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
nature and not apart from it. It demands a commitment to a bio-centric attitude, and subscription to the intrinsic value of every entity in nature both sentient and non-sentient. Sessions views,

Deep ecology is concerned with encouraging an egalitarian attitude on the part of humans not only toward all members of the ecosphere, but even toward all identifiable entities or forms in the ecosphere. Thus, this attitude is intended to extend, for example, to such entities (or forms) as rivers, landscapes, and even species and social systems considered in their own right. (qtd. in Garrard 21-22)

Deep ecology, aims for “the creation of systems that are diverse, symbiotic, and compatible with natural systems, and for the establishment of an anti-class attitude which is consistent with biospheric egalitarianism” (Drengson 76). Secondly, holism in nature is seen holistically, as an integrated system, rather than as a collection of individual things and thirdly, self-realisation is to fully realise one’s identification with nature. By probing deeper they can discover their true place in nature. This transition opens the doors to a better-off and more rewarding life for the human. It is meant to characterise a way of thinking about environmental problems that attack them from the roots, the way they can be seen as symptoms of the deepest ills of our present society.

Naess uses the term “deep ecology movement” (qtd. in Drengson xxi) to refer to a broad eco-centric, grassroots effort, as contrasted with an anthropocentric, technocratic approach, to attain an ecologically balanced future. He sees this endeavour as a social and political movement. On the other hand, he reserves “the term “deep ecology” … for referring to his own specific ecological philosophy of ultimate premises
centered on “Self-realization” achieved through wider identification with one’s ecological context. Here, “deep ecology” is used to refer to a philosophy, not a movement” (qtd. in Drengson xxi).

Deep Ecology was based on Gaia theory; the theory that suggested viewing earth as a complete system; a living and interconnected organism. Sir James Lovelock finds a remarkable harmony between biotic and abiotic elements on earth:

Another way of viewing the evidence of harmony highlighted by the Gaia hypothesis, is as a reflection of the intrinsic interdependence among elements of living systems, in which an organism’s identity is tied to its relations with other organisms, and its individual purpose-oriented toward the preservation, development, and multiplication of the self is integrated with a whole purpose of contributing to the development and preservation of the larger whole. (“Gaia Hypothesis”)

It is this belief that fuels the environmental movement, sustainable development, and a global push for the return of industrialized nations to a more primitive way of life.

In the book Gaia and God, Reuther views:

One of the most basic ‘lessons’ of ecology for ethics and spirituality is interrelation of all things. Both earth science and astrophysics give us extraordinary and powerfully compelling messages about our kinship, not only with all living things on earth, but even with distant stars and galaxies. A profound spirituality would arise if we would attempt to experience this kinship and make it present in our consciousness. Such meditation would parallel the ancient contemplative philosophies, which
saw in the human soul a fragment of the cosmic soul that moved the universe and which saw the body as the microcosm. (48)

Deep ecology facilitates communication that transcends species boundaries. Self-realisation is central to Naess’s Deep Ecology. Self-realisation in this sense means broadening and deepening our sense of self beyond the narrow ego to identification with all living beings. This requires an enlarged understanding of the biospheric culture and community. This is the essence of deep ecology and a source that sustains authentic religious community. Naess views,

A closely related idea is that of microcosm mirroring macrocosm, an idea especially potent during the Renaissance and now partly revived in hologram thinking. Each flower, each natural entity with the character of a whole (a gestalt) somehow mirrors or expresses the supreme whole….The microcosm is not apart from the whole; the relation is not like that between a big elephant and a small mouse. Microcosm is essential for the existence of macrocosm. (36-37)

Deep ecology emphasises on an expansion of personal identification of all humans with non-human beings. Concurrently the human self expands, extending its identification with its own family, home, community, animals, forests, landscape, mountains, sun, moon and stars. There is no limit to this expanded self. It calls for realising the sacred interconnection on the cosmic dimension. The birds that sing in the jungles are equally a part of us, when birds stop singing one has created a hindrance in nature. Ecological self-realisation produces spontaneous joy and celebration of life. Bill Devall views:
Ecological self is not forced or static ideology but rather the search for an opening to nature (Tao) in authentic ways. If a person can sincerely say after careful self-evaluation and prayer that “this Earth is part of my body,” then that person would naturally work for global disarmament and preservation of the atmosphere of the Earth. If a person can sincerely say, “If this place is destroyed then something in me is destroyed,” then that person has an intense feeling of belonging to the place. (108)

The central spiritual tenet of deep ecology is that human species is a part of the Earth and not separate from it. It has proceeded from related belief systems derived from Eastern religions, such as Taoism, Buddhism, and Jainism and from the primitive societies. Buddhist teachings recognise that all things are interdependent and conditional upon each other. Every condition follows another and all are part of an orderly sequence of cause and effect. Buddhism taught its disciples that the human mind should embrace all living as a mother cares for her son. As Jews or Hindus see themselves as receiving the truth from scriptures or direct encounter with God, the deep ecologist receives sacred truths from the natural world. The Native Americans sense that each person has a particular animal as teacher of truth and values. As one discovers his ecological self, it will joyfully defend and interact with that which he identifies. Instead of imposing environmental ethics on people, they naturally respect, love, honour and protect that which is of their self.

The ultimate goal of deep ecology is understanding of the self as a large all-inclusive self including all lives, human, plants and animals. All of nature strives to realise its self, and to live in harmony with its parts. Each and every species has inherent
value and humans have no special moral status. The flourishing of all nature is the ultimate goal of deep ecology.

The ancient Chinese sage Lao Tzu, one of the world’s early philosophers of ecology, observed that all things are equal in the great natural order. The trouble begins when we start to separate ourselves from this order. We do this first by passing judgments which attempt to elevate ourselves over other beings. The human impulse to manage the world is an expression of the judgment that we know best how the natural world should run. Ironically, we find every day that we do not know enough to prevent the unfortunate consequences of attempting to manage too much (Drengson 88-89).

Deep Ecology is in resonance with and responsive to the creative cosmos energy that constantly flows through the moods and rhythms of nature around us. Meaningful communion exists where there is sharing and mutuality. In the wider biospheric community, mutuality between humans and nature must take the form of partnership, sharing the toil of creation. Ecologists call this ‘symbiosis.’ Humans should live calmly on earth, absorbing the full cost of their lifestyle. To this end humans should learn the art of being in communion with nature. David Rothenberg, a deep ecologist has formulated seven principles of deep ecology. Out of the seven principles, four principles of Deep Ecology, relevant for the analysis of Judith Wright’s poetry are taken for study:

