CHAPTER FOUR
EMANCIPATION OF FEMININE SPACE IN HALF A LIFETIME

".......a spacious Horizon is an Image of Liberty, where the Eye has Room to
range abroad, to expatiate at large on the Immensity of its Views, and to lose
itself amidst the Variety of Objects that offer themselves to its Observation.” 1

If we relocate this extract of Addison in the context of Australian colonial space, the
question that immediately follows is, how pleasurable is this ‘Immensity of its Views’ to the
colonial ‘gaze’? For though ‘Immensity’ can provide libidinal pleasure to the exploring
‘gaze’, at the same time it also requires a boundary, a horizon from the otherwise fear of
being lost in the vastness. The ‘spacious Horizon’ of Australia is both seducing and intriguing
to the settlers. It is seducing because its openness withholds the possibility of the imperial
dream coming true. It is intriguing and fearful because it runs the risk of annihilation and
getting lost in the vastness just like Patrick White’s eponymous character Voss, who with his
insatiable desire and egotism is ultimately lost in the Australian hinterland. Judith Wright in
all her writings has attempted indefatigably to detour into the discursive promenades beyond
the ‘spacious Horizon’, beyond the fringes of legitimacy, where space is not usurped but
released for the free play of imagination. In this chapter the primary focus is, how through
Spatial History that unveils the discursive lacuna of Imperial History; Wright retrieves those
spaces for immigrant women who are like presences of diverse absence, much like the
Aborigines whose cultural and existential signature cannot be obliterated and yet they are
invisible from the sight. The predominant colonial discourse of ‘innocent’ ‘helpless’ white
woman threatened by the frightful mythical Aboriginal cannibals is not at all a
comprehensible concern for Wright. In the course of the journey of her life, Wright has
discerned that the panoptical oppressive space of the white women controlled by white
masculine authority is more hellish. Remarkably Wright has proved in her writings that the 
terra nullius waiting outside is the realm of unconscious desires, fragmented dreams and a 
place of liberty for the confined souls of these women. The white man's discourse insists that 
the vast stretch of topography across the frontier is hostile and it runs the risk of violating the 
white woman's ethics. Wright reduces such a discourse as evasive and deliberate. The 
representation of a perilous venturesome 'outside' is a disguise that reveals the white man's 
latent anxiety of losing control over the 'other'. Wright reveals that in order to preserve such 
chauvinist ego, the white man poses as the chivalrous man of power to protect the lady in 
distress. Michel Foucault has located this undercurrent of chauvinist desire in the broader 
perspective of colonial discourse when he explains, how the desire of the west for the 'other' 
has given way to a permanent space where something or someone should stand as a 
substitute:

....at the gates of cities, there stretched wastelands which sickness had ceased 
to haunt but had left sterile and long uninhabitable. For centuries, these 
reaches would belong to the non-human..., they would wait, soliciting with 
strange incantations a new incarnation of disease, another grimace of terror, 
renewed rites of purification and exclusion. 2

Judith Wright has shown that the colonial women, who have migrated from England for 
the sake of their husband or father, also stand at this gate of exclusion and segregation. These 
women are beffited into the familial passive role of docile mother or wife, always ready to 
serve their men at their beck and call in the course of their enormous enterprise. Wright 
believes that both the Aborigines and the white women have shared this space of 'otherness' 
but while for the former, the space is personified as monstrous and devouring, for the latter it 
is the space of debility, insecurity and enfeeblement, a 'lack' that requires a constant 
vigilance and protection. This chapter is concerned with Judith Wright's aberrant
autobiography *Half a Life Time* and some contextual poetry from inside and outside the text that reveal Wright’s attempt to search for a ‘Thirdspace’ as Soja proposed. This Thirdspace not merely rejects or challenges the sexualized spaces but also triggers lost spaces through a process of exfoliation of the self. It consists of multiple personal journeys and narratives that simultaneously project and contest various spaces she comes across in her life from personal to professional, from darkness to light and from resistance to intimacy. The chapter will throw light on the various oppressive spaces of colonial household which have remained in oblivion, on the spatial-hierarchies on the basis of gender discrimination juxtaposed by the telluric space of intimacy and liberation, and on the autobiographical space that stands in contrast to the phallocentric space in the diaries of the forefathers. Finally the discussion will concentrate on how Wright has exterminated herself from the paternal space of claustrophobia to the maternal place of topophilia.

*Half a Lifetime* is different from other conventional autobiographies in the sense that Wright has never written it with the purpose of writing autobiography. These are different personal essays collected by the editor Patricia Clarke and her daughter Meredith McKinney that reveal a journey of the self from childhood to adulthood. The autobiography in the form of collective essays shows that, Wright has been looking towards some new form instead of continuous chronological account of her life. This process is appreciated by the editor Patricia Clarke as she explains how “she explored possible alternative structures, and wrote fragments and occasional chapters from time to time over the years”. (*With Love & Fury: Selected Letters of Judith Wright* 379) The book concludes with her husband’s death treasured in the memory lane where she has planted “the two little cypress trees”, “the blueberry ash trees in the side garden,” “and the Melaleucas” (*Half a Lifetime* 286) with the unspoken emotions, love, suffering and pain of a woman. The autobiography is of course not complete in the traditional sense covering her entire life from birth till death. Wright has explained at the end
of the book that: “The person who wrote the early part of this autobiography is clearly not the person who lived it.” (Half 289) In her collection of letters titled *With Love and Fury*, the editorial note mentions:

Judith allowed herself to be persuaded that the jumble of autobiographical material could after all be shaped into its own book. The mass of rather chaotic material that she had begun writing over a decade before and added to occasionally as felt inclined, was finally structured and edited by Patricia Clarke, to become *Half a Lifetime* (1999). *(With Love 492)*

Though the autobiography is not complete in capturing the entire life of the Australian bard, but those essays reflect a transcendental and a trans-historical journey from the space of domination to the place of dwelling. Wright being afraid of too much introversion has never been comfortable with the idea of an autobiography. She has called *Half a Lifetime* as a ‘part autobiography’ and herself as ‘bad autobiographer’ as she has enumerated the impediments of writing this book:

I have just finished answering questions about my life for the Autobiography (some I can’t answer because I have forgotten). It’s been interesting enough for me to remember most of it but not all. *(With Love 554–561)*

However, the book appears to be a gradual reflection of the bard’s evolution from her dying mother and grandmother to herself as a self-dependent mother, who, pledges to her daughter a world of dreams and desires tinged with the colour of love and care through the transmogrified process of what Julia Kristeva has proclaimed as “I am she”.

