The redefinition of pastoral, then, requires that contact with the green world be acknowledged as something more than a temporary excursion into simplicity which exists primarily for the sake of its eventual renunciation and a return to the ‘real’ world at the end. A pastoral for the present and future calls for a better science of nature, a greater understanding of its complexity, a more radical awareness of its primal energy and stability, and more acute questioning of the values of the supposedly sophisticated society which we are bound. (235)

Exploring Judith Wright's poetry, nature seems to be the greatest molding factor of her poetic imagination. She sees life everywhere. The reader learns that life is interrelated, a vast brotherhood, which includes ourselves not merely placed on a lifeless globe in a dead universe. In order to reconcile with nature, she strongly recommends a change in the manner we look at the earth and this could be accomplished through a rediscovery of the aesthetic experience of nature. An aesthetic appreciation of nature will improve our practice of bonding with, and caring for the environment.

**Chapter – IV**

**SOCIAL ECOLOGY**

*We must regenerate ourselves if we are to regenerate the earth. Our feelings and emotions must be engaged, and engaged on a large scale.*

--Judith Wright
Social ecology focuses on basic human relationships, and society’s dealings with nature. It analyses the impact of domination or exploitation of the biosphere by human beings which has resulted in destruction of the habitat. It identifies that social problems are at the origin of all ecological problems and advocates reconstructive ideas to modify the blueprint for our lives in order that man might live in harmony with nature. In the words of Murray Bookchin:

> The relationship between society and nature is, for social ecologists, not one that looks “upon [nature] as a necessitarian, withholding, or ‘stingy’ redoubt of blind ‘cruelty’ and harsh determinism, but rather as the wellspring for social and natural differentiation. (qtd in Light 6)

Social ecology and eco-centrism are critical of the exclusively instrumental approach toward nonhuman nature that has formed the governing political ideologies of current times. In addition, social ecology and eco-centrism find common motive in protecting nature, and both inquire about a radical ecological reconciliation between human society and the rest of nature. Given this common agreement, one should not be surprised to find agreement between social ecologists and those of an eco-centric influence in relation to a broad spectrum of environmental issues, ranging from the prevention of logging of old-growth forests to the fortification of the rights of the natives and their time-honored homelands (Eckersley 78).

Judith Wright, an unbending environmentalist and social activist opposed the insensitive attitudes that humiliate human life and the environment. She advised men to take a bio-centric approach towards nature and used her poetic talents to do something stupendous to stop the indiscriminate destruction of the Australia she loved.
She campaigned against ecological issues like deforestation, mining, oil spilling, the devastation caused by the world wars, climate change and she fought for the rights of the Aborigines. She was deeply involved with setting up an organisation devoted to wildlife preservation, marine preservation, which was one large factor in having the Great Barrier Reef saved from commercial exploitation and declared as a Marine National park:

[Judith Wright] publicly identified herself with trying to save the natural environment, stopping man from destroying the country and thereby himself. The dissociation of man from the landscape has the inevitable consequence of the denial of human values, and it was human values she asserted, the very life of the planet. (Bridge 115)

Wright, in her poems ‘A Document’ and ‘Eroded Hills’ deals with an important ecological issue, deforestation; the clearing of earth’s forests on a massive scale, often resulting in damage to the land. The poem ‘A Document’ exposes man’s ruthless act of destruction of the forest causing vast imbalances in nature’s system. The European government dominated by anthropocentric thought, looked at the trees in terms of their instrumental value. Wright was obliged to vend eight hundred strong coach wood forests to the government in order to aid the Australian war effort. The ‘coach wood’ trees were used during the Second World War in the Mosquito Bomber, a twin-engine aircraft. She had no other option but to sign the title deed as “it was World War Two. / Their wood went into bombers-planes” (CP 244). There is self-forgiveness when Wright says, “I signed uneasily” and “I was much younger.” Together these phrases hint at injustice perpetuated by the conquerors:
Ceratopetalum, Scented Stainwood:

a tree attaining seventy feet in height.

Those pale-red calyces like sunset light

burned in my mind. A flesh-pink pliant wood

Used in coach building. (CP 244)

As an eco-critic, Wright decries the destruction of trees due to human rapacity. Her depiction of the trees, commonly known as ‘Scented Stainwood,’ is both botanically accurate and sensuously indicative. Her approaches to trees were both scientific and artistic. Just like a botanist, she describes the physical details of trees like the height of the trees, the colour, shape, and texture of their leaves: ‘Scented Satinwood’ grows up to ‘seventy feet in height’ and grows over a long period. They have ‘pale-red calyces’ similar to the blossoms of the Christmas bush, and perfumed, ‘flesh-pink, pliant wood.’

Wright anxiously compares the length of time needed for the trees to reach maturity to the rapidity with which they were chopped down. “They grew / hundreds of years to meet those hurried axes” (CP 244). The phrase, ‘hundreds of years’ has the effect of stressing the process of growth, almost as though the trees are identified with the passage of centuries:

Under the socio-legal dispensation

both name and woodland had been given me.

I was much younger then than any tree

matured for timber. (CP 244)
Wright upbraids herself when in a mood of patriotism she decided to sell to the government the coachwood forest, a part of her family property. ‘The socio-legal dispensation,’ the order of things established and controlled by the law of society, have forced her to sell the coachwood forest. Though Wright had the good will, her voice was overpowered by the law of the land. The private guilt and sorrow, together with public responsibility, has the effect of a shock. Bookchin defines hierarchy and domination as complex “cultural, traditional and psychological systems of obedience and command … in which elites enjoy varying degrees of control over the subordinates without necessarily exploiting them” (qtd. in Rudy 274).

Wright speaks for dumb nature through her powerful personification of the tree. She uses terms that suggest the animate, almost human, nature of the trees: “Uneasily / (the bark smells sweetly when you wound the tree)” (CP 244). She portrays the trees with a certain innocence and inability to defend themselves. The suggestion of pain inflicted in the act of selling the trees for timber is the reason for the ‘wound.’ It recalls ‘burned’ in the second stanza, reinforcing the fine suggestions of the identity between the human and natural orders; to ‘wound’ an aspect of natural environment is to damage humanity as well. The poem brings to light the poet’s guilt in violating the natural order, even though she was justified in arguing her liability towards her country. The words ‘burned in my mind’ mean that the harm done to the trees has created a deep wound in her mind because she feels guilty that she was indirectly responsible for the felling of the trees.

Similarly in the poem ‘Sanctuary’ she bewails the fact of its reckless destruction: “… here the old tree stood / for how many thousand years?—that old
gnome tree / same axe-new boy cut down…” (CP 140). In the poem ‘For a Pastoral Family,’ she says “If now there are landslides, if our field of reference / is much eroded, our hands show little blood” (JW CP 407). Wright points out that the cutting of trees by the colonisers has led to soil erosion resulting in land slides. She believed that the only way to rectify the problems of soil erosion caused by deforestation is by replanting of trees. In criticising the felling of trees, Wright uses the terms, “private exploitation and uncontrolled use of the land … in the interests of profit” (qtd. in Platz 258). These factors, she argues poignantly,

Have left us with a country whose soils are depleted, eroded, salinised and piled in our waterways and estuaries, whose water itself is chemically and organically polluted, whose forests are disappearing and no longer profitable, and whose income drops yearly as the effects of our waste and greed sink deeper. (qtd. in Platz 258)

‘Eroded Hills’ expresses regret for the de-forested landscape and she urges replanting trees to mend the eroded hills. She wished to re-establish life in an act of compensation for her grandfather’s clearing of the land for grazing. Besides tree-planting to redress the crime of the rampant tree clearing, long-term wisdom and yearning for liberation imaged in her poetical words. She openly expresses her anger at the settlers’ destructive practices and articulates her antipathy towards clearing the trees. This poetic tradition conceived the life of nature as a source of health and integrity, in utter contrast with the corruption wrought by human beings. The first stanza refers to her grandfather’s ecological atrocity:

These hills my father’s father stripped,
and beggars to the winter wind

They crouch like shoulders naked and whipped—

Humble, abandoned, out of mind. (CP 83)

The poet was annoyed with the anthropocentric outlook of her ‘father’s father’ and laments the sorry sight of the stripped hills. She continues to describe in eco-aesthetic terms that the earth was ‘stripped,’ ‘whipped’ and ‘naked.’ As timber gathering was a lucrative business the red cedars, woods of the rainforests were mercilessly cut by the colonisers. The certainty that the taller the trees, the richer must be the soils under them, caused a great deal of valuable timber to be cleared and burned for farmland. Within the next few decades the land often became ruined and weed-infested as the first fertility of ash and humus was exhausted. Such forests often grew on soils quite unsuitable for farming and on slopes whose hill led to erosion. Wright mentions in her memoir, Tales of a Great Aunt: “Trees have suffered a lot from us, and even this book is made out of paper, which usually comes from trees” (62). Wright indulges in loving memories of nature in her childhood where “Of the scant creeks I drank once / and ate sour cherries from old trees” (CP 83). She writes in her memoir Tales of a Great Aunt,

They are more like gardens in the air, than trees, when I remember them; orchids and ferns scrambled all over them, and all kinds of birds and animals and insects lived on them. But red cedar is good tree for furniture-makers and so they were sold and dragged out to the timber mills. (62)
The land that is owned, bartered, ‘stripped,’ ‘whipped’ and blinded is the ancient earth that roots the tree that bears the fruit. “I dream of hills bandaged in snow / their eyelids clenched to keep out fear” (CP 83).

Collett observes, “Her poetry sculptures the land into human … ascribes human meaning to rock and hill and tree and river” (8). She points towards a loss of ecological balance. But there is also awareness of looming threat which might lead to the further extinction of plants and animals. This becomes noticeable at the very end of the poem, “When the last leaf and bird go / let my thoughts stand like trees here” (CP 83). Wright expresses the wish that her thoughts might stand like trees; there is a desire for replacement. Due to deforestation, millions of species which added colour and beauty to the environment were wiped out.

Wright was also alarmed about the harm done to the birds owing to deforestation, which has lead to the extinction of rare birds. The poem ‘Extinct Bird’ mourns the loss of birds which vanished with the abuse of nature. All now are vanished with the ‘fallen forest’ which is the natural habitat of the birds. She is angry that some destructive human hands had felled the trees and destroyed the forest which was the abode of these birds. She says,

Charles Harpur in his journals long ago

…………………………………………

recorded the birds of his time’s forest

birds long vanished with the fallen forest—

described in copperplate on unread pages. (CP 182)
Wright refers to Charles Harpur, a poet who has made a record of birds of his time’s forest which are now extinct. The rare variety of birds has ‘vanished’ because of the ‘fallen forest’ as the most critical threat facing the birds is the destruction of habitat. Habitat loss has been implicated in a number of extinctions, including the ‘scarlet satin bird.’ Wright mentions with love the satin bird which ‘swung like a lamp in berries’ (182). Wright mourns that “There was a bird, blue, small, spangled like dew. / All now are vanished with the fallen forest” (182). She feels sad for the extinct bird and poses the question “who helped with proud stained hands to fell the forest” (182). The forests were converted into plains and other natural systems into agriculture, mines, and urban developments, this reduced potential habitat for many species. The colonisers with ‘proud stained hands’ (182) have destroyed the home of these birds. At present the ‘brightly tinted’ Australian native birds dwell only in the ‘unread pages’ of Charles Harpur’s book.

Similarly, another poem ‘Lyrebirds’ makes an appeal to leave the birds to their own way of living. The message is simple: they should not be disturbed in anyway. “Some things ought to be left secret, alone; / some things—birds like walking fables— / ought to inhabit nowhere but the reverence of the heart” (CP 178). She expresses her concern for the Lyrebirds which have become extinct. “I’ll never see the lyrebirds— / the few, the shy, the fabulous, / the dying poets” (178). Alike in appearance to the peacock, rarely seen by humans, it is native to eastern Australia. These birds look like a perfect lyre, “a splendid bird, bearing / like a crest the symbol of his art” (178). Now they have become like ‘walking fables’ and they ‘inhabit nowhere but the reverence of the heart.’
Wright, in another poem ‘Brush Turkey,’ deplores the way man destroys and pollutes the habitat of the birds. Brush turkey is a spectacular large bird with black feathers and a red head. The poet, with great admiration, describes the bird “Ash-black, wattle of scarlet, / and careful eyes, / he hoaxes the ape” (CP 180).

Right to the edge of his forest
the tourists come.

He learns the scavenger’s habits
with scrap and crumb-

his forest shrunk…. (CP 180)

With the eye of an eco critic, Wright points out the trouble given to the birds by the tourists who are also in a way responsible for the destruction of the forest; some insensitive tourist may pollute the place with plastic or throw away food which is not suitable for the birds. The Brush Turkey becomes a beggar in its own rightful place: “… he lives / on what the moment gives; / pretends, in mockery, / to beg or charity” (CP 180). The tourists who enter the forest throw food for the birds:

The backyard bird is stupid;
he trusts and takes.

But this one’s wiles are wary
to guard against the axe:

escaping, neat and pat,

into his habitat. (CP 180)

Wright expresses anguish over the attitude of the callous human beings for destroying the habitats of those birds which add beauty and colour to Australia. The
parrot in the poem ‘Trap’ says, “We must be / their prisoners, boy, and in a bitterer cage” (CP 229). The drab, brown plains of inland Australia are brightened by the brilliant plumage of parrots, one sixth of the world’s total. The illegal smuggling of parrots out of Australia remains a problem. In ‘Peacock,’ she is critical of the aldermen who deny dignity to the ever-beautiful peacock in its dirty cage. “Shame on the alderman who locked / the Peacock in a dirty cage!” (CP 163). Despite being trapped there for the idle amusement of human eyes, ever-resistant and Phoenix-like, nature rises above it all, as she muses: “Love clothes him still, in spite of all” (163).

Wright’s overall purpose was to arouse a social conscience about the natural environment. In her fervour for it, a sarcastic fringe emerged at times to her conservation agendas. The presentation of birds in Wright’s poems is not like the English Romantics’ nightingale or skylark, which seems a messenger from heaven to inspire or encourage the poets. The birds are free and dispassionate; they sing out of instinct, not for God or human beings. In Wright’s poems, as in nature, birds act purely out of their own impulse.

In the poems like ‘Trapped Dingo,’ ‘Flying Fox,’ and ‘Platypus,’ Wright expresses her anguish for the loss of habitat of animals through deforestation, dams and irrigation projects. In the poem ‘Trapped Dingo,’ she conveys the social message to protect the wild dingoes. The dingoes were caught in trap by the farmers because they preyed on calves and sheep. The dingoes and wild dogs are viewed as a threat to livestock. In the poem ‘The Trapped Dingo’:

So here, twisted in steel, and spoiled with red
your sunlight hide, smelling of death and fear,
they crushed out of your throat the terrible song

you sang in the dark ranges. (CP 9)

The grief of the trapped dingo is typical of the treatment meted out to so many species on the earth. In the opening lines, the voice reveals the sight and smell of death in the trap: “twisted in steel, and spoiled in red” (9). Harsh dental sounds, for example, in “twisted steel,” spare no relief. Peter Singer strongly defends the position that animals have rights, and that humans have corresponding obligations towards animals. “If a being suffers there can be no moral justification for refusing to take that suffering into consideration” (qtd. in Behrens 276).