1. There is intrinsic value in all life. 2. Diversity, symbiosis, and thus complexity explain the life of nature itself. 3. On the outside we should change the basic structures of our society and the policies which guide them. 4. Self-realization brings the many into one. (Rothenberg 159-62)
Wright lived the first twelve years of her life in an area of undulating hills of farmland and small towns interspersed by deep forests. Wright’s poetry abounds with the images of those great trees and the forests that nurture wildlife. The rolling landscape, the stories and the characters of New England were early sources of inspiration. The lushness of Tambourine Mountain, the sand plains north of Noosa and the colder country of Mongarlowe provided the environmental backdrops to later rich writings. Wright’s lyrical work was inspired by the regions in which she lived—New England, New South Wales, the subtropical rainforest of Tamborine Mountain, Queensland and the plains of the southern highlands near Braidwood. The landscape where she spent her early years stamped her consciousness with the understanding that the greater cosmos stretches beyond the grasp of humans who are but insignificant figures on the land. The importance of the nurturing Earth led to an early conservationism in her. Wright in her book Half a Lifetime, views regarding Tambourine Mountains:

We would spend an afternoon walking down into the rainforest that covered the mountain slopes, marvelling at the wealth and variety of life there, or an evening walking down the tracks into the parks, finding dead logs illuminated with a pale light from rotting wood and rows of blue phosphorescent fungi. (248)

Wright discovered ‘deep ecology,’ in her bush property at Edge. The unused, semi arid location of Edge changed the way she saw and appreciated nature. From a broader, philosophical perspective, she saw the interconnectedness of all life. At Edge she experienced bliss. She spent hours studying a piece of ground and the life swarming
it, or would sit by the river that ran past her property and watch the small, moment by moment changes in the water, the trees and sky. Almost every day Wright went for walks through her property. She described in her letters that she felt ecstatic during those walks. Fiona Capp, her biographer rightly observes: “In her ever-evolving relationship with the land, she was learning how to dwell in it without imposing herself on it. To accept it for what it was, to see it for what it was, to love it for what it was” (15).

Wright conveyed through her poetry, a state of expanded or uplifted consciousness which entails an awareness of the integral unity between human beings and the environment, from which would arise a more harmonious relationship between human and the natural world. And yet, equally, as she argued and explained so resolutely in her non-fictional writing and public lectures, the process is always one of promoting and, in practical terms, achieving change. In this sense, Wright clearly insists that poets contribute to the growth of a new kind of consciousness, conferring a political character on her imaginative work; the word ‘political’ is used in the broadest sense.

In the poems ‘Lichen, Moss, Fungus,’ ‘Tadpoles,’ and ‘Cicadas,’ Wright highlights the first and second principle of deep ecology. “There is intrinsic value in all life forms….Diversity, symbiosis, and the complexity explain the life of nature itself” (Rothenberg 159). She examines the intrinsic worth of tiny creatures and their role in the ecosystem. When a species of alga and a species of fungus exist in a symbiotic relationship, the resulting organism is called ‘lichen.’ The lichen, moss and fungus are inconspicuous because of the small size of their structures; still they have their intrinsic value in the ecosystem.
Wright is in fact delighted with them, and describes them as if they were the most important specimens in a garden. Wright acknowledges the microcosm of the fungus world, its place, and the miniature loveliness of the plant life within it, as if to remind us that all is not obvious that is either beautiful or useful.

‘Lichens’ are important to the ecosystem as some types of lichens make the nitrogen in the air usable to plants and they are homes for spiders and other insects. Christopher Manes views in his essay ‘Nature and Silence’:

If fungus, one of the “lowliest” of forms on a humanistic scale of values, were to go extinct tomorrow, the effect on the rest of the biosphere would be catastrophic, since the health of the forests depends on Mycorrhizal fungus, and the disappearance of forests would upset the hydrology, atmosphere, and temperature of the entire globe. (24)

The classic, symbiotic interpretation of the relationship that forms lichen is that the alga feeds the fungus, while the fungus protects the alga from the environment. The other suggestion is that the fungus is a parasite that exploits the alga for its own use. In the latter case, the relationship is not symbiotic, because it is not mutually beneficial.

Wright stresses the need for a diversity of forms of life, which contribute to the ability of many living beings coexisting and cooperating in complex relationships rather than the domination of one species over others. In biology, symbiosis is the term for a mutually beneficial association that occurs between two different species. There is a detailed examination of the tiny world of living things which “flourish on this rock ridge” (JW CP 417). Despite their differences, algae and fungi coexist very successfully as lichens. Lichens are a sturdy, symbiotic collection of algal and fungal
components that grow together on rocky and porous surfaces just about anywhere. These multifaceted organisms may appear crusty, leafy or shrubby.

Deep ecology teaches men that every living thing, from the small club moss on the forest floor, to the human being, has equal right to live and flourish. Wright appreciates the intrinsic value of the ‘Slow primitive plantforms.’

Slow primitive plantforms
push up their curious flowers.

Lichens, mosses and fungi—
these flourish on this rock ridge,
a delicate crushable tundra: (JW CP 417)

Although many consider lichen to be among the most ancient ‘plantforms’ the earliest records of the existence of Lichens date back to about 400 million years. Wright uses the fungal eco-system as a symbol of the broader environment, as delicate and readily damaged as that which dwells on its rock ridge. It is a vibrant, complex world, and easily crushed by human indifference. The poet describes the delicate nature of the lichens in the phrase ‘a delicate crushable tundra.’ Since these environments are among the most sensitive to destruction and pollution, our rich and varied lichen heritage is incredibly useful in allowing men to assess what human are doing to their environment. Wright, a lively leader of campaigns within the environmental movement in Australia, reminds men of the vulnerability of the eco-system and the susceptibility of the innumerable life-forms which depend for their survival on humanity and its interventions. When there are too many harmful things in the air, lichens die.
Wright, like a botanist, describes the types of Lichens, “bracket, star, cup, parasol; / gilled, pored, spored, membraned; / white, chestnut, violet, red” (417). Wright reinforces this by her descriptions of the fungus as colourful things of beauty, and the important part that they play in the renewal of forests. Naess opines, “deep ecology seeks to help us see and feel ourselves as intimately interrelated to an intrinsically valuable Nature, so that when we harm Nature we diminish ourselves” (qtd. in Hallen 200).

Similarly, in the poem ‘The Cicadas,’ Wright has focused on a small and seemingly insignificant creature, the cicadas. The cicadas spend most of its life time in the soil; it is an important prey for birds and mammals, and the burrowing activity of nymphs facilitates water movement within the soil. Drengson views, “Value experience … is the very essence of the universe. This value that each being has for itself is also shared by others. So each exists for itself, but also exists for the other. It is a value in itself, and value for others. It has both intrinsic and instrumental value” (91).

By personifying the cicadas and making it feel love and other emotions, one can identify with it; on a deeper level the person may feel empathy for its struggles and sadness and triumph in its successes and love. The person starts caring about its existence and well being in the world, which therefore means he would anticipate for the preservation of this and other creatures of the world. The poet adopts the persona of the cicada and feels that she is one with them, and this makes the poem much more personal, once again making it much easier for the reader to relate to the cicada.