“You who were darkness warmed my flesh
where out of darkness rose the seed.
Then all a world I made in me:
all the world you hear and see

141
This eloquent poem of Wright reflects a strong phenomenological association between the place and the subject so that the poet defines her womb as an interior space of dwelling solely 'made' by herself, an inter-personal space without the intervention of the 'other'. This autobiography is a spectacular reflection on sediment of memories as reflected through spatial metaphors. Unlike her forefathers, who have seen the land as the space of inviting crevices and curves, Wright identifies herself as the extension of the land: “I am the earth, I am the root, / I am the stem that fed the fruit,”. (A Human Pattern: Selected Poems 21) Under the gaze of a white man, it is always the native woman who is visualized as the metonymic reflection of the land. In contrast, being a white woman, Wright’s process of identification of herself with the land of darkness has given new dimension to cultural discourse of Australia.

Imperial history has extracted an Australian space of inclusion and exclusion. This selective space has prohibited the earliest colonial women to enter into the realm of socio-political context. Their existence have never transcended beyond the idealized representation of faithful supporters of their men or the nation’s favoured ‘child production machine’ whose only responsibility is to re-populate the vacant space with white progeny. In such epitomized idealization of the great ‘white mother’, Judith Wright has never qualified herself as morally cleaned, innocent and pure nor has she taken the responsibility of becoming the moral guardian of the black women. Wright believes that the image of the white mother is a masculine idealization that implicitly encourages extinction of the Aborigines. This is soon supported by the Darwinian proposition of the theory of evolution that encourages the ‘survival of the fittest’. In the process, the colonial consciousness aims at controlling their women by chastising them with an oppressive demand of producing innumerable male progeny and by subjugating them in the hegemonic domestic space of ‘protection’ and control. Wright has narrated how the white woman in this great process of colonial
undertaking, has often suffered premature death without any medical care and relief. Sensing the danger, Wright has confronted such imposition with a refusal although her shadowy nonexistent mother and grandmother have failed to overcome it. *Half a Life Time* begins with the forbidden question from the conflicting self of the writer:

> Who am I? None of my genes is indigenous. How did I get here and why? The place to find clues is not in the present, it lies in the past: a shallow past, as all immigrants to Australia know, and all of us are immigrants. The history of our arrival holds a history beyond itself. It begins in another hemisphere.” (*Half 3*)

The reference to 'another hemisphere' reveals her drive to search for another space threatened by the chasm of symbolic orphanage. Paul Carter believes that Spatial History begins and ends in language, and writing itself is a form of journey. This journey has always the possibilities of digressing into many more new ways. Wright loiters into those spaces where she can begin to look for the Lacanian world of the 'Real'. It is relevant to refer to Wright's feminist articulation in her poem “Naked Girl and Mirror” where she begins negatively “This is not I”. (*A Human 138*) This denial forces her to look for those spaces before she has been constructed as ‘she’. The diaries of her forefathers have created a sense of ‘absence’ in Wright because the existence of the colonial women indulged in a more traumatic struggle than their counterpart, which is never mentioned. She therefore surges for another space where the ‘giant pepperian tree’, the song of the magpie, “the nameless trees, the sleeping soil, the original river” become the phenomenological tool in her quest to seek a self-definition. Wright is extremely sardonic in belittling the heroic chauvinist figures of her forefathers.

The poem in the opening chapter of the autobiography, called ‘Old House’ is a metaphorical revival of the lost Australia. The old house is now worn out with the burden of history embedded with several layers of secret memories. Her great great-grandfather who
“moved into that mindless country like a red ant” (Half A Lifetime 1) is presented as a puny unrecognized figure in that vast space. Paul Carter writes “language like travelling, give space its meaning” and so Wright’s poetry creates a space, a space that constantly evokes the “sad river, the silted river”, or the silent woman denied of her voice. No one has yet read the murmuring sound of the sad river but Wright with her poetic intuition interrogates the river to unravel its history of melancholy. Wright has discovered at a very early age, that their aristocratic pioneering family in the colony has endowed ‘whiteness’ as the synonym of an exemplary virtuous woman in contrast to the primeval Aboriginal woman, whose supposed virulent sexuality and wild sagacity must not contaminate them. Judith Wright observes in her autobiography that just as the river and the ‘Old House’ are still lingering with pain and scourges, similarly the essence of those women from her families with their unbelievable withstanding power, is lingering in the dark obtrusive corner of the space of settlement. The trail of their essence is still there to contest those historical spaces of contingency where intangible oppression has taken the illusory shape of refuge and domestic terrain.

The first white woman from her family is Margaret Wyndham, her great great grandmother from her paternal side who is a ‘noted beauty’. Beauty is an important element to define a white woman that signifies and ensures a secure fortune for her. A cynosure of several men including the explorer Ludwid Leichardt, she is a stellar example of a perfect white woman in the colony, successfully undergoing fourteen times labour pain and is celebrated in her photograph as the epitome of feminine beauty and virtue in a landscape of desolation and infertility. (Fig 4) However, Judith Wright with a doubtful insight, wonders at the mystery of her ‘faint smile’ at the age of sixty-four when she successfully nourished and rewarded the family with plenty of children and grandchildren. Wright captures an implicit politics in such feminised and benign photograph:
She poses, one hand on the back of a carved and turned chair upholstered in velvet, behind her the sweep of a tall curtain. She wears a lace cap suitable for a grandmother and a dark dress—silk or satin?—a pyramid of drapery touching the floor. In all this rich material, she stands with a faint smile, a bit shy, a bit amused perhaps. (*Half 5*)

