INTO THE REALM OF REALITY

There is
One great society alone on earth:
The noble Living and the noble Dead.

--Wordsworth
CHAPTER II

INTO THE REALM OF REALITY

This chapter is a mourning for the helpless Aborigines, who had been leading a gay and happy life before the arrival of the English Colonizers, as portrayed by Wright in her poems that stand testimony to the mindless violence caused to the native people.

About sixty thousand years ago, when the whole world was cooler, the oceans lower and when dry hills and plains extended over a vast area, came the Aborigines to the island of Australia. They came from Asia and found Australia drier than the Indonesian island they had left behind. Aborigines are depicted as an “unchanging people in an unchanging world”; but their way of life changed, though at a slow pace. Their way of life like every way of life had it’s defect and weakness, but they could be proud of colonizing a difficult terrain in making use of an astonishing range of foods and medicines, in using ingenuity in many facets of daily life, and in managing to survive in areas which today are virtually uninhabited.

The happy life of the Aborigines died, when Sir Arthur Philip, the Captain of the First Fleet, brought into the island the convicts and soldiers. In spite of Captain Philip’s efforts to win over the hearts of the Aborigines, the natives feared at the sight of the Europeans and moved deep inland. But life was not rosy for the English. The convicts and the police had to fight against the odd conditions that prevailed there. In the following ten years more convicts arrived and somehow the British Colony was established.
Sheep farming became the main occupation and the export of wool increased. As the industrial revolution gathered momentum, machines improved and cheapened the production of woolen cloth. The astonishing rise of the woolen industry changed Australian life, eventually establishing Australia as a major exporter of wool.

As a result, sheep farming moved further inland exposing the hiding places of the Aborigines who became silent victims due to such encroachment. Sometimes clashes between the Aborigines and the white shepherds broke out resulting in the death of the natives. Along with this, diseases like measles and small pox infected from the invaders also killed a large number of Aborigines.

In modern criticism, investigation of a writer’s social origins and of the effect, which the social factors had on his work, has been at least as common as psychological studies of a writer’s state of mind, and the two have often gone together. There seems to be a relation between sociology and criticism. Fredrick A. Pottle, in his *The Idiom of Poetry*, says that poetry always expresses the basis of feelings of the age in which it was written. It never goes wrong. Culture may go wrong; civilization may go wrong; criticism may go wrong, but poetry, in the collective sense, cannot go wrong. (Daiches 279)

In Wright, we see the society and the feelings of the society. Her poems are of a sociological order, which not only talk about the hardships and sufferings of the Aborigines but also trace out the history. She is a
sociologist who looks deep into the society, trying to find out the faults and reflects them in her work. As a true Marxist she takes pride in her dialectical insight both into society and history. She looks into the social structures and historical forces of the society in which she lived without being shattered by political beliefs.

In accordance with Pottle’s view we see that Wright’s poems reflect the society she lived in. In fact, she must have been psychologically affected to have felt so much for the Aborigines. As a social reformer she voices out for the plight of the natives through her poems.

The Hungarian Marxist, Georg Lukacs sees Balzac, a Catholic royalist, as a great writer because Balzac saw the significant truth about what was happening in society. “The central intellectual problem of realism is the adequate presentation of the complete human personality; and art, if taken to be pure, must be saturated with social and moral humanistic problem”. (Daiches 367)

Accordingly, we see Judith Wright not only as a poet, but also as a critic and social worker who campaigned for the Aborigines and their land rights. She believed that a poet should be concerned with national and social problems. Even before her death, at the age of 85, she attended a march for reconciliation with aboriginal people at Canberra.

In both, her poetry and prose work, The Cry For The Dead, Judith Wright is concerned with the reconstitution of Australia’s aboriginal past, a past that has been consistently either suppressed or romanticized. She
started to see that her mission was to find words and poetic forms to bridge
the human experience and the natural world, man and earth.

The problem of morality becomes a problem of organisation, both in
the individual life and in the adjustment of individual lives to one another.
Without systems, value vanishes, since in a state of chaos important and
trivial impulses alike are frustrated, observes I.A. Richards (44) and
"according to Wright the true function of art and culture is to interpret us to
ourselves and to relate us to the country and society in which we live", says
Shirley Walker (152). That is why she was attracted towards the native
Aborigines and their life. In one of her poems "Brevity", she says:

Rhyme, my old cymbal,
I don't clash you as often,
or trust your old promises
music and unison.

I used to love Keats, Blake:
Now I try haiku
for its honed brevities,
its inclusive silences. (CP 413)

As a social critic Wright is much concerned with the health of the
mind as any doctor is with the health of the body. Mathew Arnold, when he
said that poetry is a criticism of life was saying something so obvious that it
is constantly overlooked (Richards 46). The artist is concerned with the
record and perpetuation of the experiences, which seemed to him most worth living and Wright is someone who is most likely to have experiences of value to record.

Wright started to publish poems in the late 1930s in literary journals. As a poet she made a debut with *The Moving Image*, in which Wright showed her technical excellence without burdens of fashionable trends. Most of the poems were written in war time. The main theme in the volume was the poet’s awareness of time, death, and evil on a universal scale. With a new focus, Wright gained a reputation as a wholly new voice in literature. Her increasing anxiety of the destruction of the natural environment along with the annihilation of the Aborigines brought more pessimistic undercurrents:

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Die, wild country, like the eaglehawk,
dangerous till the last breath’s gone,
clawing and striking. Die
cursing your captor through a raging eye.
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I praise the scoring drought, the flying dust
the dying creek, the furious animal,
that they oppose us still;
that we are ruined by the thing we kill. (CP287)
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Wright’s poetry was inspired by the various regions in which she lived – the New England, New South Wales, the sub tropical rain forests of
Tamborine Mountain, Queensland and the plains of the Southern Highlands near Braidwood. In most of her poems there is a feeling of loss, loss of nature and loss of the natural inhabitants. A new period in Wright’s life started in the mid 1950s:

…the two threads of my life, the love of the land itself and the deep unease over the fate of it’s original people, were beginning to twine together and the rest of my life would be influenced by that connection. (Brady 163)

In “The Two Faces,” she took Hiroshima as an example of man’s power to destroy even the cycles of nature. Wright’s activism on conservation issues led her to focus on interaction between land and language.

In the early 1960s she helped to found Wild Life Preservation Society of Queensland. She fought to conserve the Great Barrier Reef, when its ecology was threatened by oil drilling and campaigned against sand mining on Fraser Island.

Nature and the Aborigines play a major and contemporary part in her poems. Whenever she talks of empty land it is destruction, both of nature and the Aborigines. In The Cry For The Dead, she examined the treatment of the Aborigines and destruction of the environment by the English settlers from the 1840s to 1920s. The book deals with the little known and almost completely ignored history of the aboriginal people, in particular the Wadja people of the Dowson River Valley in Queensland. Shirley Walker says that
the title refers directly to the aboriginal custom of waking the camps at dawn with a “chaunt” for the recently dead, as described by Gideon Lang in his *The Aborigines of Australia*:

...while waiting for day-break one of the natives rose, lit a fire, and commenced to sing one of these “Chants” for the dead. Almost immediately afterwards, one fire was lit and one voice joined after another until a line of fires gleamed down along the edge of the scrub and the whole tribe joined in the melancholy dirge. (153)

Judith Wright says that destruction of the aboriginal race was so swift and ruthless that few records survive and those that do are deeply biased. What emerges clearly from her works is the brutality and inhumanity of the process of genocide. The aboriginal wars were actually suppressed and the consequences of these wars were the destruction of moral values, culture and environment.