On yellow days in summer when the early heat
presses like hands hardening the sown earth
into stillness, when after sunrise birds fall quiet
and streams sink in their beds and in silence meet,
and underground the blind nymphs waken and move. (CP 102)

Wright connects with nature on such a deep level that it could almost be considered as a human. She intends to make the audience feel the cicadas are also in par with human beings and man has no right to destroy nature when it is so much like human beings. Wright refers to the cicadas as nymphs, which are wingless before they mature into their adult form, and describes them as having spent their entire life “crouched alone and dumb in patient ugliness enduring the humble dark.” Allen Douglas views,

The 17 years species spend all but a few weeks of this period in the ground where the nymphs feed sucking sap from plant roots, causing little apparent damage. Upon completing development in the 17th spring of the life cycle nymphs emerge from the soil prodigious numbers and leave behind innumerable conspicuous emergence holes. They quickly ascend plants, buildings and other available perches when they attach themselves and transform into adults. (5)

The irony could possibly serve the purpose of conveying the idea that even the superficially ugly aspects of the natural world have a strong element of beauty. With respect to the intrinsic worth of each being, A.N. Whitehead opines:

Everything has some value for itself, for others, and for the whole. This characterizes the meaning of actuality. By reason of this character, consisting reality, the conception of morals arises. We have no right to
deface the value experience which is the very essence of the universe. Existence, in its own nature, is the upholding of value intensity. Also, no unit can separate itself from the others, and from the whole. And yet each unity exists in its own right. It upholds value intensity for itself, and this involves sharing value intensity for itself, and this involves sharing value intensity with the universe. Everything that in any sense exists has two sides, namely, its individual self and its signification in the universe. Also, either of these aspects is a factor in the other. (qtd. in Drengson 90)

Wright believes that every natural aspect of the world is beautiful and no matter how aesthetically unpleasing they may be every living creature must be respected and protected as they cannot fend for themselves.

Sunk in an airless night they neither slept nor woke
hanging on the tree’s blood dreamed vaguely the
dreams of trees,
and put on wavering leaves, wing-veined, too delicate to see.

(CP 102)

Wright describes the life of the nymphs as sad, lonely, ugly and dark. These creatures can live at this stage of their life for up to seventeen years, waiting patiently until they are finally ready to mature into their adult forms.

The subject of the poem ‘Swamp Plant’ is an inconspicuous little plant that lives on “swamp-edges” and there is nothing striking about this little plant; “upside down as ever / Living on swamp-edges” (JW CP 367). What is interesting is that the persona first discovers some barely visible features of this little plant, and then encircles it with
a subtle verbal contour: “small earth-hugging rosette, / stem like a thread and
downward-turning bell / of meditative blue” (367). Needless to say, the cognitive
interest in the little plant is triggered off by a feeling of compassion and wonder.
Significantly, the persona then enters into a dialogue with the little plant, in the course
of which it is addressed as though it were a human partner: “Half size to a grasshopper,
/ What insect is small enough / To drink from you?” Repeatedly the speaker uses the
second person singular: “But for your colour, - /such a colour as old sea-goddess chose.”
Treating the plant as a person, Wright says, “Leaving you there, I take you home with
me, / one tiny image / of still untouched unknown tranquility” (367). Thus Wright
values the plant for its intrinsic value.

What is conspicuous is an added detail which throws into relief the persona’s
revised concept of the relationship between the human and nonhuman world. The
persona kneels down in order to look at the tiny plant more closely. In doing this, she
deviates from the normal response characteristic of the average Australians, who would
not do this: “nor do our people go / down on their knees at the swamp-edges” (JW CP
367). In a symbolic gesture of humility the writer lowers herself to have a closer gaze
at the tiny plant. This contact is becoming increasingly appropriate to her. What she
takes home with her is a new awareness of this plant’s intrinsic worth that has been
revealed to her through her humble interaction with it. Rolling Thunder views:

All things—and I mean all things—have their own will and their own way
and their own purpose; this is what is to be respected. Such respect is not
a feeling or an attitude only. It’s a way of life. Such respect means that
we never stop realizing, never neglect to carry out our obligations to ourselves and our environment. (qtd. in Drengson 92)

Wright elevates the Tadpole’s struggle in ‘Halfway’ to that of a spiritual journey. The poem highlights the first and fourth principle of deep ecology. “There is intrinsic value in all life” (Rothenberg 159) and “Self realization is a process that connects the individual to the larger world. (162).

Wright like a deep ecologist understands the intrinsic value of the tadpole; she looks at the tadpole arrested in a sheet of ice and compares the struggle of the tadpole to that of the humanity’s struggle, clambering for greener pastures. In the first stanza, “He hung at arrest; ‘displayed as it were glass’ / an illustration of neither one thing nor the other” (CP 295). She continues to demonstrate the tadpole, illuminating him as having a frog's head, hinder legs and budding hands. “His head was a frog’s, and his hinder legs had grown / ready to climb and jump to his promised land” (295). The “comic O of his mouth” and “gold rimmed eyes of lustrous glaze” effectively form in the mind’s eye a wide-eyed, wet-eyed creature, perplexed and frantic to reach a place of belonging. Wright elevates the struggle in order to highlight the intrinsic value of the tadpoles; as they are important components of the ecosystem.

Wright is able to recognise the tadpoles voice as her own, relating to the tadpoles struggles to her own struggle: “I am neither one thing nor the other, not here nor there. / I saw great lights in the place where I would be” (295). Shirley Walker in her book The Poetry of Judith Wright: A Search for Unity, finds Wright’s poetry “is that of integration rather than unity. Unity suggests the dissolution of polarities into oneness – of life and death, or day and night-into rhythms of nature. In the integrated vision the
polarities stand forth in their full power, and acceptance is strengthened by the overt recognition of what acceptance involves” (qtd. in DeGroen 56). George Sessions opines:

Arne Naess’ Spinozist and Gandhian perspective on human maturity and spiritual development must also be reconciled with, and tempered by, his love and respect for diversity (human, cultural, biological, etc.)—for example, Naess truly loves and finds fascinating the tiniest insect—and his philosophic skepticism concerning attaining ultimate human knowledge. Hence, the significance and importance placed on the endless Socratic deep questioning process in “deep” ecological inquiry. (58)

Wright, in the poems ‘The Orange Tree,’ ‘Wattle Tree,’ ‘Habitat,’ and ‘Rock Pool,’ focuses on the second principle of deep ecology. “Diversity, symbiosis, and thus complexity explain the life of nature itself” (Dregson159). The above poems highlight the diversity of nature and how it functions in an interdependent way in the ecosystem. The value of meaningfulness prescribed by the biological sciences in its use of the term ‘symbiosis’ can be understood only as an interconnected part of the world of symbiosis in which it is a just a selection of organism in a deeply significant way but of all entities. “All entities are understood as dynamic unbounded and situationally unique symbiotic selves; each patterning if relationally, a symbiotic within the process of togetherness of being” (Booth 10).

