.

It was only after immense struggle and wrestling with the angel, that she set her foot on the path of freedom for the Aborigines. The great secret of morals is love; a man, to be greatly good, must imagine intensely and comprehensively. He must put himself in the path of another and of many others; the pains and pleasures of his species must become his own. The great instrument of moral good is the imagination says Shelly in his *A Defence of Poetry*. With the use of binary words, Wright begins the poem “Dry Storm” as, “The uninhabited mountains stand up green, / naked with rock or clothed with and old forest....” (CP190)

She is the farmer who has sown the seeds of love and is anticipating rainfall. The other farmers cluster around her, but, “.....The cloud’s heart / is torn wide open, but it means no rain”. (CP190)
Wright had experienced many such failures from her people in regard to the freedom of the Aborigines. She had been one with them in the hours of agony, crying bitterly:

O ease our restlessness. Wild wandering dark,

vague hurrying depths of storm, pause and be full,

and thrust your fullness into our desire

till time release us, till we sleep. (CP 191)

The natives' longing for a easeful sleep and a safe wakening depends upon humanitarians like Wright. They wish to wake to a cool sky and a soaked earth and to drink its light in peace.

While the English romantic poet John Keats wants to escape into the world of the bird, Wright is quite different. Keats wants to escape from agonies and reality, whereas Wright metaphorically flies into the world of the birds to proclaim certain truths in which she fuses all her passions, and in one clear voice sings to the world, a song of joy and happiness. Through her collections of innumerable poems she has done justice to the natives. As Shelly in his Defense of Poetry, quotes "a poet is a nightingale, who sits in darkness and sings to cheer its own solitude with sweet sounds; his auditors are as men entranced by the melody of an unseen musician, who feel that they are moved and softened, yet know not whence or why. The poems of Homer and his contemporaries were the delight of infant Greece; they were the elements of that social system which is the column upon which all succeeding civilization has reposed." (344)
Like Homer in Greece, there is Wright in Australia to give strength to the aboriginal society. There may arise conflicts and resolutions on the road to a good cause; fighters for a social cause may meet with remote relationship between systems; unapprehended and inexecutable things rise up in between. At present, in India the voice of Medha Patkar, trying to save the Narmada Valley and the people around it from the Sardar Sarovar Project, is facing stiff opposition even from the Government. Such socialists meet with various hindrances. But, in the words of Richards the results of the untrammeled response are not lost in their usual trafficking.