Annamma Joseph in “The Tribal Story Lost in an Alien Tale” says that a sharp note of anger accompanies every representation by Wright, of an animal or a form of nature as a victim of violence committed by the colonizer. “The Bull” is described by McAuley as “a splendid celebration of organic life – in particular of fulfilled sexuality” (406). However, the bull, the central image of sensual magnificence is driven and humiliated by the dogs. The poem ends with the question:
What enemy steals his strength – what rival steals
his mastered cows? His thunders powerless,
the red storm of his body shrunk with fear,
runs the great bull, the dogs upon his heels. (CP 38)

Similar victims are there in plenty, strewn all over the world. They
become landmarks of protest to poets such as Wright. Judith’s association
with the people and the land is so deep that she feels not only for the human
victims but also for nature. She laments for the loss of nature too. In
“Eroded Hills”, she says:

These hills my father’s father stripped,
and beggars to the winter wind
they crouch like shoulders naked and whipped-
humbled, abandoned, out of mind.

I dream of hills bandaged in snow,
their eyelids clenched to keep out fear.
When the last leaf and bird go
let my thoughts stand like trees here. (CP 81)

The killing of the Aborigines and the destruction of the land seems to
have had the impetus and inevitability of Greek tragedy, says Shirley Walker
in her criticism on The Cry For The Dead.

As the first whites moved in they were usually offered hospitality and
women, as was the aboriginal custom. Not understanding these customs the
whites abused their hospitality; the women were kept, not returned to their
husbands as was customary. The Aborigines were driven from the best lands and from possession of the water holes. Their hunting grounds gone, the Aborigines stole sheep and cattle and were savagely punished for this. Any retaliation was punished by the indiscriminate slaughter of all the blacks in the area, innocent or guilty.

Poets of sociological order are naturally expected to condemn such violence committed on the hapless, through their powerful verses. Shelly in his “Defence of Poetry” states that, “poets are the institutors of laws, and the founders of civil society and inventors of the arts of life; language, colour, form and religious and civil habits of action are all the instruments and materials of poetry. (340)

As a true poet Wright has made use of all the above said instruments to prophesy to the world the outcome of such brutal violence. According to Shelly, all poets should be philosophers; for the poem is the very image of life expressed in its eternal truth. Plato was essentially a poet. Lord Bacon with his sweet language and majestic rhythm satisfies the intellect with his wisdom of philosophy. Dante, Shakespeare and Milton too, are philosophers of the very loftiest power. (343)

Violence of representation erupts when the attempt is made to suppress difference and retrieve the past. The poet takes a position outside the field of power, or at least writes about it as if it were “out there” says Annamma Joseph, who further elaborates that Judith Wright situates herself in a female position, relative to the discourses of the dominant culture, so
that she may presume to speak for the excluded. She manipulates every aspect of language and expression to fulfill her mission, including phonic structure, image, grammar, the play of meaning and association, etc. And the violence is often represented by a disturbance or a menace lurking behind the landscape that is conveyed through her poems (407). The emptiness of the land is beautifully expressed by Wright in her poem “Bora Ring”. The poem begins with an air of emptiness and sorrow. Wright’s voice of distress is implicit in the poem. She not only mourns for the death of the Aborigines, but also for the loss of the traditional song and dance.

It is at times as though her whole attention were not on the poem, as though the constant reworking of the same set of themes, which is characteristic of her, had led to an occasional and unconscious parody of herself (Joseph 407). Reading the poems of Wright, the history of early Australia and its inhabitants, the aftermath of the arrival of the British can all be pictured clearly.

Allen Tate in his “Tension in Poetry” says that poets have from earliest times been the historians, the interpreters of contemporary culture, and the prophets of their people. In William Blake whom we see as a mystic and esoteric, there is an outcry against the oppression of man by society; he lashes out against child labour in his day and against the government’s indifference to the indigent soldier who has served his country faithfully. (Tate 382)
We see Judith Wright lashing out against the injustice done to the natives. In fact, the tribal colony of Australia has become just an old tale. She emphasizes the absence of the aboriginal race, the vacuum in nature and culture left by their passing, and the loss, the pain and guilt experienced by the perceptive white observer. The poem “Bora Ring” defines this absence and loss:

The song is gone; the dance
is secret with the dancers in the earth,
the ritual useless, and the tribal story
lost in an alien tale.

Only the grass stands up
to mark the dancing-ring: the apple-gums
posture and mime a past corroboree,
murmur a broken chant. (CP 8)

The sympathetic identification of the Aborigines with nature, which is fully developed throughout her poetry, is then made clear. Nature itself abhors the loss, and attempts to supply it. The horseman is a lone observer:

The hunter is gone: the spear
is splintered underground; the painted bodies
a dream the world breathed sleeping and forgot.
The nomad feet are still.
Only the rider’s heart
halts at a sightless shadow, an unsaid word
that fastens in the blood the ancient curse,
the fear as old as Cain. (CP 8)

Surely when there is nothing to be hunted, a hunter cannot exist. The line implies the washout of the race; the hunter in the English blood is no more. The nomad feet too are still, as there are no more nomadic tribe of Aborigines. The world had slept and dreamt of those wiped off tribes. The pathos lies in the last stanza, where the rider’s heart halts at a “sightless shadow”. The use of the phrase “sightless shadow” is an alliteration that throws a ghostly effect on the reader. The shadow of the Aborigines seems to be moving but the English cannot see it; fear grips his heart; fear of a curse from the Gods, for wiping out an entire mass of people. The English man fears the wrath of God, just as Cain feared the killing of his brother Abel.

Wordsworth calls the poet “a rock of defence for human nature” (Daiches 95). He says that the poet binds together the vast empire of human society. Daiches, in his Critical Approaches to Literature, says: “The fairest and the most interesting properties of nature are not the most beautiful and the most picturesque aspects of natural scenery, but those aspects of the physical world which, when they react on the sensitive mind of the poet, produce, either immediately or more profoundly, in subsequent recollection, an awareness of some of the basic laws of human mind, laws which derive
from the essential structure of the mind and personality and which are in turn part of the larger pattern of the structure of the universe.” (95)

As for the poet being the “rock of defence for human nature”, it would seem to mean that the poet, in virtue of his achievement of this kind of awareness, redeems man from triviality and from selfishness by demonstrating the importance of sympathy and the relation of the individual experience to the sum of life. We see Judith Wright binding together the vast empire of human society, by revealing the common psychological laws, which underlie all sensation and all sensitivity and revealing it not by abstract discussion but by showing through the persuasive concrete illustration that is drawn from experience. “Bora Ring” and “Nigger’s Leap” are a few such poems.

The title of Wright’s prose work *The Cry For The Dead* is meant to have a wider connotation. It is meant to apply to all the victims, black and otherwise, of the nineteenth century pastoral invasion of Queensland, in which Judith Wright’s own family was involved. The author’s source material consisted of the diaries and reminiscences of her family and whatever other documents were available. Her research, she says, took her into “dark places”, for, the destruction of the aboriginal race was so swift and ruthless that few records survive and those that do are deeply biased. What is certain, according to Judith Wright, says Walker, is that:

Britain’s tributary colonies, which contributed so much to her wealth, were generally a scene of merciless dispossession,
exploitation, outright murder and contempt for indigenous peoples, and Australia was certainly no exception. For obvious reasons, the methods by which the aboriginal resistance was overcome and the ways in which they were expelled from their land were seldom recorded. It was only when the resistance resulted in such notorious events as the Myall Creek case (the sole example of high publicity given to white attacks on Aborigines), or the Hornet Bank and Cullin-la-Ringo tragedies – events that could be exploited to arouse colonial passions – that the blood and terror of the Black Wars was partly revealed. (154)

In another poem, “Trapped Dingo”, the cruel act of killing is dramatically brought out. The actual picture of English barbarism flashes in our mind’s eye.