Wright’s nature is not a decorative backdrop upon which human dramas are played; rather, detailed facts of a natural scene or of animals themselves often constitute the main texture of her poems, while human beings become irrelevant or trivial. She places the animal in the centre and human beings only as a part in the poem. In the cowardly facelessness of the merciless killers “they crushed out of your throat the terrible song” (CP 9); it is a reference to men who had set the trap like cowards. This horror is increased by the remoteness and indifference of the onlookers. The poem resembles Ted Hughes’ ‘The Howling of Wolves’ which evokes pity as these wolves are uncomprehending creatures living by blind instinct. In another poem ‘Wolf Watching,’ the wild wolf is locked up in a cage; the natural habitat for a wolf is a forest, when it is imprisoned in a cage it is a violence done to animals. Hughes expresses worry for the loss of wild species as they are victims of their own predatory nature, that has made them live like this according to their wildest
whims and inherent instincts. This impulse in them inevitably stresses on the theory of survival of the fittest without any reservation.

Wright wanted the society and the people in power to be aware of animal rights. In her compassion, she empathises with the dingo in its drawn-out, grueling death. Wright disapproves of the insane cruelty of the human hand that has inflicted pain on a brave dingo. She says “Did you hear / my silent voice take up the cry?” (9). She sympathizes with the wild animal in torment. This poem is an ode to all victims of horror.

Wright simply adores the alien, sovereign beauty of the animal, without making any attempt to impose presumptions. She admires the dingo “I heard you, desperate poet” (CP 8). The dingo is described as the “drinker of blood, the swift death bringer” (8) in allusions to ancient Greek tragedy and Homer. The suffering of the wild dingo is compared to that of the tribulation of great Greek heroes. She says,

Achilles is overcome, and Hector dead,
and clay stops many a warrior’s mouth, wild singer.

Voice from the hills and the river drunken with rain,
for your lament the long night was too brief. (CP 8-9)

Wright elevates the dingo to the level of a bard. Usually the dingoes are described as cunning predators but Wright’s language lends the dingo a personality while respecting his autonomy. “Hurling your woes at the moon, that old cleaned bone, / till the white shorn mobs of stars on the hill of the sky / huddled and trembled, you tolled him, the rebel one” (CP 9). The phrase ‘the rebel one’ shows the resistance of the dingo like Lucifer in Milton’s ‘Paradise Lost’ and it makes the dingo admirable
and independent. Further, the tragic end of the trapped hero reminds us of the demise of great Greek heroes: “Insane Andromache, pacing our towers alone, / death ends the verse you chanted; here you lie” (9).

Wright regrets man’s narrow minded vision that views wild animals as man’s enemy to be hunted and killed. The anthropocentric mind of man views animals by their usefulness to human beings who do not understand that the wild has a role to play in the ecosystem and they exist autonomously. She enunciates her tender care for the animals which suffer owing to man’s anthropocentric attitude towards nature. She grieves at the sight of dead flying fox in the poem ‘Flying Fox on Barbed Wire’:

Little nightmare flying-fox
trapped on the cruel barbs of day
has no weapon but a wing
and a tiny scream. (CP 132)

As barbed wire is a major killer in which thousands of flying fox are killed entangled. It causes excruciating suffering for the entangled animals. In ‘Platypus’ the narrator feels nostalgic for the pristine water in the creeks of her childhood. Now the platypus has to deal with ‘scummy fetor.’

The pool runs thick
with car-bodies, cans, oil.
The river’s dead
But at this late midnight
Suddenly my mind
runs clear and you rise through. (JW CP 369)
‘Australia 1970,’ is an eco poem where the poet criticises the aggressive clearing of forests, on massive scale for agricultural and industrial purposes. Wright decries the wrong usage of the land which has exhausted the richness of the topsoil and her voice rages at the result of the thoughtless destruction of Australia’s natural resources. She is annoyed with man’s defacement of the environment, and mechanical way of life and thinking. She feels close to the fading land, exhibits concern and uses the technique of naming animals, insects and plants that co-exist in this miserable environment. Put simply, it means the destruction and extinction of much plant and animal species, many of whom remain unknown and whose benefits will be left undiscovered.

Die like the tigersnake
that hisses sure pure hatred from its pain
as fills the killer’s dreams

with fear like suicide’s invading stain. (CP 292)

Wright feels close to the dying land, and uses the mode of naming animals, insects and plants that co-exist in this bleak environment; ‘the eaglehawk,’ ‘the tigersnake,’ ‘soldier-ants,’ ‘scorpions’ and the ‘furious animal.’ This image imparts the meaning of eco centrism, interconnectedness and resistance in the sense that nature is depicted as a body that is the centre of opposition. “Bookchin claims that insects such as ants and bees are genetically programmed, that institutions and societies are unique to human beings,” (qtd. in Macauley 310) and that human animals possess the capacity for rational, abstract, and ethical reflection. This barrenness of land is due to exploitation of the colonizer on the land. Her country is fighting back against its exploitation, the elements and animals combining to drive out those who would abuse
the earth. Wright feels guilty of the injustice done to the natives as she takes responsibility for the action she says “we are conquerors and self-prisoners,” (CP 292) rather than blaming the problem on some distant ‘they.’ Wright says, though the colonisers corrupt the land with a torturing brain the land is obstinate and withstands all atrocities. The very things Wright loves and reveres are being addressed-spoken to lovingly, yet commanded to die:

Suffer, wild country, like the ironwood
that gaps the dozer-blade.
I see your living soil ebb with the tree
to naked poverty. (CP 292)

Wright, an unswerving eco-critic, compares the suffering of the land to that of the ‘ironwood.’ The country suffers like the sturdy ‘ironwood’ that gaps the ‘dozer-blade’ used for clearing the land. The poet rues when she sees the “living soil ebb with trees” (292). The virgin soil is for the first time exposed to rain, and heat, and it leads to soil erosion, The trees are uprooted “to naked poverty” for the purpose of farming, for huts, yards and cooking fires, and the banks of streams suffered erosion and crumpled not only from overgrazing but denudation of tree cover. It also suggests that mechanised agriculture replaced the direct association between humans and the earth. More prominently, colonizers overlooked the sustainable farming life which had given way to consumer culture. Wright expresses her views in her book Born of the Conquerors, “The second century occupation changed this picture as tractors and other machinery were put to use in clearing and ploughing vast acreages for wheat”
(38). Such early changes during the first years of White management must have been considerable factors in the incidents of drought, drying of creek and the dust storm:

I praise the scoring drought, the flying dust,
the drying creek, the furious animal,
that they oppose us still;
that we are ruined by the thing we kill. (CP 292)

Wright takes an eco-centric stand and considers the land as a being which is integrated. This latter idea is suggested by the juxtaposition of images that connect the poplars with the four basic elements: air, fire, water, and earth which are respectively evoked by the “scoring drought” referring to the sun’s heat, ‘the flying dust’ alluding to the air and ‘the drying creek’ indicating the water. The ‘furious animal’ a reference to the earth is fighting back against its abuse. The elements of nature and animals combine to drive out those who would exploit the earth.