The photograph is taken on her birthday for celebrating overtly white feminine grace and for epitomising Margaret as a successful mother of twelve surviving children. The luxurious attire cannot enshroud her tired eyes or her ‘faint smile’ that has perturbed Wright with disturbing questions. History has given space to her with a utilitarian purpose and not for Margaret’s own existence. This unequal spatial distribution is once more captured by Wright in her minute speculation of the pages of history. She explains how George Wyndham, one of the pioneering figures in the epoch making process of colonization and British industrialization, has basked in the golden sunlight of reputation as

George Wyndham, Sesquicentenary Commemorative Booklet, 1827-1977, in which he is the person commemorated. Margaret is not allowed a sesquicentenary, though her name appears in the booklet as an addendum to Georges’s. (*Half 6-7*)
Margaret Wyndham, the first woman of my family to set foot in Australia. This daguerreotype was taken in 1865 when she was sixty-four, after she had borne fourteen children, twelve of whom survived.

Fig. 4. Photograph of Margaret Wyndham, a mother of twelve children and the first woman to arrive in the terra-nullius. *Half A Lifetime*, ed. Patricia Clarke (Melbourne Victoria: The Text Publishing Company, 1999) 148.
Margaret with her ‘faint smile’ unquestionably should remain satisfied within this precarious space just as Eve in Wright’s poem adopted herself to Adam’s egoistical whims and punishments. The poem ‘Eve to her Daughters’ is reminiscent of the unalterable claustrophobic condition of the women of her family like Margaret Wyndham, May Mackenzie, Weeta Mackenzie or her own mother Ethel Bigg. Eliza Wright, her great grandmother has achieved little space for contributing children more than fourteen in number. What history cannot provide these women, Judith Wright has attempted to carve for them. Wright has delineated the physical and emotional stamina of May Wright in the space of uncertainty, despair, and alienation especially in the palpable silent widowhood of her life. The space she has shared in the absence of her husband, especially when the government has prohibited women’s entry in the exiled land without their husband, is elusively sensitive and psychologically challenging. Her spatial movement has marked a transgression from the domestic narrow wall to a hazardous turbulent world outside. The journey that May has dared to start is taken up by her granddaughter Judith Wright in her poetic transgression. The poet Fiona Capp, an ardent lover of Wright’s poetry explains this process of the journey of Wright through the metaphorical act of walking:

Almost every day Judith went for walks through her property; walks she described in her letters as ‘ecstatic’. She used the word, I think, with full knowledge of what the Greeks call ekstasis, the indescribable joy that comes of ‘stepping outside’ ordinary experience and losing oneself in the moment. 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. She even gave up trying to cultivate a garden, that beguiling mirage of perfection and control. Meditating, Buddhist say, is
not a matter of self-improvement or striving of any kind, but of learning how
to be fully present.  

Fiona Capp has explained how Wright is being influenced by Buddhism in the later part of
her life and unlike her forefathers; she has never cultivated forcibly anything that disturbs the
natural space of Australia. On the other hand, Adam, the symbolic imperialist is portrayed by
Wright in the legendary figure of George Wyndham or Albert Wright, who is indulged in
raping the country at the same time posing as the messiah protecting their women. Wright
confesses in her poem ‘Eroded Hill’: “These hills my father’s father stripped;”, (A Human
49). In An Autobiographical Study (1924) Sigmund Freud has never mentioned anything
about his mother and depicts the fiancé as a hindrance to his work. If for Freud women exist
as a symbolic lack, then for Judith Wright, the plethora of women figures in her
autobiography represent a completion in the patriarchal space of exigency of colonial world.

Another significant family sketch in relation to gendered space is of George Wyndham
who has believed that “sons were the essentials”. In the picture, George is seen rollicking
among “unlabelled multitude of grandchildren” in a “triumphant occasion”, (Half 7-8) (Fig 5)
projecting an unambiguous racial politics. Such a picture of innumerable grand children in
the newly settled colony is almost a representation of the future space of ‘healthy’ Australia,
well populated with white progeny, while the dark truth of the ‘stolen generation’ remains in
oblivion. When the children of the stolen generation suffered identity crisis, sexual abuse and
mental anguish, this sketch appears bitterly ironical for Wright where the abundant white
progeny stand as future unlawful master of the space and the inheritors of sins.
A grand family gathering in 1864. George and Margaret—labelled Pa and Ma—at a small table. My great-grandmother Weeta is at the piano, towered over by her husband Arthur Mackenzie. The sketcher has scrawled ‘Not half handsome enough!’ below the picture.

Fig. 5. A sketch on the first generation Wright family gathering crowded with huge children.


The gendered colonial paradigm that constitutes an essential aspect of the nation’s history is also reflected in the microcosmic domestic space overwhelmed by male power. Wright finds that the concept of home is a hegemonic appropriation of an egoistic pyramid of hierarchy where the position of the father figure as the ‘speculator’ is always privileged. In her salient reminiscences, Wright triggers a wounded domestic space that pervades in her memory with shattered dreams and unfulfilled wishes of her ailing mother, whose shadow is now lost in the dark alleys and by-lanes of the space, just like the silhouetted figures of the Aboriginal bodies lost in oblivion. In the miniature space of cold kitchen, dark laundry and repelling bedroom, Wright recalls how privacy of a woman means acceptance of contamination and germs and dying slowly under the medication of blind religion:
The house, as my mother grew more and more locked in her illness and despair, was infected by the religiosity that drove her into the arms of Christian Science and identified her with her own mother, whose illness had also ruled her household. (Half 85-6)

Wright penetrates into the psychological recesses of these women to discover how their mental delusion has infected the architectural space of their dwelling, so that she is afraid to face her sick mother. This claustrophobic situation baffles her as she wonders: “This imbalance of the feminine side of things perhaps set me reflecting early on what my own use and function in life might be.” (Half 48) The unmarried women have no appropriate place in the domestic space of ‘discipline and punishment’. Their space of existence is distorted and hence Wright defines their position as what Edward Relph has called ‘placelessness’.