The poem ‘Orange Tree’ with its “green bough” and “roots in night,” “stands upright / to shelter the bird with the beating heart” (CP 89). It bears life to give life. Many species of birds prefer to nest in trees. The orange trees with dense leaves and
branches give parent birds and their offspring protection from storms. The poet describes the bird as “beating heart” because the birds can view the predators with a trembling heart. This tree leaps out of cold and dark “to reconcile the night and day, / to feed the bird and the shinning fly” (CP 89). The fruits of the trees feed the birds. In its native simplicity and the wonder of its growth and fruiting, the orange-tree is “a perfect single world of gold / [which] no storm can undo nor death deny” (89). She idealises the tree not sentimentally but in high admiration for its ability to transform the darkness of earth into resilient life, and the coldness of winter into fruit in its season. It roots, stands, shelters, leaps, reconciles, and feeds. Orange tree is not sufficient unto it but intimately aims to enhance life in its assigned productive cycles. Its purpose is to live interacting with earth, bird, air and life in a world with its own distinctive contribution. Orange trees endure the weather, erosion and drought and enjoy their given fixed places in the landscape. They give and receive what is given; they persist and endure; and pre-eminently are seen as faithful to the needs of human inhabitants.

The ‘Wattle Tree,’ a million golden balls creating one round golden tree like the sun, is a perfect symbol of unity. The brilliant yellow, fragrant flowers of Golden Wattle make it a popular garden plant. In spring large fluffy golden-yellow flower-heads with up to eighty minute sweetly scented flowers provide a vivid contrast with the foliage. Thus, golden wattle images or reflects the golden glory of its origin energy, the cascading light of the Sun. Native plants in Australia have developed a symbiotic relationship with the land, acclimating to its water supply and natural conditions. Preserving and propagating the tens-of-thousands of plants native to Australia in place of invasive, non-native species will prevent further extinction of Australia's remaining
flora. Again, Golden Wattle flowers have been used in perfume making. Its natural aroma though divinely subdued is instantly distinctive and appealing. In September, its distinctive perfume pervades the landscape, further welcoming the arrival of spring and identifying itself as spring's herald and insignia.

The wattle tree picks up the wattle’s power to unify. Then her poem achieves the upward movement, the unity, the epiphany she seeks. Ecology shows us that natural world is not just an assembly of individual species all competing with each other for survival but that the natural world is made up of many communities of diverse beings in which the species all play different but essential roles. Wright views in her book *With Love and Fury: Selected Letters of Judith Wright*, “The Wattle-tree”- yes, it seemed to me that alchemy, a search for the ‘philosopher’s stone,’ was an attempt to weld man and earth into a unity…” (277).

Then upward from the earth

and from the water,

then inward from the air

and the cascading light

poured gold, till the tree trembled with its flood.

…………………………………………………

Yes, now I bud, and now at last I break

into the truth I had no voice to speak:

into a million images of the Sun, my God. (CP 142)
The tree mirrors the sun in several ways: in its participation in the universal work of continuing creation, it combines the truths of the four physical elements in one mysterious process of assimilation and growth:

The tree knows four truths-
earth, water, air, and the fire of the sun.
The tree holds four truths in one.

Root, limb and leaf unfold
out of the seed, and these rejoice. (CP 142)

The poet begins with an amazing preliminary claim that the wattle-tree, like the universe as a whole, is composed of four elements, and combines four truths in one. Combining earth, water, air and light, the tree symbolizes abundant wisdom in its cascading gold. As well, its blossom’s prodigality reflects the sun’s overabundance, “the tree trembled with its flood” (142).

Wright finds symbiosis even in a humanly constructed environment. For Wright, the house is no simple human structure for human habitation, it is a place procreated within the togetherness of being. A similar sentiment is expressed by Wright in ‘Habitat’: “Symbiosis- / that’s our fate, / my wooden house.”:

An eight-foot carpet-snake
used to winter in the ceiling.
We heard him roll and stretch
when the evening fire was lighted. (JW CP 299)

‘Habitat’ is a powerful poem where she warns us of the consequences of turning against the very creatures whose presence is benign for our easy survival. She speaks
in particular of an “eight foot carpet snake” that “used to winter in the ceiling” and was killed by ‘some stick happy farmer’ just for the fun of it. The outcome of this thoughtless act was “That winter the rats / came back” (JW CP 299). The farmer, like Coleridge’s ancient mariner, took the snake “for a trophy” and was really thwarting the native utility of such a reptile in meeting the rodent menace. From the standpoint of the deep ecology movement, attempts to control the natural world create difficulties to other beings and natural ecosystems. Not only human values are at stake, but also the values of all other organisms. Wright, however, conceives symbiosis in a more holistic way, “I too hostess / for numerous inhabitants- / a rich bacterial fauna” (JW CP 300).

Biospheric egalitarianism and the principles of ecological interconnection help us to realize that no large-scale impacts on ecosystems will be without their effects on human life. The greater the effect observed on other life forms, probably the greater will be the effect on us. Since social processes are interrelated as well, ecological principles must be introduced at the inception, not at the conclusion of design. (Drengson 89)

For Wright, the house is a place where one finds the basic needs as well as emotional needs fulfilled. The house, though an inanimate thing, is also connected with living and non-living things which occupy it. Furniture wears out and passes away, possums and spiders share living spaces created by the house, and the house as sensual being responds to weather events. Wright in the poem ‘Habitat’ observes:

The ceiling also sheltered
possums, mice, spiders.
A blossom-bat hung itself
neatly in my bedroom,
small fur umbrella
with live eyes. (JW CP 299)

In Wright’s poem “Habitat,” a meditation on the experience of living in the house, she refers to a dream in which “Heraldic animals / stand at the garden entrance. / My snakes are at home there” (305). It is called biospherical egalitarianism which, according to Naess, was practiced by Gandhi:

Some European companions who lived with Gandhi in his ashrams were taken aback that he let snakes, scorpions and spiders move unhindered into their bedrooms—animals fulfilling their lives….He believed in the possibility of satisfactory coexistence and he proved right. (23)

Each of us quite naturally perceives man to be at the center of things, but no one would deny that other events ultimately have their influence, too. Likewise, many people unconsciously place humanity at the centre of the universe. In this view, the utility of anything is measured by how it can be used by humans. For many, everything has its instrumental value. Such anthropocentrism is understandable, but narrow and misguided. It is a worthwhile exercise to imagine that something else, such as an ant, a lizard, an oak tree, or a virus, is also the focus of the cosmos. Gary Snyder rightly views:

An ecosystem is a kind of mandala in which there are multiple relations that are all powerful and instructive. Each figure in the mandala—a little mouse or bird … has an important position and a role to play. Although
an ecosystem can be described as hierarchical in terms of energy-flow, from the stand-point of the whole all of its members are equal. (238)

In ‘Wildflower Plain,’ a new more complex integration with nature which embraces this wider set of tensions is achieved; ranging from “angry granite,” “to this thorny, / delicate, tender / speech of the flower” (JW CP 155). There is again some conciliation as “time’s old anger / become(s) new earth, / to sign to the heart / the truth of death.”

The relationship between the concepts of complexity, diversity, and symbiosis could be considered the core of deep ecology –where three ideas from the science of ecology are applied in a philosophical frame … complexity is the single word for the virtue and perfection of nature that we are slowly discovering more about, leading to an increase in awe and wonder. Diversity together with symbiosis are the particular qualifying factors that define and make possible this complexity (Rothernberg 159).