The English employed natives to wipe out their own race. Those white pastoralists who attempted to protect the Aborigines on their own properties, from such indiscriminate massacres, were subject to recriminations from their neighbours and most were forced to drive the blacks out to take their chance. While violence by the Aborigines against the British was well publicized in an inflammatory manner, the wholesale slaughter of the entire tribes of Aborigines was suppressed. Later, when it suited the pastoralists, when white labour was too expensive, the pitiful survivors of the tribes were employed on the stations for a pittance but, for
the most part, they drifted to the outskirts of the white townships to be further degraded by prostitution, alcoholism and the use of opium. Finally they were collected on aboriginal reserves, often far from their tribal lands.

Judith Wright provides a chilling account of the legal debate as to whether the Aborigines were subject to Queen Victoria and therefore under her protection or whether they were completely outside legal jurisdiction. The question was settled by the hanging of seven white men for the massacre of Aborigines; but the whites drew together in a conspiracy of silence after this. Another equally disturbing thing is that the evidence of an Aborigine could not be admitted in court because of his inability, as a heathen, to swear an oath on the Bible. Thus the only evidence admitted in court was white evidence.

Other justifications for genocide which are disclosed in Judith Wright’s account are quite shocking. An argument goes that the Aborigines were a primitive race, little better than “black apes”, therefore their extermination was an evitable part of progressive evolution. It was also maintained that the Aborigines were weak and passive, that they had offered little resistance and therefore deserved to lose their land. This is apparently far from truth. Though hospitable at first, the Aborigines when aroused, resisted to the limit of their endurance and their inferior weapon:

So here, twisted in steel, and spoiled with red
your sun light hide, smelling of death and fear,
they crushed out of your throat the terrible song
you sang in the dark ranges. With what crying
you mourned him, the drinker of blood, the swift death bringer

Who ran with you many a night; and the night was long.
I heard you, desperate poet. Did you hear
my silent voice take up the cry? (CP 9)

An Aborigine poet was crushed to death for fear that he may sing the massacre of the Aborigines. The English who killed the poet are called by Wright as “the drinker of blood and the swift death bringer” in the poem “Trapped Dingo”.

Wright brings out her feelings and all she can do is cry for the cruel killing, “the lover, the maker of elegies is slain, / and veiled with blood her body’s stealthy sun.” (CP 9)

In yet another poem, entitled “Waiting”, Wright makes amends for the dead Aborigines; she realizes that the massacre is a serious crime, which can never be forgiven. A study of a few poems like “The Hawthorn Hedge”, “Bullocky” and “Nigger’s Leap” from her early work shows the desperation, feeling of guilt and humanism that burst out through the poems.

It was not the loss of life but also the loss of the land which is sung pathetically by Wright. The land is ruined by white farming practices; the English wanted the re-creation of an English feudal system in a land so peculiarly resistant to it. Other ex-convicts like the Chinese and the Kanakas had suffered too; but the suffering of the Aborigines who were
sacrificed to the bucolic dream seem greater still, says Shirley Walker.

(154)

"Country Town" is a short poem, which brings before our eyes the plight of the natives on the loss of their land. The poem is ambiguous; the convicts seem to cry for their lost land, England, while the natives cry their heart out for their land being usurped. Everywhere, towns creep over the landscape. The land is now safe with bitumen and banks. The hills are "netted in" with fences. The land had become urban. At night when the town sleeps, a voice is heard:

This is not ours, not ours the flowering tree.
What is it we have lost and left behind?
Where do the roads lead? It is not where we expected.
The gold is mined and safe, and where is the profit?

The Church is built, the bishop is ordained,
and this is where we live: where do we live?

And how should we rebel? The chains are stronger. (CP14)

Rebellion will lead only to death. According to Aristotle, "Poetry springs from two causes, each of them a thing inherent in human nature. The first is the habit of imitation; for, to imitate is instinctive with mankind. Secondly, all men take a natural pleasure in the products of imitation—a pleasure to which the products of experience bear witness. (62)
Wright as a poet has given a picturesque imitation of the death of the natives in her poem "Nigger's Leap". The picture moves the reader's heart. It is with desire that Wright wishes to teach the world. The pleasure that the poet gives need not always be good. Aristotle, in his Poetics has said that poetry is the most philosophic of all writing; it is so; its object is truth, not individual and local, but general and operative. Wright has very aptly been operative; through her philosophic poems, she has trumpeted to the world the most passionate and live things with sympathy and pleasure. Wordsworth in his "Poetry and Poetic Diction" observes: "the poet writes under one restriction only, namely, the necessity of giving immediate pleasure to human being possessed of that information which may be expected from him, not as a lawyer, a physician, a mariner an astronomer or a natural philosopher, but as a Man." (300)

Wordsworth further adds that this necessity of producing immediate pleasure is a task light and easy to him who looks at the world with a spirit of love. Further, it is a homage paid to the native and the dignity of man. For, the poet knows, feels, lives and moves with man. At first, there is no sympathy except what is propagated by pleasure; but wherever there is sympathy with pain, it will be found that the sympathy is produced and carried on by subtle combinations with pleasure.

There is also no knowledge about any particular fact, except that which has been built up by pleasure by the poet and exists by pleasure alone. A poet not only gives the reader pleasure but also reveals the bitter facts,
which causes pain leading to sympathy. This has been there with many poets, especially in those beautiful poems of Keats, Shelly and Coleridge.

Let us consider, for example, the following lines of Keats from his poem “Ode to a Nightingale”, where the poet reveals the pains of life and wishes to fly into the world of the Nightingale, where there is no sorrow when compared with the world of man:

Where but to think is to be full of sorrow
and leaden-eyed despairs,
where Beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,
or new Love pine at them beyond tomorrow. (27-30)

The above lines give us immense pleasure, but the facts highlighted are painful, which lead to sympathy. The same can be seen with Shelley when he says in “Ode to the West Wind”:

Oh, lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud!
I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!
A heavy weight of hours has chained, and bowed
One too like thee. (53-56)

Similarly in Wright we see the cruelty in the killing of the natives, which gives the reader a pleasurable pain, leading to sympathy. This is profoundly described in “Nigger’s Leap, New England”.

In “Nigger’s Leap, New England”, Wright seems to correlate the activities of nature to the dead Aborigines. An atmosphere of serene calmness lingers through the poem. An obscure tide is seen around the cape
and the bay. The night is already dark and brings loneliness along with it. The poem yet intensifies the loneliness:

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Make a cold quilt across the bone and skull

that screamed falling in flesh from the lipped cliff

and then were silent, waiting for the flies. (CP 15)

The picture of a cliff over the sea, how the chased natives were driven over the cliffs, and having no other chance, how they had to jump into the deep sea are brought out clearly through this. One fall, and their heads split, with blood oozing out, where flies wait greedily. The narration brings the picture of the falling, screaming natives to our eyes. Poetry and painting, according to Wordsworth, in his “Poetry and Poetic Diction”, are called sisters, for they both speak by, and to the same organs. Both have bonds of connection; we see the picture coming alive before our eyes like a painting (296). The resemblance between poetry and painting or the art of bringing alive a picture through a poem lies in the art, diction, language and style of the poet, which is there in plenty, in Wright. In accordance with Coleridge’s theory of poetry in Biographia Literaria, she has a good sense which is the body of her poetic genius, fancy which forms the drapery of her poems, motion which gives them life and imagination, the soul that is everywhere. (323)

The twentieth century Australian, ignorant of the historical process of genocide, must now contemplate the vacuum at the heart of his own
comfortable existence. "Niggers Leap" is a lament for a whole tribe of women and children.