..........to marry was the proper destiny for women, even those who like my aunt, seemed to live more or less happily and had their own pursuit of painting and music. They had nobody to order about, no household to rule, and no acceptable role beyond working for others, without independence or money of their own. (Half 52)

This sense of placelessness is due to “casual eradication of distinctive places and the making of standardized landscapes that results from insensitivity to the significance of place.” Wright has strongly protested against the insensitivity of the colonial men. For though her forefathers have been indifferent to such pristine places of these women, Wright’s memory is sedimented with their existential crux, evocative in various phenomenon like her mother’s bed, the paintings of her aunt, the howling black stove, hot water kettles, steaming saucepans or the huge utensils that orchestrate the sad symphony of life. Wright has experienced this domestic space without any self-conscious awareness. As she undergoes several emotional erosions, the space is deeply involved within her. Her mother’s room re-
emerges with the saturated memory and evocative impressions which are comprehensible and
yet unknown, unattainable and invisible to the rest of the house. The smell of asthma
cigarette that her mother used to smoke, revives a space of association, pain and love. Marcel
Proust in "The Remembrance of Things Past" writes:

> When nothing else subsists from the past, after the people are dead, after the
> things are broken and scattered: the smell and taste of things remain poised a
> long time, like souls: bearing resiliently, on tiny and almost impalpable drops
> of their essence, the immense edifice of memory.\(^9\)

The shimmering sound of the rhymes of her aunt, her playful fingers at the piano or her
paintings rejuvenate a synesthetic space in oblivion. Wright’s poem “Remembering an Aunt”
is a phenomenological revival of the memory of a place through the memory of the person.
Michel de Montaigne (1533-1592), the Renaissance philosopher has explained this in a most
simple way when he has said that “A strong imagination creates its own reality.”\(^10\) Through
this imagination the lost space with its distinctive memory of the aunt is revived:

> “Brushes, paints, Beethoven put aside
> (for ignorant flattery’s worse than ignorant blame,)
> she took her stance and held it till she died.
> I praise her for her silence and her pride;
> art lay in both. Yet in her, all the same,
> sometimes there sprang a small unnoticed flame—
> grief too unseen, resentment too denied.” (A Human 137)

Wright’s autobiography reveals that this colonial domestic space of seclusion is pervaded
by stagnation, so that the space evokes a discouraging atmosphere for any kind of progress.
Wright re-awakens the ‘unnoticed flame’ of her maiden aunt Weeta, whose dreams are lost
like the brushes, paints and the fading melody of the piano. This poetry revives Weeta’s
diffused and distant space of existence. The impenetrable darkness of the interior domestic space symbolically suggests ignorance and damnation so that a desire to read and write, is not only discouraged but also denied: "I was beginning, at almost four, to learn to read, but the room was too dark for the books or even pictures." (Half 35) Gillian Rose, the feminist geographer has deconstructed the concept of 'home' as a space of intimacy. It appears to her as a space of violence and neglect. Rose observes:

So, to white feminists who argue that the home was 'the central site of oppression of women', there seemed little reason to celebrate a sense of belonging to the home, and even less, I would add, to support the humanistic geographers claim that home provides the ultimate sense of place.11

The distinction between permeable and prohibited in the choice of books is also, a way to control women and their mindscape. Wright's amazement at the restricted realm of reading of her mother and grandmother discloses the 'female-centred narratives', which are restricted to petty household issues. She remembers how Cenci, being a book of incest and murder, vanished suddenly once her mother has tried to read the book. With its impending doom and passivity, such constrained space of limitations and restrictions has played a crucial role in shaping the identity of a woman. This sense of female confinement is described by Wright when she explains how the energy of a woman is lost as a captive soul in this space of domination:

........chilly verandah and through a 'functionless' lobby with a leaking roof where the huge black iron tray the girl had to carry obscured her view so that accidents sometimes resulted." (Half 42)

An attempt to transgress the frontier of gendered space is an embodiment of 'inauthentic' desires. Wright remembers how with her childish, naivety she has transgressed into the playful world of the boys where she is exterminated and punished in the dark corners of the
bathroom for such daring act. If the space outside is territorialised and circumscribed with fences and boundaries, what Wright intends to suggest is that there is also an impermeable metaphorical boundary existing inside the domestic space. Thus the settler’s house in the colony is a metaphorical reflection of another terra nullius, a metonymic representation of the future nation with its utopian fantasies and defined boundaries. The stable colonial domestic space is an essential microcosmic foundation for the dream of the future nation. Wright explains how the architectural detail of the domestic space pervades her memory. Her wondering mind cannot be restricted within the permeable space and hence its fluidity of motion overcomes all boundaries of patriarchy. She still remembers vividly the secret castration of calves, painful spaying of heifers and blood stained slaughtered ground of kangaroos and poisoned rabbits:

The duality of life and death, not to mention sex (and sex was not mentioned inside) may have got itself into my puzzled mind from the beginning. Slaughter and the Sermon on the Mount and Jesus as the Good Shepherd looking after his lamb seemed to be at odds. (Half 47)

This bruised heterotopias inside the domestic space excoriate the meaning of ‘home’ with its socio-political implications. Her delineation of the domestic colonial space reveals that the white man’s house in the colony which upholds the cult of discipline, virtue and protection is hollow and flimsy.