Wright expresses outrage at the environmental destruction now becoming evident for all to see. Many of her poems have concentrated on studies of minute details of the features of the country she sees around her. The poem ‘Australia 1970’ embodies a painful stress, because the colonizers had started exploiting the land resources: “Though we corrupt you with our torturing mind. / stay obstinate; stay blind” (292). Earlier the agricultural tools were mere ploughs and axes. The colonisers destroyed the native trees and plants but the land was obstinate and it showed its protest through regrowth of plants and trees. In this way, the poet bespeaks of the redemptive power of nature and demands care. But later with modern equipments like bulldozers the land was ruined and became sterile. Marcus argues,
….while the historical concept of nature as a dimension of social change
does not imply teleology and does not attribute “plan” to nature, it does
conceive of nature as subject–object: as a _cosmos_ with its own
potentialities, necessities and chances. And these potentialities can be,
not only in the sense of their value-free function in theory and practice,
but also as bearers of objective values…Violation and suppression [of
nature] then mean that human action against nature… offends against
certain objective _qualities_ of nature which are essential to the
enhancement and fulfillment of life. (qtd. in Light 372-73)

Marcus further adds, “the liberation for man to his own humane faculties is
linked to the liberation of nature-that “truth” is attributable to nature not only in a
mathematical but in an existential sense. The emancipation of man involves the
recognition of such truth in things, in nature” (qtd. in Light 373). The poet points out
that the colonisers have failed to recognise the fact that other species also have the
right to exist and flourish in their natural habitat.

Wright’s poems ‘County Towns,’ ‘Builders’ and ‘Typists in the Phoenix
Building’ are about modern society’s anthropocentric vision of nature which is ready
to sacrifice nature for the sake of technological progress. In Wright’s opinion,

The goldfields were ravaged and left without any rehabilitation
measures as miners rushed to the next bonanza; most remain in that
state today, and the mercury cyanide used in mining processes were
destructive to wildlife and plantlife for many years after. (BOC 36)
‘County Towns’ shows that the men did not at first recognize the beauty of the land they set out to tame, and in the name of progress in terms of buildings, roads and fences, they were destroyed more than they realised:

This is no longer the landscape that they knew
the sad green enemy country of their exile,
those banded men whose songs were of rebellion.
The nights were cold, shepherding; and the dingoes
bawling, like banshees in the hills, the mist coming over
from the eastward chilled them. (JW CP 13)

‘Builders’ illustrates the way man changes in a concrete environment. Wright campaigned to save the native forests. She was against “manhandling raw material” (JW CP 361) in order to construct a concrete building which later “gets out of order and beyond control”; (361) which means clearing the native forest and building concrete buildings may lead to problems like climatic change. “Books says, the state and its people replace the organic with the inorganic, soil with concrete, living forest with barren earth, and the diversity of life forms with simplified ecosystems” (qtd. in Light 346). The greed to exploit defied all meaningful limits, destabilising the earth’s ability to sustain complex life. In the book **Post-Scarcity Anarchism**, Bookchin is of the view,

The technological revolution, culminating in cybernation, has created the objective, quantitative basis for a world without class rule, exploitation, toil or material want. The means now exist for the development of the rounded man, freed of guilt and the workings of
authoritarian modes of training, and given over to desire and the
sensuous apprehension of the marvelous. (qtd. in Higgs 240)

In the poem ‘Typists in the Phoenix Building,’ Wright mocks at the modern
man who is mechanised, and, consequently, alienated from the rest of nature. Wright
looks at the intricate, lifeless pattern of modern materialistic life. The first line of the
poem “In tiled and fireproof corridors” (CP 239) brings to light the “burning heat” of
summer, scorching the city outside. The fire proof corridors sheltering the members
of the office from outside heat have also, paradoxically, shut them off from the
rhythms of life in the natural world. Outside the building the city is burning in
‘summer’s heat’ and ‘the blazing sun forgets its course,’ (CP 240) while the interior
of the office is cozy and sheltered.

According to the eco-critical perspective, human life is exposed to danger not
only in the manner of spiritual deterioration but also physically human beings are
forced to lead an artificial life style as a result of technology which undermines the
integrity of the natural systems across the planet. Technology constitutes the greatest
challenge to natural life in the way that nature no longer seems to be necessary for
human life. Every thing there is mechanized with a bevy of smartly dressed women
typists and clerks who are busy calculating the accounts regarding forest fires.
“Comptometers and calculators / compute the frequency of fires” (239). The fire
image also ties up with the nature of work the typists do; the work of computing the
costs due to the victims of bush fires so common in the Australian countryside in
summer seasons. “The city burns in summer’s heat, / grass withers and the season’s
late; / The metal bird would scorch the touch;” (CP 240). Wright is sorry for the
climate change which has occurred because of the destruction of natural resources. Modern life has cut us off from any meaningful contact with the raw world of nature.

In the poems ‘Northern River,’ ‘Drought Year,’ ‘Flood Year,’ ‘At Cedar Creek,’ and ‘Interface,’ Wright grieves over the power of man to check, pollute and alter the water sources. In the poem ‘Northern River’ the poet thinks of the river which was once fed by mountain springs, and was a favorite sanctuary of bellbirds. The river was “lit with the rock-lilies” (CP 6). In the past the poet was comforted by the river. But at present man has felled the trees and the river is all dried up: “Where your valley grows wide in the plains / they have felled the trees, wild river / Your course they have checked, and altered” (CP 6).

Literally defined as “human centeredness,” anthropocentricism as it is commonly understood refers to the view in which nonhuman nature is valued primarily for its satisfaction of human preferences or human interests. It is the root cause of environmental problems such as species extinction. Man has destroyed nature and in turn he has to suffer owing to drought. Drought affects all types of life forms in the biospheric ecosystem because both plants and animals directly depend on water. Any shortage of water supply adversely affects them. Wright says “Not the grey Kangaroo, deer-eyed, timorous, / will come to your pools at dawn” (6). The poet expresses her grief at the kangaroo populations which suffered severely during drought. According to a study released by an Australian scientist, giant-sized kangaroos measuring eight feet died due to long-term drought. Wright, in her book The Cry for the Dead, says,
Thirsty cattle crowded the banks of every waterhole, and men drove the camps away, for cattle were said to be frightened from the water by their presence. Kangaroos and wallabies were disappearing, all game was scarce after the fires, and even those groups which still lived by hunting and gathering were forced by starvation and thirst to the fringes of the townships or the doubtful protection of the stations. Such of the young as had been born after the white invasion remembered little of tradition; the old were dying, and the last remnants of tribal structure were dying with them. (222-23)

As a conservationist, Wright mourns the dearth in ‘Drought Year’ as it is primarily anthropogenic. The dingoes’ cries within the poem also help create a kind of song, like the howling of wolves and coyotes, or the wails of humans. In ‘Drought Year,’ to betoken parchedness and impending death brought down by drought, the now silent bird seeks liquid wherever it will, sucking up the last moisture even from a carcass.

That time of drought the embered air
Burned to the roots of timber and grass.

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

The dingoes’ cry was strange to hear. (CP 84)

Wright found in nature’s mysteries and tragedies and in its miracle of self-repair, some readily recognisable natural templates for addressing society’s ills. She offered them as warnings so that the Australians would stall the emerging consumer society’s excesses. The lines, “That time of drought the embered air / Burned to the
roots of timber and grass” (84) depict the drought-benighted landscape. The words “embered” and “Burned” vividly describe the hot, dry air. The word “bear” in line three can be read in at least two ways: the lime-scrub cannot bear the heat or the lime-scrub cannot bear fruit.

In the ‘Flood Year,’ she talks of flood which is caused because of human activity, “the year of flood, the scoured ruined land,/the herds gone down the current, the farms drowned, / the child never found” (CP 85). The flood represents a challenge to their anthropocentric belief in human supremacy over nature. Their attitude as a group is that humans should somehow be able to control such natural occurrence, that nature should somehow not be allowed to infringe upon their built, “civilized” environment.