Water in any form is generally interpreted by psychoanalysts as a female symbol, more specifically a maternal symbol. Except when invaded by men, the river is characterized by a strange fluid, dream like peacefulness; the river also suggests the dark, mysterious serenity associated with the prenatal state, as well as with death, in psychoanalytic interpretation. The tension between land and water may be seen as analogous to that between the conscious and the unconscious in Freudian theory, says Guerin. (138-139)

The Aborigines find a symbolic mother in the waters of the sea; in Freudian terms, they return to the womb. Guerin observes Huck and Jim in Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* as victims of malevolence, who escape from Ms. Watson and Pap Finn to the river in order to gain freedom. The ideal symbol is the dark sea, which is suggestive of the Freudian death instinct, the unconscious instinct in all living things to return to the non-living state and thereby achieve permanent surcease from the pain of living. (Guerin 138)

According to Richards, poetry is historically a connected movement, a series of successive integrated manifestations (43). Each poet from Homer to our own day has been the voice of the movement and energy of poetry. Even at an early stage of her poetic career, Wright showed a mature and objective grasp of the processes of history, of the repetitive cycles of racial
victimization and genocide. In “Nigger’s Leap” as well as in the “Bora Ring”, what is noticeable is the ability to make historical statements in lyrical forms and to give the brutal and transient facts a mythic force.

Guerin says that just as dreams reflect the unconscious desires and anxieties of the individual, so myths are the symbolic projections of a people’s hopes, values, fears and aspirations (132). Myths are by nature collective and communal; they bind a tribe or a nation together in common psychological and spiritual activities. Myth is the expression of a profound sense of togetherness of feeling and of action and of wholeness of living. It is a dynamic factor everywhere in human society; it transcends time uniting the past with the present and reaching toward the future.

Now and again we see Wright’s use of biblical myth in her poems. In “Bullocky”, we see the redeemer Moses, leading a whole race towards a bright future. The image of a wise old man like Moses is a personification of the spiritual principle, representing knowledge, reflection, insight, wisdom, cleverness and intuition on one hand, and on the other, moral qualities, such as goodwill and readiness to help, which makes his spiritual character sufficiently plain. Apart from all these we see the Bullocky as a man of morals. He is a sacrificial scapegoat, the hero with whom the welfare of the slaves or nation is identified; he must die to atone for the people’s sins and restore the land to fruitfulness:

Beside his heavy-shouldered team,

thirsty with drought and chilled with rain,
he weathered all the striding years

till they ran widdershins in his brain.....

Then in the evening camp beneath

the half-light pillars of the trees

he filled the steepled cone of night

with shouted prayers and prophecies. (CP 17)

In the archetypal approach, there usually is an archetypal motif or pattern, where the hero archetype plays a major role. The hero is a savior or a deliverer who undertakes some long journey during which he or she must perform impossible task, battle with monsters, solve unanswerable riddles and overcome insurmountable obstacles in order to save the kingdom. Wright’s Bullocky can also be viewed as an archetypal hero.

The poet had been aware of so many men like her family’s bullock-man, Jack Purkiss, who had sacrificed his life slogging for the whites. This Jack Purkiss, had been commemorated as a hero in “Bullocy”. He stands for many such men who had striven for the welfare of the slaves.

Repetitive cycles of racial victimization and genocide are seen in many early poems. Criticism is not a “discipline”, as many modern critics like to regard it; but it is a civilized exchange of opinion. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a new form of academic criticism, the “bio-critical” approach flourished vigorously; this approach conveys to the reader a sense of the writer’s achievement set against the background of
his life and time. Its greatest success lay in giving the reader a total impression of the kind of work a writer produced, with appraisal of individual works used as an example to illustrate the generalization rather than as critical assessment in its own right.

One can easily conclude that most of her poems are biographical. Through most of her poems the poet generalizes the attitude of her people during her time, especially their attitude towards the natives. The poem “Nigger’s Leap”, tells us of the mass genocide she witnessed. The poet is also aware of the difficulties the English would have met with, if the natives had not been there to help them:

Did we not know their blood channeled our rivers,
and the black dust our crops ate was their dust?
O all men are one at last. (CP 16)

Sidney in his Apologie for Poetry, argues that poetry is simply a superior means of communication and its value depends on what is communicated; and to determine that value we have to go to other arts like history or moral philosophy. Imaginative literature can be justified if it communicates historical or philosophical or moral truths in a lively and pleasing manner (Daiches 53). “Nigger’s Leap” is highly imaginative and in the imagination lies the history of the Aborigines. The poet, through her poems, has shown us exactly what had happened years ago in Australia, when the English set foot on it.
Wright finds a solution for this cruelty, through the death of the Aborigines; her early poems are just sympathetic. In death, the poet feels that the natives are equal to the English; for, no living creature can escape death.

An American was mildly shocked that the Australians in the twentieth century still kept alive the mental process of guilt and defiance that sprang originally from the convict settlement of their beginnings. It is perfectly true that America was once a convict settlement and has vigorously forgotten the fact. But Wright said that they could not have done it—they had not even tried to do it. The fact of Australia’s convict settlement origin had a deep meaning in their twentieth century consciousness as it had been in the nineteenth century.

As Wright feels, may be it is the passage of time that made the ‘Australian settled English’ see ‘man’ inside the native Australian. When the English formed colonies in America, the situation was entirely different. It was the Puritans, unable to tolerate the Anglicans and Catholics, who had fled to America and settled down there. The natives, who were the Red Indians, were like the Aborigines. They were chased or killed; but the land was fertile and hence the English did not need the help of the natives; but the Australian land was different. The English could do nothing without native help. The Red Indians too may have suffered like the Aborigines if not for the availability of the fertile land in plenty. Also comparatively, the Aborigines were worse than the Red Indians as they were just nomads. The
Australian land too was not fit for living except for a few places. So the Aborigines could not escape elsewhere into the land as the Red Indians had done. They had to be under the mercy of the English settlers.

The Aborigines had been a lot of help to the English settlers. After the massacre of the natives, the English had nobody to warn them of the rocks; there were no bells to welcome them. Even the lights on the shore were very little to guide them through. It was the natives who shed their blood to make channels for the easy coming of the English ships. It was they who had planted and grew crops for the English bread. But the brutality of the English had no bounds. Even “night” personified as a person, the night, which hid them behind the cliffs, had the same question on its tongue for the English. A note of regret ends the poem “Nigger’s Leap”:

Never from earth again the coolamon

or thin black children dancing like the shadows

of saplings in the wind. Night lips the harsh

scrap of the tableland and cools its granite.

Night floods us suddenly as history

That has sunk many islands in its good time. (CP 16)

The Coolamon and their children have gone forever into the land of no return. With them had gone the tribal dance and song.

Coleridge declared that a “legitimate poem” should have parts which mutually support and explain each other; all in their proportion harmonizing
with, and supporting the purpose and known influences of metrical arrangements. (Guerin 78)

Judith Wright has mutually supported and explained well in the poem “Nigger’s Leap” how the Aborigines were killed; the atmosphere is first set when the reader enters into the poem, he can at once sense an air of sadness; the bringing in of “night” further intensifies the serene mood. There seems to be no other sound than that of the waves beating the boats. Wright had made an already calm night calmer still, by her use of words and description of the shore scene. It shows that the shore had never been as calm as it was then, which makes the reader take a guess, reasoning out the extraordinary calmness.