In this context, Edward Relph’s delineation of the concept of ‘insideness’ and ‘outsideness’ further explains the politics of domestic space. Relph explains that “To be inside a place is to belong to it and identify with it, and the more profoundly inside you are the stronger is the identity with the place.”¹² In contrast, outsideness relates to a sense of alienation and identity crisis because of one’s inability to locate in that place. Hence insideness and outsideness are both related to psychological association than mere physical
presence. For Wright, the open space outside contrives a place of freedom and peace while the domestic place inside is most dangerous:

I began to understand my own feminine destiny. Girls, I now knew had few choices. Their future lay inside, while Outside was a male domain. Not even the Inside in which they had been born and reared would belong to them unless, like my father’s sister Weeta, they stayed unmarried and without much status. (Half 52)

This disjunction between ‘Inside’ and ‘Outside’ is more than a spatial partition but acts like a metaphor to construct the identity. Wright’s disagreement with the isomorphic representation of space is justified when she connects the sense of insideness and outsideness with identity of a woman. For the colonial women, ‘insideness’ means unacknowledgement of their existence. The patriarchal borderline between ‘home’ and the ‘world’ reduces the identity of the settler woman to the supporter of her man. Wright has shown ironically that the colonial house with its geometry of walls that stands as the signifier of Enlightenment is a sepulchre of void and penumbral darkness:

In a predominantly male household, my brothers were entering the life of action while the life of feeling, in which my mother and I were left, grew somehow poisonous. Though I longed to escape, I now knew and feared, that my fate as an incipient woman and housewife was to be trapped Inside with babies, illness, fear of death, the consolations of religion and little else except cookery and sewing to think about. (Half 86)

The charm of intimacy and comfort of the home is therefore seen by Wright as a masculinised construction especially keeping in view the essence of ‘homecoming’ for the ‘heroic’ man returning from explorations. Paul Carter writes how candle flame, invites a
feminine charm for the explorer/traveller so that the house as an internal space of privacy appears exaggeratingly appealing:

The light is tended by women, the same women whom it shelters and protects and whose outlines it throws invitingly against the curtains. The flame manifests the double aspects of the house: as seducer and seduced, as mistress and servant. The house makes of the returning traveller both master and child.13

The same flame that provides warmth of the hearth to the exhausted explorers also becomes the metaphor of lust in Wright's poem:

How many cuts of choice and prime
our housewife hands have dressed since then—
these hands with love and blood imbrued—
for daughters, sons and hungry men! (A Human 132)

In this poem Wright describes mammoth task of unbearable domestic works that women have performed for men, who like 'hungry dogs' always expect testimony of devotion at the altar of sacrifice. In her essay entitled "The Economics of Sex", 14 J. Scutt views marriage as the legalised way of selling women's sexuality in order to gain some form of financial independence. Judith Wright with her bold narration depicts how her great grandfather Henry Edward from her maternal side, met with an accident and how Annie Burraston, one of the daughters of the local rider “nursed him so satisfactorily that she had already borne him a son, Frederick, when they married in February in 1860.” (Half 15) So, Wright has unleashed the truth that the female body, which is the site of contestation and subject of protection in the colonial land of uncertainty, has become the bait of 'necessary violation' in order to seek entry in the 'mythologised' space called 'home'. Thus the saviour becomes the destroyer in violating the space of colonial women while women, having no option accept this as
hegemonic control. Wright has described such moments of crisis after the death of her mother when spinster women in search of a place of dwelling, thronged her father. While the father has forgotten his paternal responsibilities, Judith like an uprooted plant, drifting in the difficult waves of life, suffered a volatile relationship with her step-mother. She has experienced the pangs of insecurity, desolation and what it means to be ‘placeless’ although she has remained within the boundaries of ‘home’.

They were mostly desperate for marriage to rescue them from their unhappiness and I developed a jealous possessiveness towards my father, recognizing vaguely that they had more in mind than mere housekeeping. (Half 104)

Elaine Showalter has detected this as “the problematic of women’s space”, where she suggests that “in literary theory where female space is the alternative linguistic and imaginative place from which women can speak”. 15 To seek this alternative place, in her childhood, Judith Wright has searched for the company of a sister than a brother and her dream is fulfilled later when she has proclaimed the indigenous poet Oodgeroo Nonnucal or Kath Walker as her sister. (A Human 166) What Showalter has suggested as a form of spatio-temporal identification in the world of writing, is practically guided by Wright’s mother, Ethel Bigg who has anticipated the danger for her daughter:

she had ambition for me as a poet and my small successes, when the verses and letters I sent to the Sydney Mail’s children’s page won praise from its editor, ‘Cindrella’, gave her a good deal of pleasure. (Half 89)

Like the eponymous Norah Linton of Norah of Billabong, Wright forges in the smithy of her soul the unrecorded pains and dreams out of the sluggish element of the patriarchal world to give birth to a new artist, a new mother and a new wife. In her feminist newspaper The Dawn, Louisa Lawson has anticipated women 'with ready hands and new brooms', giving
Wright further analyses her childhood space through a process of intuitive understanding of the space outside. When the domestic space inside is seen by her as a patriarchal-consigned place of confinement and violence, the vast expanse of the Australian space outside is embraced by her as an outlet to release her suppressed anxiety. Wright’s perception of the Australian space differs widely from her forefathers. If for her predecessors, space is signified by a framework or matrix without which it is empty, for Wright space is more psychic, affected by acute sensations and emotions. She structures space by evocation of senses while her forefathers have concretised it as a three-dimensional geometrical structure by using apparatus of imperialism. The psychological reason for such a difference is well explained by Carter in the book *Repressed Space*:

.........repressing the sense of homelessness that haunted their effort to make a home, the colonial settlers turned the resulting anxiety outwards, expressing it as an aggression towards the land. As a result, they shared the ironic fate of the destructive character: clearing the land only intensified its agoraphobic charge. The more they tried to drive the symptom out, the more they reproduced it. In the process of removing trees and over grazing, they advanced towards self-destruction. Yet the panic to produce an ideal flatness from which every ghost of the environmental unconscious had been removed seems to have been irresistible.17

Thus, the ‘destructive characters’ of her race find this outside space as infinite, untamed, but this same tremulous space becomes for Judith Wright, the inexorable place of epiphany:

All those borders and the shrubs and trellises, in my memory, were loaded with scent and flowering; roses, larkspurs, delphiniums, lilies, mock orange
and the big old laurel tree. Even now the scents of lavender, heliotrope and
clove pinks seize my memory with the presence of those sunny days. (Half 69)