In ‘Rockpool,’ Wright depicts creatures in rockpool and their activities readily which reflect unity and symbiosis. She describes in such lively manner: “I watch the claws in the rockpool, the scuttle, the crouch- / green humps, the biggest barnacled eaten by seaworms… / I hang on the rockpool’s edge, its wild embroideries” (JW CP 419). The sea creatures live competing, and feeding on one another. Though they are diverse in nature each has an important role to play in the ecosystem.

However, Wright was both artist and activist, the values celebrated in her poetry are the same values she fought for in the political arena. The third principle of deep ecology is “On the outside we should change the basic structures of our society and
policies which guide them” (161). The poems ‘At A Public dinner,’ ‘At Cedar Creek,’ ‘Australia 1967,’ ‘The Eucalypt and National Character,’ ‘Dust’ and ‘Brief Notes in Canberra’ in which she expresses outrage at the environmental destruction, at present, a threat to modern man and her poetic diction becomes political in these poems. In **Preoccupations in Australian poetry**, Wright observes, “the landscape has … its own life hostile to its human inhabitants,” it was now forcing ‘its way into the foreground’ even more powerfully than she had envisaged and it became the poet’s task to express its anger” (qtd. in Brady 86).

So in ‘At a Public Dinner,’ Wright was angry with men who have enslaved the earth by polluting it. The poem represents the politicians and business leaders as cannibals, “eating and drinking my country’s honour, / my country’s flesh” (JW CP 312). She calls men “to revise most radically [not only] our exploitive techniques, but [also] a whole attitude of mind and feeling that are very deeply rooted in our whole history of our dealing with the natural world” (qtd. in Platz 259).

In the 1960s, she was the founding president of the Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland, responsible for saving the Great Barrier Reef and large areas of rainforest. The literary critic Vivian Smith writes as a mark of tribute to the poet:

> Wright believes the poet should be concerned with national and social problems. Her urgent commitment to questions of ecology and conservation and the questions of Aboriginal Australia and the need for a land treaty have been the focus of her most recent concerns. New ways of reading the past and a fuller understanding of Aboriginal Australia are important aspects of present-day culture. (**Encyclopedia**).
Wright’s poetry naturally speaks of another form of knowledge, an ecological consciousness. In numerous essays, she expressed her conviction that poetry offered a powerful, and a deeper and broader mode of awareness, and so of being itself. Such a new mode of being evolves in what can be called a poetics of ecology: poetry becomes a guide to being with and in the land in creative and empathetic terms, not simply on it as utilitarian producers. Veronica Brady reaffirms the observation of Wright’s view of the poet as reworking “the relationship between man’s thought and the universe” (83).

Wright states her case against the economic and technological advancement of our time in her book *Because I Was Invited*, when she says, we need a “new vision and ethic” (254). By being inflexible and obstinately fixated on attitudes of control and manipulation, humans fail to grasp the fact that ecosystems operate on principles of interdependence.

Wright expresses through her poetry the public activism which has urgent relevance with regard to the current and future politics of water and the environment in the present day. Wright was passionately concerned about Australia and she was alarmed at the indifference of modern man towards his environment.

In the poem ‘Dust,’ Wright regrets the way the land was exploited and she expects a change in policies regarding agriculture. She believed in the methods of land preservation followed by the native aborigines who considered the earth as their mother:

> Our dream was the wrong dream,
> our strength was the wrong strength.
> Weary as we are, we must make a new choice,
a choice more difficult than resignation,
more urgent than our desire of rest at the end of the day.

We must prepare the land for a difficult sowing. (CP 24)

Wright was displeased with her forefathers’ wrong dream of dominating this earth. The result of their dream was both destruction of the land and the devastation wrought by the Second World War, with its “eroding gale” that “scatters our sons” (CP 24). If there was to be any hope for the future, she believed, there needed to be a change of attitude, a new way of thinking about man’s relationship with the land; the line in her poem ‘Dust,’ “Prepare the land for difficult sowing” refers to better agricultural methods that sustain the land. Wright observes in her book Born of the Conquerors:

In a reassertion of that fact, we can use as guidelines the new science, ecology, and an old and once honourable discipline, economics. When the two begin to work in harmony again, some of the wisdom we need to restore our disordered communal household will be available for use.

This is the only possible way to a future for us all. (124)

Wright’s political convictions are reflected in her poems. Her acute sense of the suffering of, and deep concern over the wrong meted out to, Aboriginal people through colonisation is primary to any serious perceptive of her work, both literary and political. Wright writes in one of her letters in With Love and Fury: Selected Letters of Judith Wright,

I was mad to take it on in any case as the WPSQ was fighting the battle for the Reef, and against the sand miners on Cooloola and Fraser Island,
we were all being spied on the industrial interests and I was near breakdown” (525).

In her poem ‘At Cedar Creek,’ Wright advocates the use of the native wisdom in the preservation of the land resources. Aboriginal, spiritual and cultural understandings of place and land are of great importance in terms of water resources: “The myths of primitive people / can reveal codes / we may interpret” (JW CP 379). She held dear mythology and primitive culture though the wisdom of these disciplines, captured in poetry, could help to promote a higher level of ecological awareness which would strengthen man’s relationship with nature. And she believed that the native knowledge of the people can be utilised to preserve the natural resources. The depiction of Aboriginal relationships concerning water reveals a wealth of knowledge that is different from western concepts but that should be regarded as similarly legitimate and valued, bringing with it a new richness to western thought.

Wright expresses her protest and expected changes in policies which would save the natural world. Her lobbying and activism have kept her active with political slogans and headlines. She tried to save nature till her last breath. Wright tried to change the negative forces of the society:

My desk is silted with papers.
Write to Ministers.
protest torture of political prisoners.
Save the forest. (JW CP 379)
Wright was angry with the greed of politicians. She expressed her protest through her poetry against the inhuman politicians who looted the natural resources in the name of progress.

In the poem ‘Sanctuary,’ Wright brings home the point how important it is to protect our native forest. She lamented the incursion of a road through a special place full of “antique forest and cliffs” clearly inspired by Tamborine Mountain. She uses poetry to put forward her point on the current destruction humans are doing to the environment, native habitats and animals that live in them. Wright has expressed a negative opinion of urbanisation; in the lines, “It leads / into the world’s cities like a long fuse laid,” the poet compares the road, our infrastructure as a fuse to a bomb. The symbolisation of the human progress by the road has been described as in conflict with the surrounding environment and is still “sweeping” through. The description of the road as “like a long fuse laid” shows that the road connects everywhere, yet potentially destructive hence the word “fuse.”