Allen Tate’s theory of tension fits well the Wright’s poem, “Nigger’s Leap”. It is a fully organized body with all the extension and intention we can find in it. The figurative significance we derive does not invalidate the extensions of the literal statement. At every stage we may pause to state the meaning so far apprehended, and at every stage the meaning is coherent.

The end of the first stanza brings a flash back of the death of the Aborigines. A death can never be made more cruel than these. It was a sort of suicide, a mass suicide. Crowds of Aborigines must have fled from the chasing English settlers, fleeing from what they dreaded, not to a serene Tintern Abbey or to the Land of the Nightingale, but to ‘Death’. The natives must have run to escape death at the hands of the English but never would they have thought that a cliff and a deep sea would be waiting for them
Wherever they turned ‘death’ waited to swallow them. So, instead of turning back and facing the pursuer, they felt it better to plunge into the deep seas, breaking their heads over the cliffs and rocks. Captivity and bondage was worse than death.

Here we are reminded of the plight of the Negro labourers who suffered in the hands of the British in Africa. An African poet, David Rubadiri, describes the state in which the Negro slaves lived:

Slouching on dark backstreet pavements
Head bowed.
Taut, haggard, and worn.
A dark shadow amidst dark shadows.

(CW Poetry 133)

The Aborigines had been pitiful victims of torture. Being unable to tolerate it anymore they jumped to death. Having described the death of the Aborigines, the poet in the second stanza, tells us the various disadvantages in their death. The Aborigines and their clans were in plenty, scattered all over the island; whenever the English settlers needed help, the Aborigines would be there; whether it be hauling the boat to the shore, or flashing lights to guide the boats, the natives would be on the shore at any time. But after the massacre the shore remained scanty; there was nobody to chatter to; the smiles of the black children were no more.

The third stanza makes the English look back on all that the natives had done for them. If not for the natives, the English would not have found
it easy to live on the wild, uninhabited island of kangaroos and kiwis. The utterance of, “O all men are one at last,” by the poet, makes us feel that at least in death the Aborigines are equal to the others. One is reminded of James Shirley’s words, when he utters:

Death lays his icy hands on kings,
sceptre and crown
must tumble down,
and in the dust be equal made. (Death the Leveller)

Poetry, as Sir Philip Sidney claims, is superior as a moral teacher. Moral philosophy teaches virtue by precept and theoretical argument whereas the historian claims to do better since he teaches by concrete examples drawn from history. (Daiches 62). The poet performs both. He paints virtue vividly and attractively, while vice, with equal vividness is made to appear always ugly and unattractive.

Poetry with its notable images of virtues and vices, and with its delightful teachings shows us the nature of the poet also. Poems of Wright dealing with the Aborigines show the humanistic feelings of the poet. To quote Wordsworth from his “Poetry and Poetic Diction”, a poet is endowed with more lively sensibility, more enthusiasm and tenderness; he has a greater knowledge of human nature and more comprehensive soul, than are supposed to be among common mankind (298). Judith Wright satisfies all these qualities.
Poetry is the most philosophic of all writings; its object is truth, not individual and local, but general and operative. The poems of Wright give a competent and confident truth to the tribunal to which it appeals, and also receives the same truth from the tribunal.

Wright's later fight for the aboriginal rights has its seeds in her poetry. A note of pathetic fallacy is seen when "night" seems to ask the same questions that the poet pondered over about the various helps rendered by the natives. The questions still lie strange on their tongues; the well-wishers of the Aborigines are not able to accept the fact of the complete wiping away of a race that had helped the usurpers and shown them the way for a bright future.

Defenders of cultural studies believe that the idea of humanism was the foundation of western civilization and modern democratic values. On the other hand, a Marxist theorist Terry Eagleton believes that the current "crisis" in the humanities can be seen as a result of the failure of the humanities. Cultural study joins subjectivity with engagement, a direct approach to attacking class inequities in society (Guerin 242). Though cultural study practitioners deny "humanism" or "humanities" as valid categories, they strive for what they call "social reason", which often strongly resembles democratic ideals.

Just because the Aborigines were uncivilized or dark-skinned, it doesn't mean that they are not human or inferior to the white skinned. They should not have been killed, for no good came out of the killing. The
thoughts gnaw the poet’s heart. It brings out the intense agony of the soul. Wright ends the poem with thoughts of voidness. God, who had created the world, filling it up with various races and creatures and nature, had not given the right to his creations for destroying one another. A warning note persists through the last lines of the poem. Just as ‘night’ lips the harsh scrap of tableland and cools its granite, so also the:

Night floods us suddenly as history

that has sunk many islands in its good time. (CP15)

Darkness seems to fill the hearts of the settlers with realization of destruction. Many an island had been destroyed due to the power, ego and cruelty of the British. Wright believes that by the eradication of the Australian natives the British have marked yet another chapter in their history. It was night, which wiped out a million Aborigines; and it was night, which fills the hearts of the settlers with guilt and fear—the fear of the wrath of the Gods.

An analysis of the title “Nigger’s Leap, New England” gives us both a negative and a positive meaning. The leap of the nigger may be for joy; the joy of founding a new land, “New England”. The poet’s feelings for the death of the natives and for the opportunities of their resurrection are seen in the title. Just as the British set foot in America and formed the New England colony which flourished, a day may come, when a new colony would erupt once again for the niggers’ heart to leap up in joy.
The title may also be suggestive of a negative tone. The niggers, leap into the sea for death, thus making the English set up a new, “New England” colony. Among the many colonies, which the English had set up, one is the Australian colony formed by wiping out the native settlers. The title in itself is enigmatic. The nigger leaps, giving way to the colonizer for, their leap to be a boon for the surviving niggers, depended on socialists like Wright who ultimately won freedom for the Aborigines through their sustained writings on the genocide.

“The Hawthorn Hedge” is yet another poem which expresses Wright’s feelings for the Aborigines. The hawthorn hedge which had been planted has grown hungry to cross the ridge. Though the poet is just comparing the age-old days and the present day, thoughts of Aborigines flash in her mind. The hawthorn hedge had grown so high that a rider passing by is not able to see what lies on the other side. The lines: “Let him stare. / No one is here. …” (CP14), may appear to have an ordinary meaning; but a second reading reveals an emptiness, a void in the place:

only the mad old girl from the hut on the hill,

unkempt as an old tree…. (CP 14),

seems to be there, like the lame child in the story of “the Pied Piper of Hamelin”. Even this girl will hide away and will not see if anybody waves his hand. It is not shyness; but fear, fear of death in the white man’s hand. Immense fear had made her heart a grindstone, which whets the thorns of the hawthorn bush. She has become insane being all alone; the gay, happy girl with a sweet song in the air is no more.
Psychoanalytic feminist critics, Gilbert and Gubar point out that the mad woman figure represents aspects of the author’s self image, like the angel or heroine, as well as elements of the author’s anti-patriarchal strategies. They describe a feminine utopia in which wholeness rather than “otherness” would prevail as a definition of identity. (Guerin 203). The poet here is of course an angel, who saves the voiceless Aborigines and gives them identity.

Judith Wright shows a clear grasp of legalisms by which the white race justified both the annexation of the land and the destruction of the native people. Her early poems reveal only a concern for the Aborigines; but later on she protests and raises her voice supporting them. The Aborigines too, get ready to fight back. After majority of them were wiped out, the remaining few were not scared of the colonizers. In “Sandy Swamp”, the poet gives us a picture of the aftermath of the massacre:

No visiting traveller crosses
by the pale sandy tracks that vanish
under the banksias hung with mosses.
In yellow evenings when the sea sounds loud
night rises early here,
and when white morning sings
here clings the darkness longest.