This quoted passage reveals how through her intense sensory experience, Wright
crystalizes the childhood space in her memory. She embodies how fragrance can transform
space into place evoking a vivid, emotionally surcharged place of dwelling. By dwelling on
smell of the various flowers, Wright is effusive in her laudation of the abstract space that is
redolent with memories of a place. It also shows that there is a difference in outlook between
her forefathers and herself in viewing the land. That her forefathers are always ‘outsider’ in
the Australian space is evident, when the land appears alien to them, while for Wright it
seems that the living space is absorbed into each other’s subconscious. This outside wild
space yields therapeutic sensation to the bruised mind of her childhood because she is
careless of the politics of space and lacks the concern for the accepted canons of ‘beauty’.
This euphony of attachment is what Yi Fu Tuan defines as ‘topophilia’, a discourse which is
discussed in the first chapter. Unlike the assigned restrained space of the house, the horizontal
endless extension of the space is augmented with a sense of boundless freedom and an
endless kinesis for a creative soul like Wright. The poem called “The Child” at the beginning
of chapter four titled ‘growing up’, captures such moment of simplicity between the lonely
child and the land. The elemental quality of the entire place is evoked in the quintessence of
‘thrust of green leaves’, ‘the red tower of May-tree’, ‘smelling of wild honey’ which
exuberantly keep the child warm with vitality of life. The life force of the child is found in
the deluge of a full blossomed wild tree, as Wright has poeticised “the blood a moving tree of
may”, rather than the chaotic world of humanity. (Half 81) It is not the house, but this very
primitive place outside , where Wright has experienced through a simple image of a tree, the
joy and purity of childhood.
In the autobiography, Wright chooses to begin her childhood reminiscence from her act of ‘disobedience’, a deliberately chosen term which denotes defiance against the almighty:

…first time I am suffering not only from the pain, but from the knowledge of disobedience (I should not have been where I was)... for I had suddenly been cast out of the Garden of Eden, and retribution was, as I knew too well, on the way. Above all I have a new and incommunicable knowledge that I am separate from the world. I am ‘I’ and I don’t like it. (Half 29-30)

The ‘disobedience’ she has referred to is the act of transgression from the quintessential feminine realm to the forbidden masculine world of action, penetrating the social, cultural, sexual and political boundaries of legitimacy. This ‘disobedience’ is also a reference to her shooting desire to interrogate the authenticity of the existence of her race in the terra nullius. Above all, she is referring to the greater act of defiance of the Adams of her race who in an unruly manner indulged in infringement by evacuating the original inhabitants, followed by usurpation of the space of Australia. Wright here gives the literal description of bleeding of her leg caused by insertion of the splinter that grooved and furrowed the pristine forest of the land. The ‘bleeding’ that smudged her white dress with dripping blood is endowed with symbolic significance. Bleeding here refers to her punishment and pain for her wilful transgression, but it also refers to the incomprehensible sin of her race that makes her bleed with pain, because her forefathers’ act of violation has curbed a permanent signature of wound and execration on the Australian space. The reference to bleeding is juxtaposed by the poet’s awareness of the dissolution of her ‘self’ between innocence and experience and between childhood and adolescence followed by attainment of puberty:

But it was this new ‘I’ that was making me howl so loud. From a kind of space-time continuum which included myself, I had suddenly arrived into a self awareness, alone and in pain and trapped in a life which I had now
recognized would take me right through, unstoppably and uncontrollably until
I was as old as my grandmother—and then I would die. (Half 30)

The new ‘I’ has ascribed the development of the child into a girl configured with her
gender ideologies. Wright in her candid and brazen narration reveals through her personal
experience, how the woman’s body is enmeshed with the scope of spatial surveillance, so that
the body is seen as the site of various discursive issues of beauty, civilization, fertility and
power. When the idealised white woman’s body is endowed with beauty and sensuousness,
Wright has confronted the pain of denouncing her own body as ‘inferior’ or ‘lack’. The body
that appears as a space of vigorous reinforcement of the future civic space of Australia with
its utopian dream of modern enthrallment, becomes an inhibition for Wright. With her
granny-glasses, her large nose and teeth out of alignment for which she is called Bucky,
Wright confronts the reality: “I had known I was no beauty.” (Half 98) She still remembers
painfully how her childhood ball dress exposing the knee and the curvaceous alignment is
tortuous for her just because she must look seductive like her cousin Tina in order to be
deemed as a ‘sexy’ figure under the patriarchal lenses. The French sleeping doll from
England, gifted by her aunt is “recognized as a feminine model” with its “blue eyes, curly
hair and pleasing expression”. (Half 51) Such prioritised discursive elaboration of an ideal
body creates psychological anguish and a sense of inferiority for those, who cannot fit into
the given frame. Julia Lesage in her essay “Women’s Fragmented Consciousness in Feminist
Experimental Autobiographical Video” captures such psychological complexity of an
adolescent girl when she is confronted with sexual obligations:

For most teenage girls, the rituals of selecting and putting on makeup,
shopping for clothes, and dieting have the social and psychological function of
ordering sexuality. The rituals around physical appearance allow them to
construct a version of self that both invites sexual approach and polices the
parameters of desire. By concentrating on the physical, these rituals focus
attention on achieving “beauty” and thus reduce any conscious awareness of
the structural nature of heterosexuality as a social force.\(^{18}\)

Wright explains analogous psychological affliction when she is confronted with her body as a
space that stands for inadequacy, resentment and confusion: “I had always been what the
Irish term ‘a queer one’….somehow put me out of consideration as a normal daughter of the
pastoral aristocracy.” (*Half* 235) Wright’s disability to procure such an ideal body and to live
with an ‘abject space’ is explained excruciatingly:

> The miseries of early adolescence had begun. I was acquiring lumps and spots,
as well as the terrible little towels which I had personally to wash and keep out
of everyone’s sight...I thought that now this curse had descended I would
never again be able to ride horses or go swimming and would have to wear
uncomfortable safety pinned towels forever. (*Half* 97)