The poem tells that for thousands of years before the road was built, there stood an “—old gnome-tree / some axe-new boy cut down” (CP 140) pointing out the danger of depletion of natural resources. The use of the phrase “the world cities” takes it to an international level and the world will be destroyed if we continue to fell trees from the land: “Sanctuary, the sign said. Sanctuary— / trees, not houses; flat skins pinned to the road / of possum and native cat” (140). Sanctuary is a place of refuge, but the animals are carelessly run over time and time again. This is another warning that our actions have repercussions on other animals. In this poem, Wright warns men of what is happening around and what the deforestation might lead to. She tries to make man
change his ways and she calls him to action. Most people drive past in their cars oblivious to the existence of this sign. After driving past many times, Wright finally discovers the sign has meaning only to the indigenous and not to others.

Wright uses road as a symbol to stand for the brutal force of man who is in conflict with nature. Wright’s poem points out the natural and cultural degeneration happening in the name of human progress. The natural environment is destroyed for the sake of laying of the road in the name of human progress trees are cut for no particular reason. There is contradiction between the title of the poem, “Sanctuary” and the human action of destroying nature. Nevertheless the poet expressed hope in the fourth stanza; the lines “Swung on that fatal voltage like a sign / and meaning love, perhaps they are a prayer” (CP 140) reveal the poet’s desire of man’s coexistence with nature, by bringing in a change in the attitude of men towards nature.

She is a poet of kinship and protestation in their most factual senses and in much of her work, kinship and protest function side by side. ‘Australia 1970’ is an eco-poem where the poet criticises the aggressive clearing of forests on massive scale for agricultural and industrial practices. “The scoring drought, the flying dust, the drying creek” are the very elements which resist the anthropocentric attitude of the colonisers. Wright views in her book **Born of the Conquerors**:

In 1980 Australian soil scientist issued a despondent report on the state of the country’s basic resource—soils. More than half of the land in production, whether the crops or pasture, needed urgent anti-erosion measures; some should be taken out of production altogether….Scientists blamed unwise timber clearing, fallowing methods, overstocking of
grazing land and mining operations for this deterioration – a process which could only worsen year by year. (39)

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 preying of Australia’s natural resources. She was annoyed about man’s defacement of the environment, and mechanistic ways of life and thinking. She was angry with the way the land was cleared under contract by bulldozers, tractors and chains, resulting in terrible damage to the soils and destruction to the wildlife. Early when the eucalyptus trees were cleared for sheep pastures, the colonisers couldn’t keep the regrowth under control. But when they started using bulldozers and heavy machinery the case was reversed. The land became vulnerable. She feels close to the fading land, exhibiting concern and uses the technique of naming animals, insects and plants that coexist in this miserable environment.

Wright advocated preservation of the native trees, plants and animals which help the ecology in maintaining soil resources as well as the climatic conditions. Wright decries the destruction of the native animals and she pictures as though they are reacting to the injustice done to them. 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. This barrenness of land is due to exploitation of the land by the coloniser. The poet compares the defiance of the land to that of the wild animals which man harms thoughtlessly. Her country is fighting back against its exploitation, the elements and animals combining to drive out those who would abuse the earth.

Wright says though the colonisers corrupt the land with a torturing brain the land is obstinate and withstands all atrocities. The same connectedness with the earth occurs
in the poem ‘Australia 1970.’ Here in one extraordinary release of passion, Wright creates “a masterpiece of polemic” decrying the environmental foolishness of contemporary sand-mining and land clearing policies. Wright cries in despair about irresponsibility and insensitivity of the colonisers. Wright’s view in her *With Love and Fury: Selected Letters of Judith Wright* is noteworthy: “In fact conservation of the environment is and has been since the 1950s one of my own main involvements outside poetry” (367-68).

Wright was also conscious of her deeper responsibility. This is the subject of the poem, ‘Interplay,’ beginning with the proposition, “On the inside, we must seek quality of life rather than higher standard of living, self realization rather than material wealth” (*AHP* 108). Rothenberg is of the view that, self-realisation is a process that links the individual to the larger world. It expresses the total unfolding of the possibilities open to any person in society and natural world. “As many religions have taught us, no one’s realization can come about without that of all; so compassion and altruism must be the foundation of any life that is truly to be one of quality” (Rothenberg 162). The poem then moves into a cosmic setting:

> What is within becomes what is round,
> This angel morning on the world-wild sea
> Is seared with light that’s mine and comes from me,
> and I am mirror to its blaze and sound,
> as lovers double in their interchange. (*AHP* 108)

Thus the physical universe, it is implied, produces us. Here the reader encounters the self as constituted through association with other entities. There is a self alive within
a comprehension of dynamic and effuse interconnectivity within an open and complex
more-than-human world; a self internally constituted within a world of difference and
diversity. This method of self-realisation is recognition. By recognising the intrinsic
worth of other living beings one recognises the solidarity of all life forms. It is the
responsibility of human beings to conserve nature. It is therefore vital for us to reinstate
the lost harmony of the cosmos through a religious worldview that understands and
upholds God, human being and the cosmos as indivisible reality so that mother-earth
can remain a home for us and for future generations. One of the important features of
deep ecology is incorporating the world religions which propagate self-realisation and
expanding love for the other human beings irrespective of caste, creed or religion and
living and respecting nature.

The natural world is forced into the meditation, as revealed in the poem ‘To a
Child’ where the poet seeks an epiphany, a “moment of being,” in union with nature;
“When I was a child I saw / a burning bird in a tree. / I see
because I am, I am because I see” (JW CP 106). In the poem ‘Child and the Wattle Tree,’ she writes:

let the harsh wooden scales of bark enclose me.

Take me into your life and smother me with bloom
till my feet are cool in the earth
and my hair is long in the wind;
till I am a golden tree spinning in sunlight. (CP 34)

Wright advocated a vision with the principle of equality among human beings,
and between human beings and other species. Her heart melted for the aborigines who
lived in association with nature, who took a holistic attitude towards nature. They
looked upon trees, mountains, rivers and earth as living beings and they worshipped nature and considered men as a thread in the web of life. They felt interconnected to nature as well as natives. Wright takes responsibility for the crime done to the aborigines because she feels connected to the natives. The self-realisation made her extend her love for the natives as she loved herself. The colonisers with their intelligence considered themselves superior to animals and birds. The earth is alive, animated, and saturated with the spiritual life of our indigenous people. As Das and Mahavidyalay say:

The spiritual dimension of the landscape for Wright is incomplete unless one feels the landscape for what it is and its people. The land withholds the aborigines as an essential element of itself—the corroboree and the ‘bora’ ring mingled ‘with the warm muddy smell of the lagoon water” endows the land with a living essence, it meant for Wright a way to connect the concrete sensory perceptions with spatial contexts, to understand the resilient life that the landscape breathes. (151)

The poem ‘The Ancestors’ also reveals Wright’s growing awareness and acknowledgement of Aboriginal forms of sacredness, where spirit is immanent and animistic. The poem describes the growing darkness in a patch of forest where there stood “fern-trees locked in endless age.” In the trunks of the ferns “shaggy as an ape.” Wright sensed the “dark bent foetus” of our ancestors. The poem records the sudden intuition of what it means to carry all this prehistory “the old ape knowledge of the embryo”—within oneself; how it lives on in the present and connects us all. “Their
silent sleep is gathered round the spring / that feeds the living, thousands-lighted stream / up which we toiled into the timeless dream” (JW CP 111).