When I was there the thick hurling water
had gone back to the river, the farms were almost drained.
Banished half-dead cattle searched the dunes; it rained;
river and sea met with a wild sound. (CP 85)

Wright decries the anthropogenic activities of modern man which have led to such natural disaster. Large scale deforestation effected by man for various purposes decreases infiltration capacity of the cutover land and consequently increases surface runoff, which helps tremendously in increasing the magnitude of flood. Wright views in her book Born of the Conquerors:

Trees were felled for huts, yards and cooking fires, and the banks of streams suffered erosion and collapse not only by overgrazing but denuded of tree cover. Such early changes during the first years of
white management must have been considerable factors in the incidence of floods and the damage they caused. (35)

In ‘At Cedar Creek,’ the poet is annoyed at the materialistic ideas of the society. This is a sour reference to an aspect of Wright's own ecological position, the belief that a return to primitive culture can rescue modern humankind from alienation. She says, “The myths of primitive people / can reveal codes / we may interpret” (JW CP 379). Professor A. P. Elkin in his book The Australian Aborigines, writes:

> When an old native… asked …why I wanted to know so much about his tribe’s customs and beliefs, I answered: ‘In order to understand native life and thought, and to pass my understanding on to Government men … in the hope that they would appreciate your people and their ways’ (qtd. in WCFT 5).

Wright regrets the consumer culture of the society has led to water pollution:

> The Rivers are silted already
> Here, and in Kyoto
> I saw the sweet kama
> Choked with old plastic toys,
> Tyres and multiple rubbish. (JW CP 379)

> The rivers which were considered sacred have now become a sewer which receives the city’s waste. Rusty tins and motor-bike tyres which ecologists look upon as the most hazardous polluters of the rivers are the integral part of industrialization and modern civilisation. However, it is also noteworthy that the nuclear waste,
factory waste dumped in the sea lead to recoverable damage to rivers and sea waters.

Rachel Carson, an eco-critic, states:

The most alarming of all man’s assaults upon the environment is the contamination of air, earth, rivers, and sea with dangerous and even lethal materials. This pollution is for the most part irrecoverable; the chain of evil it initiates not only in the world that must support life but in living tissues is for the most part irreversible. In this now universal contamination of the environment, chemicals are the sinister and little recognized patterns of the radiation in changing the very nature of the world. (qtd. in Garrard 95)

Wright demonstrated an unwavering commitment to changing cultural attitudes towards the natural world. The root cause of all ecological suffering is the human superiority and domination of humanity over its environment, sacrificing both the individual's capacity for proper self-expression and his or her relationship with nature. The poem ‘At Cedar Creek’ delineates fundamental changes in the major structure of the society both at the political and the cultural as well as the economic level.

By the waterfalls of Cedar Creek

Where there aren’t any cedars

Plastic bags, broken beer bottles

effluent from the pig-farm

blur on old radiance. (JW CP 379)

Wright is angry that the cedar creek which was bountiful with cedar fruits is now filled with ‘Plastic bags,’ ‘broken beer bottles,’ ‘and effluent from the pig farm.’
The birds, mammals, and reptiles can be injured or killed by the trash thrown away by thoughtless human beings. ‘Plastic bags’ are the root cause of many of the most serious environmental problems as it takes decades to break down. It may kill the animals and birds which swallow it. And ‘broken beer bottle’ thrown by some thoughtless tourist, can cut the feet of animals. The perception of anti-anthropocentrism, another ecological wisdom of Wright is conspicuously shown in her poem ‘At Cedar Creek’ which is a dual lament: for a lost worldview as well as for a disappearing natural world.

Wright’s ecological wisdom calls for a change in the attitude of insensitive human beings who thoughtlessly destroy the natural resources. It may provide, she argues, “the new insight into our world and our condition which alone perhaps can pull us out of the rut that leads us towards world destruction” (BIWI 179). In her book The Coral Battleground, Wright expresses a warning:

The Great Barrier Reef is more susceptible to pollution than other environments because even the slightest changes in the environment can result in tremendous reduction of diversity. The reason for this is that all the species of the Reef are highly specialized in their requirements. The specialization results in many complex interactions of plants and animals with each other and the environment. We can think of these inter-relationships as many fine webs of mutual dependence which are distributed and stacked in intricate spatial configurations. Any slight disturbance of such a system would have tremendous consequences. (67)
In the poem ‘Interface II,’ Wright deals with the issue of whaling which poses a threat to the ecology. The poem begins with the sad picture of dead whales lying on the beach. The dead whales look like “sea smooth rocks” (JW CP 344) in the beach. A century ago, parts of the sea were teaming with whales but human intervention has changed this. But they face so many dangers other than whaling: pollution, loss of habitat, climate change, toxic substances, or ingesting plastic, are some of the dangers that kill whales:

Walking round the decaying monument
we learned other things too.

The bared bone of the eyesocket
hollowed deep in. (JW CP 344)

The whale described as the “decaying monument” is dead, thus decaying and its size is a reminder of a monument. The whale, now a monument not natural or dynamic but static with its “The bared bone of the eyesockets,” is a confirmation of death. Wright’s power of observation is established in “eye socket” with the ‘dry’ withered temples, the “sad” victims who have faced death due to human action.

The transformation of the values of the society from the eco centric to the anthropocentric view can be observed when man killed many whales and made them into lamp oil, lubricants, cosmetics, and meal. The whales not only die of killing but they may even die of climate change. “Dry harsh wind-battered beaches remind them / of an unaccepted challenge” (345). ‘Interface II’ closes with a sense of ambivalence; it is neither helpful to reject the challenges of evolution nor wise to sever completely the relationship with nature.
Thousands of whales die each year from commercial whaling, ship strikes, and habitat disruption. Whales are facing more threats today than ever before, largely from commercial whaling. If in ‘Interface II’ death had solidified the small whale into a rock and bared the bones of the eye socket, now in the next stage sanitisation sets in.

Afterwards, the whole air

of the coast tainted

With an enormity,

corruption total takeover. (346)

In ‘Interface III,’ the coastal air is “tainted” (345), polluted with the disgusting odor of dead flesh and the overwhelmingly disgusting stink spreads all around like “corruption.” The use of the word “corruption” is very subtle and suggestive. It is a reminder of the modern corrupted life that encircles us; it can be felt but not touched; it being all pervading cannot be buried because of its gigantic size and its intrinsic insubstantiality. The shift from the concrete to the abstract enlarges the range of meaning. The lifeless body of the whale transforms the setting of the beach. The soiled smell of the rotting flesh makes its removal crucial. The description of the dead whales is designed to shock:

Men must come, wearing masks

against decay’s contagion

chop it into small portions,

bulldoze it into trucks. (JW CP 346)

Though the poet apparently seems to be concerned about the stench of rotten flesh and death of the whale yet the real issues before her are the corruption, senseless
destruction in man’s world and the eternal presence of death in every sphere of human life. This implicit idea surfaces from the wreckage of decaying flesh. But no sand is deep enough to bury the large cadaver. Thus, it has to be further butchered, cut into pieces and bulldozed away by men wearing masks to guard themselves from all types of infections that come with decay, death and decomposition. The hideous drama of death, often enacted on the Australian beaches, described accurately, is the stage to do away with the disgusting “smell of death.”

You cannot bury the whale
in the beach it chose
No sand’s deep enough.
Some king-tide will uncover it. (JW CP 346)

In Wright’s poems ‘Habitat,’ ‘Drought,’ ‘Turning Fifty,’ and ‘Dry Storm,’ she describes the pollution of the air which is the result again of man’s action. In her poem ‘Habitat,’ Wright expresses her views of the evil effects of air pollution,

Remember the long heat-wave?
Wood cracked and shrank,
tank – water ebbed to the bottom

Air itself seemed flammable
we were scared to scratch a match. (JW CP 298)

In Wright’s view, it is only human beings who interfere with or break seasonal cycles. In the poem ‘Drought,’ the speaker mourns over the climate change:

The raging sun in his pale sky
has drunk the sap of the world dry.

Across the plains the dustwhirls run

and dust has choked the shrivelling tree. (JW CP 108)

In ‘Turning Fifty,’ she writes: “... we’ve polluted / even this air I breathe / and

spoiled green earth” (AHP 141). Wright believed some urgent and courageous action,

overruling narrowly commercial interests and countering those whose desires to control

and devour the earth as a product must be taken. If such urgent and courageous action

is not taken soon it is most unlikely that our children's children will harvest and be fed.