Who walks this way, then? Only
the rebel children who fear nothing
and the silent walker who goes lonely,
silence his goal, out of the holiday crowd. (CP 88)
The poet says that it was an undeclared war against the black race. A note of grief and guilt for the sufferings inflicted upon the Aborigines covers almost every poem of hers. "Bullocky" is one of the poems which celebrates the courage and endurance of the European Pioneers. The poem is based on an actual person, a bullock driver who had worked for the Wrights. The poet evokes the past pioneering days and gives those arduous expeditions a remoteness and a sense of adventure that transforms them into legendary events.

As the poem unfolds itself, we realize that it narrates the progressive insanity of a pioneer brought about by years of suffering and deprivation. Grief purifies the vision of the bullock-driver to the point of a kind of religious delusion, which makes him see himself as a Moses leading the children of Israel to the Promised Land.

All through the long and strenuous journey Moses' thoughts were only on a mad apocalyptic dream, a Promised Land for the future generations. The bullock-driver was just one slave man; there were hundreds like him who had sweated and strained for the welfare of the English pioneers. A mythical significance already explained, underlies the poem, which makes the bullocky timeless and a part of the Australian heritage. The whole poem is thus a tribute to those who had suffered to make Australia fruitful.

Now that the land had been fruitful, Wright asks the grape vine over the grave of the bullocky to grow close upon that bone which had striven for the fruitful land:
O vine, grow closer upon that bone
and hold it with your rooted hand.
The Prophet Moses feeds the grape,
and fruitful is the promised land. (CP 17)

Judith Wright incorporates the Aborigines into her poetry as a very important part of Australia's cultural heritage. She believes that by simply ignoring the fate of the natives, white Australians will never be able to rid themselves of an uneasy sense of guilt for what they did to the former inhabitants of Australia. "Transformation" shows the actual transformation of the British. As days go by, the British have a fear of facing the Devil. They repent for their inhuman acts. The words Wright chooses to explain the transformation freezes the reader:

All this his magic taught him year by year,
until the contract seemed an antique dream
and he alone stood builder of his world.
But now the Time he made draws in too near
and whirls him from that world into its stream
that leads to midnight's fall, and his old fear. (CP 78)

The old fear of Cain grips the English. Cain feared the wrath of God years after killing his brother Abel. The oppressor waits for some magic or a saviour angel who could save him:

Mountains and hills, come, come and fall on me!
But they are weightless figures in a play.
He and his soul alone stand face to face,
and in all art there is no mystery
will change the stroke of midnight into day
or hold the door against the turning key. (CP 78)

No transformation can take place to save the English from darkness. He is a trapped rat turning his head from side to side. His pride is pulled down. The Lucifer he created now makes his knowledge useless and usurps
the earth:

and he is snared between death's final word
and the more difficult agony of rebirth. (CP 78)

According to Shelley, says Coleridge in his Theory of Poetry, "a poem is the very image of life expressed in its eternal truth. A story is the catalogue of detached facts; poetry is the creation of actions according to the unchangeable forms of human nature, as existing in the mind of the creator, which is itself the image of all other minds. The poem evokes sympathy and the sympathetic imagination takes the reader to an experience similar to that of the poet. When we realize the full value of that experience, our sympathy gradually gives place to our admiration of the poet" (Daiches117). However reprehensible the actions against the natives might have been, the very fact of recognizing and regretting these actions opens a door to a new understanding of and a respect for the aboriginal custom and ways of life.

If we assess Judith Wright's poetic productions by her own standards we have to consider both the bearing of her work in her immediate context,
Australia, and the relevance of her message to the world's modern concerns. The main bulk of Wright's work was published during the forties and the fifties, a time when Australian literature was beginning to forget that it was adolescent and antipodean. The desire to create a recognizable Australian tradition and its sustaining myths were strong in some artistes while many others preferred to remain sheltered in one way or the other, from the problems of identity.

Two Australian literary groups, the Jindyworobacks and the Angry Penguins represented these two attitudes, that is, the confrontation between indigenous values and values of European origin in its purest form. The Jindy movement attempted to create an indigenous tradition based upon aboriginal myth and custom. Although they introduced a new and more positive attitude towards the natives, they overemphasized a culture which was alien to the white man and was not accepted as the foundation for the building of his literature.

The Angry Penguins stood in opposition to the Jindys' aboriginal claims but failed to provide any real alternative. Instead they sought to incorporate European movement into Australian context but did not contribute much to the creation of a distinctive Australian voice. Against this literary backdrop, Judith Wright's poetry may be seen as an attempt to achieve a balance between the strict regionalism of the Jindys and the bush balladists who concentrated exclusively on local values, and the vision of the Angry Penguins or poets like Christopher Brennan whose work did not
invoke any recognizable Australian features. This kind of Australianism she proposes does not fall into either an aggressive regionalism or an excessive dependence on European modes. Hers is a poetry of integration which weaves the positive and negative elements of the Australian experience into a richly textured reality and has had a great influence on the way Australians see their past, and therefore, on the way they inhabit the present.

Judith Wright had more access to the Aborigines and their culture since two generations of the Wright family had settled down in Australia near the Dawson Valley. The family had experienced the early hardships, the plight of the natives in leaving their land and property and running know-not-where into the wilderness.

The sense of fear at the invasion of the Japanese during the World War II enabled Wright to understand the feelings of the Aborigines, when the Europeans set foot on the island. The English set foot, not only as convicts or their keepers, but as colonizers too. Usurping their land, the white colonizers had made the natives slog like the ‘bullocky’, with no sense of pity. They said the Aborigines had no right to own the land as they were nomads. The island was not theirs; this was the justification given by the English for the mass slaughter and genocide.

In Coleridge’s *Theory of Poetry*, he says that if a poet can do nothing else with beauty, he can show it to somebody. Sympathy itself perhaps may have some connection with this impulse to embody feeling in action. The desire to share the experience is present in every poet. The total experience
purifies the spirit; it refines the spirit. The experience of a poem gives rise to feelings and emotions (131). The poem "Fire Sermon" will justify it:

"Sinister powers," the ambassador said, "are moving into our ricefields. We are a little people and all we want is to live". (CP 276)

Wright wanted to scapegoat herself and take the sins of her forefathers upon herself, expiating their bloody heritage through her work:

And in those days there was one of him and a thousand of them, and in these days none are left— neither a pale man with kangaroo-grass hair nor a camp of dark singers mocking by the river. And the trees and the creatures, all of them are gone. (CP 82)

Once upon a time, Judith remembers the Aborigines composing a song in honour of her great grand father. But now all are gone, except:

...the sad river, the silted river, under its dark banks the river flows on, the wind still blows and the river still flows. And the great broken tree, the dying pepperina, clutches in its hands the fragments of a song. (CP 82)

She would do the land honour, sing of its flowers and people and defend the rights of the indigenous people. It was not Wright alone who brings into her poems the loss of nature. Even before her was Shaw Neilson
who had mourned the death of nature due to the English settlers. Neilson’s address “To a Blue flower” makes him realise the truth that the English may make them rich, but:

Soon would I tire of all riches or honours or power that they fling;

But you are my own, my own folk, you little blue flower of the Spring! (CW Poetry 69)

It was not with Neilson or Wright alone that a sense of belonging arises; more poets have expressed a sense of belonging, a feeling of a home in the country of Australia. Any sane human being with a real heart, with emotions, shall surely feel for the Aborigines, the original inhabitants of the island. If a second home could bring to these poets, a sense of belonging, what would the real inhabitants of the island feel? Where would they go to except fall over the cliffs or flee deep into the bushes to be swallowed or bitten by hungry and poisonous reptiles?