This bodily disgust and spatial disruption seen in the light of Julia Kristevas’s ‘theory of
abjection’ is essential to reflect on the psychic trauma that sabotages the life of the colonial
woman. In her *Powers of Horror*, Kristeva explains how this bodily disgust and revulsion
causes a sense of loss, a fracture in the ‘I’ and a disjunction between the ‘self’ and the ‘other’.
Kristeva further analyses how ‘abjection’ also complicates the politics of exclusion and
inclusion within the utopian space of desire. In ‘Naked Girl and Mirror’, Judith Wright shows
how the same child who has once indulged in a delirium of uniting her body with nature is
now astounded with her newly discovered ‘swelling softness’ under the gaze of ‘frightened
stare’. The girl who calls herself as ‘lovely hateful naked girl’ enumerates how the
consciousness of the body has been absent in her, till she becomes aware of it as reflected in
the mirror. “This is not I. I had no body once—/ only what served my need to laugh and run”
but now the body as the space of repulsion makes her eyes ‘misted with tears’ hoping that
"Some day we may love", someday "Your lovers shall learn better, and bitterly too, if their arrogance dares to think I am part of you". Lacan in his mirror image theory has explained how the image reflected on the mirror creates the sense of 'lack' because of the disjunction between 'ideal' image and the fragmented image of the 'I'. The mirror reflecting the image of the girl in Wright's poem, may apparently seem to have created a sense of 'lack' but Wright shows that what Lacan has defined as 'lack' appears as 'loss' in her poem which is crucial and fundamental in the evolution of an independent self. What Kristeva theorises as 'the object of abjection', that includes both repulsion and attraction, is beautifully explained by Wright in phenomenological term in the poem when she describes the body as the topographical space:

Smooth once-hermaphroditic shoulders, too tenderly
your long slope runs, above those sudden shy
curves furred with light that spring below your space. (Half 138)

The dichotomy in the oxymoronic juxtaposition of the phrase 'lovely hateful' in Wright's poem shows, that this space of abjection is also uniquely a space of attraction for the girl. Kristeva has explained how the various female bodily changes like menstruation, pregnancy or sexual arousal cause a discharge, a convulsion, a crying out' (1982: 1) as Wright has lamented about such fear and trauma of the tabooed space in the darkness of adolescent ignorance:

I knew almost nothing of the matter of getting pregnant ....My mother like most of her generation was far too shy to go into details and she had died .....I could not do it and persuaded myself I did not want to. (Half 116)

After such psychic castigation from the ideal space into the space of denial, Wright has discovered herself as the custodian at the fringe, a derelict outside the grandiose space of
patriarchy. The impact of such abolishment has started first within her family after the arrival of the male sibling:

It was his arrival that first set me on the path out of Eden. Fair-haired, brown-eyed, happy and cooed over by everyone, while I was dark-haired, greenish-eyed and female, he had supplanted me. (*Half 51*)

This redundant space where she inhabits is obscure, clouding her identity as meaningless while the space of the ‘other’ is elemental for the birth of the ‘nation’. Such bitter feelings arrived in her, when she has observed how the boy child called Leslie in his childish prank hides in the ship and becomes the cynosure of a gala of unnecessary attention of the entire ship:

For once I had scored over the male, blond and good looking side of the human race, which since my brother’s birth I had recognized as having more than a head start on the female, dark and indifferent endowed side to which I belonged. As with my feelings about the Dutch and the Javanese, I identified Leslie with the conquerors. (*Half 96*)

Uprooted in the domestic space, when Wright moves to the space outside, she soon discovers that the private space at home and the public space outside are reflection of one another in terms of the game of power. Michel Foucault has elucidated that institutions are sites of power-knowledge production where discourses like race, class, gender and sexual paradigm are like powerful units interlinked with one another. Wright is critical in not only capturing the gender biasness in public space but in her dauntless narration, she has also shown how public spaces are sexually charged where indulgence in illicit sexual practices can only provide access and success for women. Through her own personal experience, she has focused on the social condition of women in public space. The institutions are implicitly patriarchal spaces where women are discouraged to venture into the public space in the form
of various restraints like gender biasness in the canonical syllabus or physical activities that are disagreeable with woman’s bodily inhibitions. In the ostensible patriarchal universities and boarding schools, Wright is marginalised for being “unable to play games with any conviction in a world where games and boys were evidently to be of the first importance.” (Half 107) Wright finds that sport is considered predominantly appreciative while poetry writing is relegated as passive and non-productive:

I was rebelling against the masculine order of things which ruled both the world and its future, the Australian journals and their choices in literature and the university. It seemed to me Australian writers too easily accepted this masculine view of things. (Half 148)

Wright’s struggle over the meaning and representation of public space revealed in her autobiography, discloses the political and sexual framework that constitute the structuring of civic space of colonial Australia. For Wright, the newly emerged civic space of Australia appeared as a site of contestation where inarticulately it encourages the space of ‘difference’. During her lonely sojourn to shape her identity outside the domestic space, Wright’s various experiences in cities like Sydney and Brisbane have brought her to the abstract space of bourgeois capitalism where women are interposed between sexual oppression and social obligations. Lefebvre finds in this capitalist space of commodification, sexual violence is the predominant aspect where women’s body become ‘pulverised’ and broken into pieces in the consumer market. Wright’s depiction of the inequality of wages for women or the picture of Brisbane streets dotted with prostitutes struggling hard for survival are antithetical and obnoxious to the historical legacy of her race in structuring a ‘civilised’ space out of the primitive savage place of terra nullius. This is explicit when she writes such bold statement: “King Cross where I lived was regarded as the hot bed of political radicalism infested with
prostitution and drink (drugs were little known). It was far from respectable address” (Half 146)

Whether working as a neglected female clerk, as an assistant of an arrogant misogynist professor or trapped between embittered frustrated women with their scrupulous sexual measures as a short cut process to success, Wright realises that the gendered public space is the space of performance where women must identify themselves with the fabricated enforced identity of an inferior in requirement of masculine control and surveillance. In a letter to Roberta Sykes on 22nd September 1993, she writes:

...women must somehow take a hand and a big hand in what is going on at federal level. The men chosen as spokespeople on the land rights issue are doing well but as I hear from the north, there’s a good deal of resentment among the women whose own rights are never ventilated, and they, even more than the men, stand to suffer bitterly from the various governmental dodging...