In the words of Murray Bookchin:

This centuries-long tendency finds its most exacerbating development in

modern capitalism. Owing to its inherently competitive nature,

bourgeois society not only pits humans against each other, it also pits

the mass of humanity against the natural world. Just as men are

converted into commodities, so every aspect of nature is converted into

a commodity, a resource to be manufactured merchandised

wantonly…. The plundering of the human spirit by the market place is

paralleled by the plundering of the earth by capital. (“Social Ecology”)

The poem, ‘The Dry Storm’ highlights the adverse effects of air pollution on

human health. It is called ‘Dry storm’ which is a rain storm but the rain evaporates

because no rain reaches the ground. This is more likely when there is a layer of very

dry air below the rain layer (“Dry Storm”). The drought drives the snake, moth, bird

and lizard to hide in rock crevices.

Spring’s months are thirsty. The valley’s crops are sown
and the seed waits. But nothing comes tonight
except the thrust of lightening. There is sound;
but it is thunder circling, here and gone,
and not the increasing rain. (AHP 109)

In the night sky, there is thunder and much lightning but no rain. The farmers’
fear of the lightning igniting the dry grass is well founded. “Long since it rained, / and now the grass is dry, ready to burn, / and farmers fear the lightning” (AHP 109).
The farmers fear dry ‘lightening’ because it may trigger a wildfire. The lightening
causes the trees to catch fire and there is no rain to stop the fire. Analogously, their
hearts are torn open in thirst and waiting. Caught, it seems between wonder and irony,
the poem’s perception soon transfers to a more generalised view at a second level
removed from just description or depiction, to seek the why of things. “But this
storm’s dry, / and dries us with its passion; and means ill, reared from the dark forest
to a darker sky” (109).

It means ‘ill’ because it causes air pollution from the “dark forest” to a “darker
sky.” Because of the dirt and smoke it appears dark and it covers the sky and prevents
people from performing their normal activity. Additionally, alternative energy
sources are gaining more prominence today and funding is being given to the
restoration of ecosystems damaged by acid rain worldwide. Some Australian
researchers emphasised historical weather patterns. Conservationists, while calling
for global action on climate change, also said that Australia needs to do more in its
own backyard to protect land and water resources from modern agricultural
development and industrial interests.
Wright’s knowledge of nature consists not only of local flora and fauna but also of the macro themes like world wars and their effect on ecology. In ‘The Two Fires,’ ‘Fire Sermon,’ and ‘Patterns,’ Wright warns humanity about the man created fire of atomic weapons which has the power to reduce the human order to ashes. In the poem ‘The Two Fires’ she says,

For time has caught on fire, and you too burn:
leaf, stem, ranch, calyx and the right corolla
are now the insubstantial waver fire
in which love dies. (CP 121)

In the man created fire, ‘love dies.’ Love is a redeeming experience, love forms the indispensable link in any relationship between man and man and man and nature. “Whirled separate in the man-created fire / their cycles end, with the cycles of the holy seeds; / the cycle from the first to the last fire.” (121). Eco-aesthetical assumption also sees war as an essential element in the destruction of the natural environment.

War is the root cause in the destruction of natural environment. War brings havoc not only to human beings but to the very ecosystem as well. The line, ‘Man created fire’ may refer to the atomic bombings in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. All men and animals within half a mile from the explosion sites died instantaneously. Many structures collapsed, in Nagasaki even the structures designed to survive earthquakes were blasted away. The line, “their cycles end” refers to man's power to destroy even the cycles of nature, which is a real intimidation to humanity.

And now, set free by the climate of man’s hate,
that seed sets time ablaze.

The leaves of fallen years, the forest of living days,

have caught like matchwood. Look, the whole world burns.

(CP 121)

Wright observes that man’s hatred was the result of the transformation of the values of the society from the eco-centric to ego-centric; it is obvious when man tries to overpower man and nature, he enters into war. War brings appalling changes in the lives of men. The ‘seed’ may refer to the germ of hatred which has resulted in the use of nuclear weapons which are presented as one of the most harmful consequences of technological progress. It had set countries ‘ablaze.’ Wright presents a terrible scene of total annihilation in the phrase ‘Look the whole world burns’ (CP 122). With the idea of fire which has both creative and destructive aspects she talks about the ancient creative and eternal fire and the man made destructive fire epitomised in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Mckinney, Wright’s husband comments on the poem ‘The Two Fires’:

The conception, on the one hand, of Nature as a self- sufficient physical system which is essentially the counterpart of a sensory experience, and on the other, man, the triumphant investigator of the ultimate secrets of this external physical system, as the master of his own intellectual and material destiny. It is this dual idea that has constituted the inspiration of our whole modern way of life and the significant fact is that, at the point where the latter conception—that of man as the master of his own destiny—has come to dominate our minds…. (qtd. in Hawke 166)
Wright in her poem ‘The Two Fires,’ is of the opinion that an ecological vision of nature as inherently harmonious, peaceful, and independent of its functions for human society is confronted by modern society’s anthropocentric vision of nature which tends to destroy nature and humanity. In his ignorance, man wanted to conquer nature but he was conquered by nature. “In the beginning was the fire: / Out of the death of fire, rock and the waters; / and out of water and rock, the single spark, the divine truth” (CP 121). Wright, an elemental poet, refers to the role of fire in the creation of the universe, ‘In the beginning was the fire’; it was a creative fire. The elements of nature nourish the world but man with his hatred and jealousy destroys nature. Nature creates man but man destroys it. A human with a strong social consciousness will consider this as a social problem.

In ‘Fire Sermon,’ Wright depicts the harm brought to man and his environment by war. Wright lived through the Second World War, the Vietnam War and Cold War with its nuclear threat. She also witnessed increasing environmental degradation and human alienation from nature and in the community within Australia. The poem should be read in the background of the dangers of acid rain caused by smoke emitted by nuclear weapons. As an elemental poet, Wright regrets in the poem that due to atomic weapons the earth is polluted:

“Sinister powers,” the ambassador said, “are moving into our rice field. We are little people and all we want is to live.”

But a chemical rain descending
has blackened the field, and
we ate the buffalo because we were starving. *(JW CP 276)*

‘Fire Sermon’ is a cry against atomic bombs which disturb nature and bring down acid rain. ‘Sinister powers’ may refer to the soldiers with deadly atomic weapons. War affects the normal life of people. During the Vietnam War, the U.S. military used large quantities of herbicides to deny their enemies agricultural food production and forest cover. Millions of acres of forest and of croplands were sprayed with the wicked intention to destroy the ecosystems through ecocide. ‘Chemical rain’ is a reference to acid rain which destroys the paddy fields. People started eating the buffalo because they were starving. “We are little people/and all we want is to live” (276). The people in power call for war but the innocent common man gets killed in war. The ego of men of one nation to control the other would result in war.

The after effect of atomic energy has resulted in acid rain. It has “blackened the rice fields” (276). Acid deposition endangers forests, lakes and agriculture. Chemical rain descends on trees, and it can make them lose their leaves, damage their bark, and stunt their growth. By damaging these parts of the tree, it makes them vulnerable to diseases. Acid falling on a forest’s soil is also harmful because it disrupts soil nutrients and kills microorganisms in the soil. Trees at high altitudes are also susceptible to problems induced by acidic cloud cover as the moisture in the clouds blankets them.

Wright feels modern man has become thoroughly puffed up with ego to control nature. Even gods cannot help to stop the destruction. It is ironic that war is being fought on a land of predominantly Buddha worshippers. The Buddha here is totally
unaffected by the wailing of the ‘little people’ whose rice fields have been blackened by ‘sinister power’. He is incapable of bringing any solace to his suffering worshippers.