Her intense efforts to comprehend the stages of this road and the vast amount of experience and knowledge gained along the way are captured in one of her dreams: “She dreamed she was a piece of protoplasm ‘knowing in a dreadful way that I had to pass through eons and eons of learning and growing and changing all the way up to a human’” (qtd. in Fiona Capp 112). In this poem, Wright’s image is of an ancestral spirit who has been described as a trapped God and he is also susceptible to the violence inflicted upon the landscape. She articulates this more fully in Born of the Conquerors:

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

Similarly, Wright talks about the native spirits who are waiting to take revenge. The blue crane in ‘At Cooloola,’ “has fished there longer than our centuries” (CP 140). The poet loves the land and feels connected with the land; however, the landscape does not love her for what her people have done.

And walking on clean sand among the prints
of bird and animal, I am challenged by a driftwood spear
thrust from the water; and, like my grandfather,
must quiet a heart accused by its own fear. (140)

She feels the spirit present in the land is waiting to take revenge. She describes
the earth as a living spirit: the tree frog is depicted as an ancient totemic animal whose
extinction, along with the burned forests and disappeared grassland, leave the
impression in Wright’s poetry of a haunted lake. “The ‘dark-skinned people who once
named Cooloola’ might too have vanished, but they knew that ‘earth is spirit’ and that
the land cannot be possessed by arrogant guilt” (Capp 140). Diehm writes:

Here the stones are spoken of not as “one with the self. Nor as beings
who have interests akin to the self that elicit an empathic response….To
call these beings “alive” is not to demand that we think of them in the
same terms as the biologically living; it is to assert that they are active
forces in the world, expressive entities that exert a kind of ‘elemental
influence’ on their surroundings, imposing themselves on the landscape
and the ecological self that is in dialogue with these differences, the self
that does not carve its name on things but is itself carved out by them,
“contains” them. (40-41)

In the poem ‘Gateway,’ venturing inwardly beyond the known borders of land
and self, the speaker arrives at the threshold of the river; and, like the river, “the sole
reality” of Self “dissolves,” only to discover that where all that “ended,” “all began”
and “all sank in dissolution”:

In the depth of nothing
I met my home.
All ended there;
yet all began.
All sank in dissolution
and rose renewed. (*CP* 116)

Wright believed that man should be humble in front of nature. The poem, ‘Scribbly Gum’ (131) is about this kind of surrender to nature. In another moment of reverie-insight, Wright remarks upon the paradoxes of interpreting different messages. Man with his limited knowledge never understands nature completely. So it is better to be humble like a leaf of a tree or a drop in an ocean. She notes that when she passed along on a forest walk, she “heard / the mountain, palm and fern / spoken in one strange word.” However, the message within the scribbly gum’s bark was “the written track / of a life I could not read” (*CP* 132). Wright feels there is more in life and she is on the path of discovery and experiencing the various adventures within that everyday because there is a deep desire and cry for relationship and connectedness in this. As Heidegger suggests: “We need only listen. For when nature speaks to us, it does so poetically-gathering itself together in its richly significant and manifold primordiality. Lying before us in nearness, nature tells us what to say of it” (qtd. in “Notions of Sacred and Sanctuary”).

Nature sets a good example for life’s lessons, we need to pay attention to that voice that speaks through our surroundings because they have something to say and give. Just as human relationship needs to give and take on both sides, nature seeks to communicate its beauty to man. This suggests the paradoxical insight that wisdom may
be more easily gleaned in accessing the harmony of nature’s wonders more than in unraveling the disrupted, fragmentary written words of human history. In the overwhelming enormity of the present moment, we can too often lack the perspective needed to read the track record of a life. Some sense of history is needed but the historians have limited their perspectives too narrowly to offer us what we really need.

The poem suggests that what really matters is to be connected to the great wheel of life and that comes not in analysing the multiplicity of history’s contradictory accounts but in hearing the simplicity of nature’s one word of explanation and invitation, however strange that may be to our unattuned ears. Nature’s word is an invitation to respond to life, to resist the forces of directionless sarcasm and entropy and to seek to connect with all that is good and right and just. The poem reports that she had experienced that vibrant grasp in the vectoring word to embrace life in the example of tree, mountain, forest and cool-gully fern.

Similarly, the poem ‘Gum Trees Stripping’ is used by the poet to exemplify the idea of interconnection of all the elements. A simple natural phenomenon, of the seasonal stripping down of the gumbarks is used to exemplify the unified functions of nature which cannot be analysed with science or intelligence. The phrases in the poem “fountain slowed in air / where sun joins earth,-to watch the place / at which these silent rituals are” (CP 133) emphasise the unity of elements. Meanwhile, the fundamental correspondence between the natural process and religious ritual is established. The gum trees enact a silent ritual: the line “the hermit tatters of old bark” suggests a necessary solitude and withdrawal from the world.
Wright rejects the intellectual comparisons of human beings. “Words are not meanings for trees. / So it is truer not to say / These rags look like humility, / … / or wounds ripped by the summer’s claw” (CP 133). She says they are misuse of man’s unique comparative ability and a misuse of language. She says the true wisdom lies in being ‘quiet’ and watch the silent ritual.

Professor Naess sees humans as “very special beings!” The problem, in his view, is that we humans “underestimate our potentialities” both as individuals and as species. Our abilities to understand and identify with Life on Earth suggest a role primarily as appreciators of the biotic exuberance and evolutionary processes on Earth, rather than as conquerors, dominators, manipulators, or controllers and “business managers” of the Earth’s evolutionary processes. (qtd. in Sessions 56)

Deep ecology movement emphasises equality and the intrinsic value of all life. It also forces man to identify that ecosystems are in some cases as intricate that they will probably never be completely understood by humans. Wright’s poems simultaneously interrogate both the conservationist impulse and the deep ecological response.