The treasure islands may have been his desired land; but the world of the Aborigines shrank to a grenade, when the English plucked away their land:

Now trapped in a mad traffic, he stands and sees the map ruled off in squares of black and white, and all his islands vanished with their palms under their hostile despotism of night. (CP 13)
In the poem called “The Surfer”, Wright portrays the happiness of freedom through the experiences of the surfer. The surfer thrusts his joy against the weight of the sea. The gulls go wheeling in air and he is in water, extremely delighted; free from torture; free from exile; free from the bond and slavery of the English man. But he cannot, forever go surfing on the foamy waters of the ocean; just as Keats had to bid adieu to the nightingale and turn back to the world of reality, the surfer too had to go back to the shore; go back to the snarling wolf which waits on the shore, showing the bones of many a native it had swallowed.

The shore is metaphorically compared to the wolfish British who occupied the lands on the shore, causing a danger to the natives; the shores keep snatching and dropping broken toys, pebbles, shells and other things. So too, the British take hold of the innocent Aborigines, gnaw them, spit them out and go in for more and more. The Aborigines had lost the joy of enjoying nature and their natural land; the spiteful wolf waiting to pounce on them was watching every moment. A prisoner in his own homeland--this was the plight of the natives.

The Aborigines may be uncivilized; but they are human and they need to be treated like human. Edward Burnett Tylor in his “Primitive Culture” says that culture or civilization, taken in its widest ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society. (Guerin 245)
If the Aborigines are judged by the standards of Tylor, one will understand that they are, no doubt, a civilized class. They have their own morals, laws, customs and habits. And if a man wants to wipe out a civilization completely, it is none other than a dreadful sin, the sin of Cain. According to Guerin, Claude Levi-Strauss was another continental thinker who said that the primitives too had a culture. Raymond Williams, a reformist Marxist, also assigned culture both to the working class and the elite. (Guerin 245, 335)

In the meantime, there was born the Leavist theory promoted by F.R. Leavis. The Leavists tried to improve the moral sensibilities of the readers by projecting works of Milton and Shakespeare. Though all these took root in Britain, it was the British who did not follow it; their wiping out of the entire aboriginal culture was open. (Guerin 246).

A look into the literatures of other Commonwealth countries shows the birth of protest literature there also. Freedom from British rule gave the countries like India, Australia, Canada and New Zealand, which were emerging into Nationhood, a new sense of pride. It was at this time that the Commonwealth was born and the very concept gave the much-needed impetus to national aspirations. The Commonwealth writers had their own view, viewed in a larger perspective of a shared past and collective endeavor for a better future than had been known to them under the British rule. The colonial poet had the opportunity for self-discovery which is the strength of his own roots, his history and destiny and also to turn the English language
into an anti language experience, to fight against the cultural imperialism of the English. The experience these poets mediated is new to the World but brought up from the depths of their natural psyche.

The empire in its anxiety to maintain its hold on its colonies, had developed derelict stereo types which taught disrespect for their own age-old ways of living and thinking and in their place proclaimed its “civilizing mission” which acting on God’s behalf had delivered them from their long night of savagery. It was the colonial poet’s task to wipe them out as they set out to make poetry.

Modernism is a philosophical outlook which characterized arts and culture of the first half of the twentieth Century, says George Lukacs in his “Ideology of Modernism” (n.pag.). The World Wars, the economic depression and the tumult that was witnessed everywhere led to modernism. No order was visible in human life and this was reflected in the literature of the century. Alienation and escapist psycho-pathological identities rose to the fore. Modernism is rooted in anti-realism. The realistic tradition believed in the Aristotelian thesis that man is a social animal. Man’s individual existence is connected very strongly to his social and historical environment. The ontological view of modernism is exactly the opposite of this. Man, for the Modernist writers, is by nature “solitary, asocial, unable to enter into the relationships with other human beings” (Lukacs). But though Wright is a modern poet, she is not asocial. The modernists believe in Heidegger’s definition that man is a “thrown-into-being.” But Wright
feels that the Aborigines were not thrown into the world. They were human who belong to a society, which had history of themselves.

The modernists assert that relationships and reality are meaningless. Man does not develop through contact with the world; he neither forms it nor is formed by it. But George Lukacs in his "The Ideology of Modernism" says, man cannot be so. He cannot be static. If it is the literary narrator who is in motion, what makes him move? What triggers his mind to write? A literary man is also a man, a social being who trumpets out the agonies of men, of an age of a civilization. He may also do it the other way round; but he needs a source and the source is man; and as the modernists assume, this man cannot be static; for, if he had been static or is static, no literature would have been or will be produced. However modern the world will turn into or whatever new ideas the modernists will bring into being, the truth that man is a social animal who needs a society will not vanish.

When commonwealth countries like Australia, Canada and Africa which had been under the rule and influence of the British are taken into consideration, all of them seem to share a common experience; exiles in their own country, unable to express themselves as human beings.

It was through the voices of Wole Soyinka, Gabriel Okara in Africa and immigrant poets like Abraham Klein, Stephen Gill and Margaret Atwood in Canada that their struggle for freedom and an outlet to their grievance is seen.
Their poems like a prism reflect the unchanging social scene which is gnawed by hunger, death, sorrow and suffering, and life: “does not wear another mantle / only calendars become new.” (Gill 6)

Continuance of moral laxities, indulgence in sensuality and political corruption and exploitation, strike a staggering blow to the entire social system. The socio-political upheavals combined with the brutality of human nature coming into light were the main causes for the human values to deteriorate. This further leads to spiritual barrenness, which T.S.Eliot had already mentioned in his “Hollow Men”. Gross human apathy towards the suffering of fellow-beings makes the poets question both the forces of racism and humanism.

Based on the work of Louis Althusser and Jacques Lacan, a structuralist form of thinking emerged that identified individuals as constructs of an ideology necessary, if the state and capitalism are to reproduce themselves without fear of revolution. (Guerin 248).

The works of Judith Wright go in accordance with New History. In fact, most new critics of anthropology look at a work of art from many angles. The 1970s was an age of deconstruction; but the late twentieth century is an age of return to history.

New History concerns itself with extra-literary matters, including letters, diaries, films, paintings and medical treatises. It looks for an opposing tension in a text, then for an opposing tension related in history. It brackets together literature, ethnography, anthropology, art history and other
disciplines. The poem “Australia 1970” stands as an example. The ecology of the country was almost dead with the captors spoiling the beauty of the entire land. At the same time the poet feels that the destruction of the wilderness will only bring ruin to the whites. The country waits like the “eaglehawk” or the “tigersnake” to take revenge on its destroyer.

The poem tells us the changes the country had undergone after the invasion. The country can do nothing except curse the captor; pure hatred is hissed out by Australia. The people of the country could do nothing but stay blind to the power of the British and their culture. The phrases, “scoring drought”, “flying dust”, “drying creek” and “furious animal” tell us what the invasion and settlement had done and also stand as a proof for Wright’s eco-criticism. The phrases used in the poem produce a meaning of struggle.

Culture was allowed by many critics to be ‘read’ as we read literature and that was what Wright did in her poems on the Aborigines. English critics uncovered meanings in a work. Meaning became the site of class struggle. As a Russian Formalist, Mikhail Bakhtin and his colleagues argued, meaning is dialogically produced within that struggle, at once conflictual and communal, individual and social. (Guerin 246-247).