“All is fire” said the Buddha, “all—
sight, sense, all forms.
They burn with fires of lust,
anger, illusion” (JW CP 277)

The men in power due to anthropocentric desires involve the innocent countrymen in war which bring havoc to both man and nature and they burn with fire of greed and anger:

Let me out of this dream, I cry,
but the great gold Buddha
smiles in the temple
under the napalm rain. (277)

Wright expresses with anguish the destruction caused by war which is the result of man’s narrow mindedness. Even Buddha seems unaffected and he keeps smiling. He is also drenched in the napalm rain. ‘Napalam’ is a substance containing petrol which is used to make bombs that burn and destroy people and plants. The use of napalm was employed towards the end of the Second World War although its use did not gain public attention until the Vietnam War. War has changed the lives and environment of human beings.

Wright's explicitly anti-nuclear poem, ‘Patterns’ begins with a cry from the depth of her heart against the space pollution caused due to nuclear explosion. Plato
says Science saves us in retail and kills us in wholesale. Tsunami and earthquakes are the outburst of nuclear explosions on the earth; they are nature’s revenge on human attitude. She talks of a threat to the earth, which is humanly inflicted. Super power countries are the causes for major environmental changes and possible dislocation of the current physiological position. Her ethical sense is stirred. She has the vision of the dropping of the first test of atom bomb: “Brighter than a thousand suns”- that blinding glare / Circled the world and settled in our bones” (JW CP 426).

Wright integrates the politics of the human and the natural in her test of the ethical questions associated with life in the gloom of atomic combat and the nuclear arms race: “Human eyes impose a human pattern, / decipher constellations against a featureless dark” (JW CP 426). Wright, in essence, returns here in ironic mode to the substance of the poem ‘Patterns’ where human and natural patternings are in tension:

Perhaps the dark itself is the source of meaning,
the fires of the galaxy its visible destruction.
Round earth’s circumference and atmosphere
Bombs and warheads crouch waiting their time. (426)

It has become clear that the human pattern itself is as ambiguous and incomprehensible as nature itself. On the one hand the human pattern seems to decode the senseless flux of nature. On the other though, human evil and destructiveness make life meaningless. Carolyn Merchant is of the view:

Nonhuman nature, therefore, is not passive, but an active complex that participates in change over time and responds to human induced change.
Nature is a whole of which human are only one part. We interact with
plants, animals, and soils in ways that sustain or deplete local habitats.

Through science and technology, we have great power to alter the whole in short periods of time. The relation between human beings and the nonhuman world is thus reciprocal. Humans adapt to nature’s environmental conditions; but when humans alter their surroundings, nature responds through ecological changes. (8)

Essentially, she suggests that unavoidable human evil prevents her from making the traditional Vedic sacrifice required to transcend death and suffering, as one must make such a sacrifice with a pure heart. Wright decries with pain that the evil mind of the human beings is the root cause of all the problems in the society. They are caught in a situation where they cannot escape darkness:

“Twisted are the hearts of men-dark powers possess them.

Burn the distant evildoer, the unseen sinner.”

That prayer to Agni, fire-god, cannot be prayed.

We are all of us born of fire, possessed by darkness. (JW CP 426)

She says that man seems to be destructive and he uses the god given fire to destroy nature without realising that men are dependent on nature. ‘Agni’ is the supreme director of religious ceremonies and duties, and figures as messenger between mortals and gods and it stands for knowledge for it is seen by the learned people. Therefore, it is also known as the illuminator of knowledge who lights up the path leading to Truth. Agni reveals the true nature of one's own self because it is the innermost light that shines ever so brightly in all things living and nonliving as their inner consciousness. She outlines the poetic interaction between the natural, social
and personal orders which give access to a different mode of existence. The wisdom of the ancients is revisiting us in our time of need for strength. As Bookchin observes, nuclear and fossil fuels … are clearly dangerous to the spiritual, moral and social health of humanity if they are treated merely as technologies that do not involve new relations between people and nature and within society itself. (qtd. in Higgs 246)

The theme of war and the resultant havoc on the environment is depicted in her poems ‘The slope,’ and ‘Party with Gods.’ ‘The slope’ is the expression of the suicidal tendencies of mankind. She speaks of the “black vortices” of our mind which set us rolling down the slope of a deck: ““That your true trial,” / cries the great Analogue of us all, / “You are the instrument of this planet’s death”’ (JW CP 336). Humanity has witnessed the dance of death in the form of world wars and the worst spectacle of it was displayed in the atomic weapons. ‘Party with Gods’ is Wright’s response to the American influence in the Pacific. It is an open denunciation of armed bullying by mighty nations.

Round the Pacific’s moaning shores,
dirty the gunboats, loud with planes,
the ancient countries stand and wait
longing to take their shape again … (JW CP 350)

It is the war-fever that pollutes the environment. The poet is aware of the savagery across the globe. The Gulf war sponsored by America left mute spectators, the whole world aghast at the destruction by sophisticated weapons. Wright is a firm believer in democracy; she decries war which causes damage to man and nature.
Wright is not just attuned to nature but has an affinity with humanity, human rights and particularly Aboriginal issues. She remains one of the most involved and socially aware of Australia’s poets. Her poetry is of the heart and humanity; it is about the tragedy of people’s cruelty to other human beings, and it deals with the destructive force that can easily end this world. Her poetry is essentially about the nurturing earth, its landscapes and creatures. Nevertheless, it is for her poetry that she is best remembered, poetry which has helped shape Australia’s sensitivity to herself as much as her industrious battles which have helped to save the country. She has consistently pointed to the domination of aborigines which in turn has lead to ecological domination. She believed Aborigines lives are intrinsic with nature. They regard themselves as part of nature and acknowledge the dependence of human existence upon ecological balance. For the theme of their legends and myths, they mostly have the five elements of nature. For Judith Wright,

Violence towards our fellow human being is inextricably linked to violence towards the land, and much of the destruction caused over the two hundred years of European occupation of this continent has stemmed from ignorance—of the realities of Aboriginal life and ignorance of the land itself. (BOC xv)

Wright is of the view that in the present era of environmental disaster, the aboriginal stories are much more relevant than ever as the Aborigines show the wisdom for biodiversity and are very careful to preserve each and every species existing. She draws the attention of the civilised people towards the sensitivity of these aboriginal people concerning environment. She further tries to re-evaluate the
chances to resolve the problems of environmental disaster by taking lessons from them.

The invasion of the colonisers has resulted in the domination of the natives as well as their land. In ‘Two Dreamtimes,’ ‘Bora Ring,’ ‘Dark Ones,’ ‘At Cooloola’ and ‘The Nigger’s Leap, New England,’ Wright acknowledges the suffering endured by Aboriginal people due to the destruction of their primeval landscape. Wright mentions in her book *The Cry for the Dead*,

… the whites built their dwelling places near those springs and waters in which the Rainbow Serpent-the Bunyip-lived, and were not harmed; worse, they defiled those waters without rousing the spirits’ wrath. (26)

The poem ‘Bora Ring’ is about repression and denial of the natives. The colonisers have desecrated the holy land of the aborigines. It is not only associated with their religious faith but it also interconnected with the ecosystem. According to Aborigine belief, the world was created in a period called Dreamtime, during which the great spirits dreamed it into being. These spirits were allegedly eternal, and the Aborigines assumed that concrete proof of their existence lay in sacred landmarks.

In the poem ‘Two Dreamtimes,’ Wright addresses Kath Walker, the aboriginal writer as “Kathy my sister with the torn heart” (*JW CP* 315) and recounts the sordid story of how the aborigines were cheated of their land and she identifies herself with them “I mourn as you mourn / the ripped length of the island beaches, the drained paperbark swamps…” (*JW CP* 317):

I am born of the conquerors,
you of the persecuted.