The poetic imagination in Wright reaches towards a cosmic unity. One of the most important principles of deep ecology is the holism, where everything is interconnected. Her engagement and hence her commitment bring together the world of living creatures with the spiritual in a union where the two may become the one. ‘The Pool and the Star’ is a poem that reaches out towards this union:

I wait for the rising of a star
whose spear of light shall transfix me—

of a far-off world whose silence

my very truth must answer. (JW CP 92)

Wright took an eco-holistic approach towards nature where all species both ugly and inconspicuous are as important as the glamorous ones. In the poem ‘Connections,’ she highlights the connections between everything under the sun:

Every cell of me

has been pierced through by plunging intergalactic messages,

and the cream-coloured moths vibrate their woolen wings

wholly at home in the clusters of whitebeard heath. (JW CP 421)

The power and presence of a great tree is a force to be admired as a moment of valuable insight. Her thoughts in one significant moment of reverie liken humans to trees for being rooted and grounded in time and evolutionary continuity: Wright views in her poem ‘Night’:

Standing here in the night

we are turned to a great tree,

every leaf a star,

its roots eternity. (CP 51)

Recognising the flux and changeability of this life, Wright sees it as directed to fulfillment. To see the human race as growing into a great tree offers many resonances about the patterns, processes and purpose of life. This metaphysical turn in her verse emerges readily enough to link the particular and concrete sensory perception with temporal and spatial contexts.
In her poem ‘Praise for the Earth,’ she says, human beings are not single or alone but, she believed, part of the towering universe, and this became the source of her confidence:

While world’s our own and our heart’s food.
no need to fear eternity.
let us, who hang like a wave on the sea,
praise all the dead and all who live. (JW CP 188)

Instead of putting human beings at the centre of the universe, and seeing other creatures as quaint symbols of human qualities and values, Wright placed these creatures alongside human beings as equally fascinating siblings of a rich and mysterious universe. As a real deep ecologist she was a social activist, a great philosopher who used western and eastern philosophy to bring about a change in each and every individual, her poetry is a happy union of science, religion and philosophy. Her deep ecological thoughts are rooted in philosophy and religion.

In her poem ‘Rainforest,’ Wright grieves for the loss of an animistic, undifferentiated and non-anthropocentric relationship to the natural world. This same conception about the interrelatedness of all things appears well exemplified in the poem ‘Rainforest’ (JW CP 412). The frog in the rainforest is said to have a distinctive call which men cannot understand. Her vision became a universal, a cosmic one. Much of it can only be appreciated by those who have experienced and shared in the life of the natural world. The forest drips and glows with green. The tree-frog croaks his far-off song. “unless we move into his dream, / where all is one and one is all, / and frog and python are the same” (412).
The poem invites the readers to listen to the voice of stillness, moss and rain amidst the green glow of a dripping rainforest. To understand the voice, one must move into a dream where tree-frog and python are the same, a timeless place where “all is one and one is all.” Understanding unity in diversity is an interpretative step from observing the details of the forest alive; this dream of the frog is a comprehension about the vitality and diversity of all life so concentrated in the ecosystem of the living rainforest. Unfortunately, humans are too quick to analyse:

We with our quick dividing eyes
measure, distinguish and are gone
The forest burns, the tree frog dies,
Yet one is all and all are one. (JW CP 412)

It was this vision that gave her a heightened sense of the earth endangered, and the thorough growing disrespect for its living forms became her grave and urgent concern, rather it would be preferable to enter into the dreaming of that place, to share the splendid intensity of its unique access not necessarily to its mysterious aesthetic nor its hidden biological interactions but to the undergirding continuity and natural directionality towards greater richness and abundance. From within the hidden storeys of its tree lines, the rainforest offers opportunities to the poet to shift gear from description and analysis to empathy and commitment. Nature which transcends Wright will outlive her and potentially surpass its degradation at human hands. Reuther views, Climate changes are also being caused by the rapid destruction of the world’s forests, particularly the rain forests in the tropical zones….This deforestation is caused primarily by clearing land for lumber and cattle.
In the process an enormous and largely unstudied wealth of biotic
diversity is being destroyed. (98)

Wright explored the lives of plants, animals and birds; not to catalogue or
proclaim her supremacy over them but to praise them, and in this way to establish
community with them.

The poem ‘Rainforest’ celebrates the interdependence of the creatures in the
natural world. A rainforest is the home for thousand of species and it is known for its
diversity. Wright makes an implicit plea for biodiversity in the poem. Wright mentions
in her book With Love and Fury: Selected Letters of Judith Wright, “Since the
attack on the rainforests is now a world-wide issue the Greenpeace in Britain has
launched a campaign there, it seems a useful sort of a poem” (414-15).

Wright grieves for the loss of an animistic, undifferentiated and non-
anthropocentric relationship to the natural world. One of the common characteristics
of deep ecology is valorisation of wilderness. Since nature is being destroyed by human
exploitation and manipulation, the ideal is to be found in areas in which there has been
virtually no such use and control. In wilderness areas we see how nature works without
human interference, flourishing with a complex and spontaneous order. In addition, in
wilderness we recognize ourselves as but a small part of the vast richness of the natural
world. In the book Rainforest, Seed, a deep ecologist views:

If we enter the rainforest and allow our energies to merge with the
energies that we find there, then the rainforest may be a place where our
roots are able to penetrate through the soft soil reaching beyond the
sad16,000-year history and into the reality of our billions-of-years-of-
carbon journey through the universe. Various truths which had been heretofore merely ‘scientific’ become authentic, personal, and yes, spiritual. We may now penetrate a truly deep ecology. (qtd. in Devall 106)

Wright had owned a strip of rainforest nearby, which she donated to the state so it could be preserved as a national park. She mobilised men and defeated an application to mine limestone and then held off the great oil companies which planned, with the backing of the Queensland government, to establish an oil industry in the Reef waters. They ultimately convinced prime ministers, politician and trade unions of the danger of the Reef, and the campaign brought an awareness among the Australians. She saved Cooloola and Fraser Island and later, her involvement in the political process in Canberra had shown what could be achieved through direct action. Wright fought against deforestation, soil erosion, the extinction of species, air and water pollution and militarism. Wright wanted to heal the earth and preserve it for future generation.

Wright suggests healing therapies, self-realisation courses to open up to each other and to the world around. She requests men to take time to sit under trees, admire rivers, and the sky and observe small biotic communities and plants and animals with close attention, get back in touch with the living earth. Man’s consciousness must be altered and begin to lead an ecologically healthy life. She also advocates one to think and act globally. Wright, an awakened soul, felt the connections between man and man and man and nature. She was not a dreamer or poet who just poured out her grievances in the form of poetry but was a real-life activist who brought about changes socially,
politically and moved men emotionally through her poems leading to self-realisation which would ultimately make one feel humble in front of nature.

For Wright, the tree around which her poetry grows is surely Love. Love of this kind includes both the acceptance and connection with many other lives, and the need to protect them. It is in a sense the same feeling that produces powerful poems about aboriginal peoples of Australia, rare species, environment and sacred sites. The poetic imagination is part of and comes from her ‘heart’; it took different forms in different periods of her life and in drawing upon feeling and experience, this imagination grew. Responsiveness and love of the natural world are the seeds from which Judith Wright’s poetry budded and grew.

Chapter – VI

AESTHETICS OF POETRY

Don’t ask for meaning, ask for the use.

--Wittgenstein

Wright’s style is an amalgamation of conventional and modern. She is a modern poet but a modernist in a fairly different sense. The strong lyrical element in her work takes a typical modern form. She is conventional in having been influenced first by thinkers from Plato, Bergson, Baudelaire, Eliot and Yeats. Wright’s love of nature, which starts with the influence of Romantic poets, gradually evolves into a sensibility of totality that evokes the Buddhist consciousness of the interconnectedness of all things and illustrates Wright’s engagement with the East, with Haiku, Sufi poetry and Japanese Zen poetry. The eco-aesthetical values that she is concerned with in her poetry are the same values that she fought for in the political arena. Consequently,