The poems of Judith Wright are a struggle, which are individual and social at the same time. The Canadian poet Stephen Gill reveals his anger through a poem. He says: “the colonizers are war mongers; they crown humanity with thorns and hang it on the cross of dreams. These ‘traders of dead bodies’ squeeze the last vestige of blood from life and in the grave of
aspirations of human helplessness, these reptiles find their home”. (7).

Anxieties related to war, terrorism, human rights violation, religious radicals, hunger, racial discrimination and ecological imbalances etc., are some of the major issues that sit heavily on the conscience of commonwealth poets; and Judith Wright is no exception.

The term “Commonwealth” has a long history. It was first used by Oliver Cromwell after establishing the Republican government in England in 1649. It was resurrected in 1931, with the creation of the Dominions, when the British Empire was re-christened as the British commonwealth of nations.

Though commonwealth concept came into practice in the mid-twentieth century, it began to evolve in the aftermath of the American War of Independence, which had convinced the British statement that they should formulate a new approach towards the emerging nationalism in the colonies, which were destined to become independent states in due course. In order to avoid a repetition of a violent break up of the Empire, as it had happened in the thirteen colonies of America, Britain thought it imperative to follow a path of concessions and reforms and develop self-governing institutions in the colonies. The Durham Report of 1839 envisaged that the colonies could govern themselves and yet remain colonies. Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa along with Britain became the founder members of the commonwealth.
But in Australia, it was not as in the case of the American colonies where the colonizers themselves were subject to hardships by the British. So, much is not known about the hardships they inflicted on the native Red Indians. But in the case of Australia, South Africa and Canada, Britain did not intervene in the affairs of the colonizers. Hence these colonizers did all they could to plunder and ransack the country, not only exploiting the natives, but also wiping them out, and taking pleasure in seeing them suffer; and among the colonizers were also born sympathetic ones like Judith Wright, who had seen, sensed and felt the pain of the natives.

Potentiality is another thing that Lukacs points out in his work, "The Ideology of Modernism". Potentiality relates to the innumerable possibilities that are available for the betterment of man. We can only imagine most of them, but realize only a small percentage in life. There is the abstract and the concrete potentiality. Wright belongs to the second type; her potentiality is concrete and is related to reality. Man always dreams and has several possibilities before him. But he has to make a choice in everything and in the act of choice a man's character is revealed. The possibilities in a man's mind, the particular pattern, intensity and suggestiveness they assume, will of course be characteristic of that individual. (Guerin 328-239)

The literature of realism, aiming at a truthful reflection of reality, must demonstrate both the concrete and abstract potentialities of human beings in all extreme situations. In a truthful reflection of reality, Wright's
poems are store-houses of both kinds of potentialities for, action cannot precede thought and out of imagination and thought, action is born.

As Aristotle states poetry originated from two causes, both rooted in human nature. The first and the important is the instinct of imitation, which differentiates man from animal and is a source of knowledge in his childhood. It is also natural for all men to take delight in things imitated. What Wright saw of the Aborigines is imitated through her poems and she takes pleasure in bringing to light those brutalities of the colonizers. The evidence is supplied by experience. Objects which are viewed with pain become delightful in artistic imitation; and that is what is seen in the poems of Judith Wright. Though she tells about the sad story of the demolition of the Aborigines, the way she imitates what she saw, making use of Biblical allegories and symbols give an enjoyment to a sad tale; Wright's usage of pathetic fallacy in poems like “Bora Ring” shows Wright as a nature poet involving nature too, in mourning the death of the Aborigines.

Looking into the technique Wright has used, it can be said that they do not have any rhyme scheme. It is just a flow of words as is the modern technique but there are some exceptions as in the case of “Bullocky”.

A glance at “Bora Ring” does not show much of rhyme; but the poem shows a void, an atmosphere of emptiness. A picture of joy in rituals and dancing and singing is seen in the first stanza; but the second stanza shows only nature in the form of grass and apple trees. They seem to miss the happy dance of the natives; pathetic fallacy is adopted here, not only in
“grass standing up”, in the “apple-gums” murmur, but the entire poem gives us a picture of a sad nature, mourning something irreplaceable. The poem ends with a Biblical myth, making the British realize that they would be punished one day for the crime of murdering a crowd of Abels. Fear grips the British, the old fear of Cain and they have to wait with guilt for the Judgment Day.

“Bullocky” has got a rhyme-scheme. Throughout the seven stanza poem, the second and the fourth lines rhyme with each other in all the stanzas. Other than this, there is no other rhyme of any sort.

Once again, there is Biblical myth adorning the poem. If “Bora-Ring” had Cain and Abel, “Bullocky” gives us picture of Moses and the Promised land. Just as Moses led the people of Egypt to a Promised Land, the ‘bullocky’ also strives hard to make Australia a promised and a faithful land for the coming generations.

The poems in the book *Moving Image* have not only poems sympathizing with the Aborigines; there are also poems which carry Wright’s nostalgic feelings for her home country and poems which reflect agonies of war are also there. Besides all this, her love for nature is portrayed in plenty. That she is an Australian Wordsworth is relevant when her poems show nature hidden here and there, even when she talks about serious things.

In the systems of the past, the word ‘form’ usually meant what we call ‘external form’. Thus, when we identify a poem with fourteen lines of
iambic pentameter, a conventional pattern of rhymes, and a conventional division into two parts as a sonnet, we are defining its external form. The same kind of description takes place when we talk about couplets, tercets, ottava rima, quatrains, spenserian stanzas, blank verse or even free verse. But the formalistic critic is only moderately interested in external forms. The process of formalistic analysis is complete only when everything in the work has been accounted for in terms of its overall form.

In the formalistic approach, the assumption is that a given literary experience takes a shape proper to itself, or at the least that the shape and the experience are functions of each other. This may mean, at a minimum, that a precise metrical form couples with a complex of sounds in a line of verse to prevent one small bit of experience like the “Bora Ring” and the “Bullocky”; or it may mean that a generic form, like that of the sonnet, is used repeatedly in a sonnet cycle to show the inter-relationships of thoughts to images, or problems to comment or a solution as seen in the poem “Sonnet” (CP 16). In such a case although the overt structures of the sonnet is repetitive, still the experience in any one Italian sonnet is structured across the octave and sestet or in the English form across the three quatrains and the concluding couplet. We can see this type in “The Beasts”. (CP185)

There is also a poem called “Metamorphosis”, which is a poem of fourteen lines, but doesn’t follow the rules of a sonnet. In all these poems there is a relationship between form and experience, the experience of Wright with the natives from childhood to a grown up woman.
A larger work like a full-length play or a novel might adopt much more complex and subtle forms to communicate the experience, such as the inter-relationships of plot and sub-plot in Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* or in a complex stream of consciousness of James Joyce or Faulkner. The fragmentation of storyline and of timeline in modern fiction is a devise used not only to generate within the reader the sense of immediacy and even the chaos of experience but also to present the philosophical notion of non-meaning and nihilism.

While in a novel, the idea is in fragments, the poetry of Judith Wright tells the story of the Aborigines through the passage of time in bits and fragments—through the various poems under various sub-titles.

Thus, from the above analysis, it can be concluded that Judith Wright’s poetry offers a realistic and moving portrayal of the exploitation of the Australian Aborigines in their own lands by the British.

The fundamental reason for exploitation is the feeling of superiority, which the colonizers had. This feeling arises mainly due to racism. The whites consider themselves to be great because of their colour, which signified them as highly multivalent. The blacks on the other hand foretold chaos, death and melancholy.

Wright is now mature enough not only to analyse, but to step into action through her poems which deal with ‘darkness’.