Raped by rum and an alien law,

progress and economics…. (317)

In the past the aborigines lived liberated in the open land, able to sustain themselves by a few hours of hunting and gathering a day and they had other interests. But later the colonisers bought and sold them as slaves; “doomed by traders and stock exchanges, / bought by faceless strangers” (JW CP 317). They were the masters of the land but then after colonisation, “The aborigines were bought by faceless masters” for whom they have to work:

The whites remembered afterwards the Aborigines’ physical qualities- their marvelous speed and endurance, their feats of boomerang-throwing, tracking and hunting, and even their physical comeliness and cheerfulness. These things made them useful to the white occupation, once their resistance was broken. (CFTD 19)

Wright cries out with frustration in her poem ‘The Dark Ones’ which relates clearly to a situation of there being such a division in society and the fact that the Aboriginal people are, in the poem, being treated as second-class citizens who are a little like ‘the pests’ and certainly not like human beings. Wright's message, in the voice of the persona, is one of repulsion that society thinks and behaves in this way, and points out the fact that transformation is necessary and that until it is made, existence cannot go on. The structure is rather disjointed, and creates a temper which is stressed and rather awkward for both the Whites and Blacks.
Underlying the subject matter of ‘At Cooloola’ is the implied theme that the lake is under threat from “conquering people” who will not protect its “White shores of sand, plumreed and paperbark, / clear heavenly levels frequented by crane and swan” (CP 141). This poem reflects Wright’s apprehension for the unique flora and fauna. This poem portrays the unfortunate incident that occurred at Lake Cooloola due to white settlement. This tragic poem captures the essence of the peaceful partnership the wildlife shares with the land, “… walking on clean sand among prints/of bird and animal, I am challenged by a driftwood spear” (141). This illustrates the serene scene before the massacre of the Aboriginal people took place. “The invader’s feet will tangle in nets there and his blood be thinned by fears” (141). Wright mentions in her book The Cry for the Dead, the record of act of violence to the aborigines were monstrous and she was ashamed of it.

As for the Native Police, their discreet reports of ‘dispersals’ really meant that men and women had been shot … all the children killed, and the lot left to be eaten by native dogs….Public opinion in Queensland encouraged these horrors and called for blood and more blood. (190)

Equally, in ‘Nigger's Leap, New England,’ Wright raises the issues of the casualty at the time of colonisation of the white settlers. On reading the first line of the poem there is a feeling of bewilderment and trepidation:

Swallow the spine of range; be dark, O lonely air.

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 range is equated with a human body, its “spine” stretching in outline against the clouds. It is a dark place then, not a surprising setting for the murderous events described later in the poem. The white settlers of that region had driven the Aborigines over its cliffs, as penalty for killing their cattle. Anne Collett observes:

In ‘Nigger’s leap, New England’, the cliff over which the aboriginal people were hunted to their death is a ‘spine of range’ whose end point is a ‘lipped’ granite head.’ It is as though the land itself screamed with their screams, and moulded itself to their body anguish. Now cooled by time, the war living flesh is become sculpted granite, whose silent lip recalls the horror of those silenced voices. The shadow people are given substance, flesh become earth, bone becoming rock, in the word sculpture of Judith Wright’s poetry. (6-7)

Wright takes the responsibility of the crime committed by her forefathers who had killed the land owners, and she registers her haunting memories of the past in her poem ‘Nigger’s Leap, New England.’ When she asks, “Did we not know their blood channeled our rivers, / and the black dust our crops ate are their dust?” (CP 15), one can sense her guilt which is born out of love for the natives and their land; her horror that she had been coming here all these years in a state of false innocence, unable to see what was before her eyes. The Aboriginal people of the area retreated into the Falls Country, deprived of their original hunting grounds and the vegetation which made up a large part of their diet, starving Aborigines stole cattle and sheep and sometimes killed the shepherds looking after them. In retribution, parties of white settlers would persecute them:
Eldershaw then claims that the growing darkness prevented him seeing anymore of the ‘horrid scene’. Yet, he goes on to describe in detail how, when his men moved in, continuing to fire, the remaining blacks ‘dashed themselves in frantic violence to the depths beneath’. Some of the youngest of the tribe hung briefly from the branches of a solitary tree before plummeting to their death. ‘Sick of the horrid carnage below, I fain would have retired from the dreadful spot, but all my efforts, entreaties, threats, were utterly useless. Shot after shot, with curses wild and deep, the excited fellows launched at their hated foes- their butchered comrades’ blood was the night fearfully avenged! (Capp 81-82)

Wright registers in her poem her annoyance at the annihilation of the aborigines and the white men’s hard hearted attitude towards the victims. Whether she knew that the massacre happened at night is impossible to say, but the poem is pervaded by images of darkness and night. The darkness prevented them from seeing the nightmarish sight; the poem captures the early settlers’ willed blindness towards the crime they had committed to their fellow human being. Only if they recognise the fact of this subjugation, confront the darkness of our history and accept that “all men are one man at last,” (CP 15) Wright argues, will we be able to move on without being haunted or swamped by the past:

Night lips the harsh
scarp of the tableland and cools its granite.

Night floods us suddenly as history
That has sunk many islands in its good time. (CP 16)
Like her concern for Aborigines, Wright’s concern for the physical environment is long lasting, knowledgeable. Wright is a reformer and an activist. Usually, the concept of everything being equal has been considered as a focus on the relationship between man and nature, while it also focused on the relationship between human beings, that is, everyman being equal. As is known, human beings and other creatures are all created equally and human beings have not any privilege or priority and are not superior to the latter. Therefore, human beings in the social hierarchy are in no way exceptional Kroptin who has laid the ideal base for a radial theory of human ecology, has observed:

…nature and people in nature as organic interrelated wholes—the actions of any one part affecting all other parts. Imbalances which exist in nature thus reflect imbalances which exist in human relationships. (qtd. in Macauley 307)

Wright’s genuine concern for the tribal culture deserves to be placed in the context of her wider and shared concern for the welfare of our planet, very much threatened by what she calls modern scientism and the predatory economic exploitation of our environment by our over-grown technological civilisation; and this concern is effectively voiced in all her writings on the conservation movement of which she herself has been an active campaigner. As John Kinsella views,

Wright is an elemental poet. So much fire, water, earth and air are in her work. And of course that necessary fifth element, quintessence. The senses, birds and animals, women and children and landscapes, all inhabit her works. She is often called a poet of nature, but I think she is
far more a poet of human contact with the land in which humans and nature are differentiated. This is to say they aren’t part of the whole, but rather that poetry is an exploration of the distance humans create between themselves and nature. (xxvi-xxvii)

Under the circumstances of the deterioration of the ecosystem, the attempt to study Judith Wright’s social ecological wisdom is highly relevant. Her social ecological wisdom, which comes to remind human beings of respecting, protecting and caring for other persons as well as nature, will provide a blueprint for human beings to develop a harmonious society. She requests humanity to reconsider the relationships among themselves between nature and human beings, between nature and society. Only in the pursuit of harmonious co-existence in society, the peaceful and symbiotic development of nature and culture, and balance between nature and human spirit, can the ecosystem operate and can human beings live a congenial life on this earth.

Chapter – V

DEEP ECOLOGY

*Everything hangs together - everything is interrelated*

--Arne Naess

Deep Ecology is a branch of ecology movement that takes a holistic view of nature and claims that everything is interconnected and human beings must take responsibility for the earth. It is against the predominant anthropocentric view that man is superior to nature and promotes spiritual bio-centricism and conservation. The deep ecology movement emerged as a religious, philosophical, scientific or socio-political movement. Deep Ecology takes a bio-centric worldview which sees human as part of