(With Love 507)

Thus what Wright is hinting at, is that women should intrude into the public space where masculine surveillance operates indirectly in order to restrict women and their freedom. Wright has detected how this entire process of ‘masculinization of space’, is taking place without the awareness of women. Through her own life story in Half a Lifetime, She has exemplified the transgression, which includes both physical and metaphorical, and is the only process by which a woman should search for a place of her own. James Clifford has observed that travelling is a scope for liberation of cultural space from the hegemonic control and surveillance. Wright’s journey from her domestic space to a space that extends beyond the continent during the onslaught of Second World War, is a bold intrusion into a cross cultural chronotope. She has repelled after witnessing such venomous space of ruthless killing and
hatred so that in a moment of epiphany, she realises that Australia with its primitive world is the place to dwell:

As the train panted up the foothills if the Moonbis and the haze of dust and eucalypt vapour deemed the drought-stricken landscape, I found myself suddenly and sharply aware of it as ‘my country’. These hills and valleys were---- not mine, but me; the threat of Japanese invasion hung over them as over me; I felt it under my own ribs. Whatever other blood I held, this was the country I love and knew. (Half 158)

In the sexist exclusionary space of living, Wright has also thrown considerable light on the emotional and psychological space of a woman. In her reminiscence on the journey of life, this emotional space primarily focuses on her relationship with several men she has come across. Reflecting back on the same emotional space of the previous women of her family, Wright only discovers it as a place of encapsulating isolation ranging from ignorance, suppressed anger, desire, trauma, denial, to repulsion, loss of faith, and depletion of sanity.

The poem called ‘Wedding Photograph’, at the beginning of chapter five captures such painful emotional turmoil of the newly wedded bride in the photograph whose impending death has ensured the next woman in the queue to fill the vacate space that will be evacuated soon. Significantly Wright’s mother, who died at a very early age, has appeared in her wedding photograph as melancholic with her head bowed down. (Fig 6) Perhaps hovering on this face of despondency and bereavement of her mother, Wright has written in her poem: “pain increases, death is final,/…….../her second bridegroom, standing there invisible”. The poem written during Vietnam War when more than five hundred Australian soldiers died is of course tinged with the dark shades of pain and fear of death but it is also a poem that reflects on the woman’s ‘shoulder sobbed-on’, ‘sound of songs at piano’ or ‘girlish face’. (Half 101)
Fig. 6. Judith Wright’s Mother, Ethel Bigg in her wedding dress. *Half A Lifetime* ed. Patricia Clarke (Melbourne Victoria: The Text Publishing Company, 1999) 150.
In that inconceivable space of infinite suppressed feelings, Wright participates in a complete immersion and absorption of that pain till she pledges: “Sybylla had refused to get married and she had left her home and decided to be a writer—and she had for there was the book to prove it.” (Half 53) This act of emotional abandonment as an immediate outcome in Wright, is not only bold but difficult to digest in the contemporary society.

Unlike the earlier women, Wright has been bold enough to enumerate her relationships with several men which have augmented her with a better perspective of the emotional space in relation to socio-political space at large. In the process Wright articulates that ‘desire’ of a woman is natural just like men. She has celebrated her sexuality which she finds to be strongly interrelated with her cerebral ardour and intellectual appetite:

I seemed never to strike the right note in any of my lovers. What I was interested in seemed to set them off immediately on a different line of thought from mine. If it had not been that the manifest destiny of women was to get married, I felt I could have chosen easily the fate of a spinster (Half 157)

Hélène Cixous in her essay “The Laugh of the Medusa,” 21 explains this concept of ‘desire’ as a dynamic revolutionary gesture to deconstruct Lacanian phallocentrism and Freudian imposition of passivity of women. The image of Medusa, the chthonic monster with her multiplicity of emotions appears in Cixous’ writing as expressive of repressed desires, passions, and unrestrained impulses. Cixous has represented a challenging woman with her extravagant wanton sexuality that disarrays all phallocentric structures. Similarly Wright’s writerly voice in the autobiography emerges out of exorbitant libidinal female sexuality relating it to her profligate creative energy. She has come across men like Andrei, half Jewish, who like a ‘shy dog’ has wanted to escape the trauma of war by marrying Wright and shifting to Australia. For her, fugitive Andrei appears like a shy dog who is concerned to
please his master but if encouraged would even go to the extent of tearing into pieces. Thus Wright has focused not only the shallowness of man-woman’s relationship in a capitalist world but has also deconstructed the phallocentric world by moving beyond the strictures of patriarchy. Her dereliction reflected in her gesture to Andrei’s desire is an act of defiance:

Andrei asked for a kiss. I complied, as I usually did, with no particular interest as one might kiss the affectionate and amiable dog……. (Half’137)

Her extravagant flirtatiousness with a man called Philip on her voyage back home from Europe reveals that Wright has blurred the line of legitimacy between moral and immoral. Her sarcasm at Philip’s cold response to her inviting gesture carries a deeper implication than mere challenge to the patriarchal strictures:

At last I discovered the reason for this remarkable self-denial – he was a Jew and did not think it fair to non-Jewish girl to get involved on that level. He would not and could not marry me so bed was out of question. (Half’141)

This discovery compels Wright to reveal the hollowness of religion, to explicate that women’s desire is boundless like her creative proliferation which cannot be restricted within a given space, language or structure. Wright thus shows that creative energy and sexual desire in women are equally impulsive, diverse and fluid. Thus Wright negotiates a new space for herself:

I no longer wanted to be a suburban doctor’s wife if I ever had and the old love affair with John, from my time at university, died a more or less natural death but it was hard to see what to put in its place. In fact my ‘love-life’ sank into the background after I told my former lover some of my overseas experiences. ‘Faithfulness’ being a sine qua non for marriage to a respectable professional, we parted more or less amicably. Half’141)
The poem titled ‘Sonnet’ at the beginning of chapter seven reveals that in the silent motionless land when “Evening and the earth are one” the poet finds her “dream draws on.” (Half 159) During her eighteen months tenure in Wallamumbi after her university education, she has discovered herself as the emerging artist in the darkness of the night when her shivering hands in cold have given birth to lines plucked from the pangs of life. Wright has overcome the gender boundaries and transgressed into spaces of unfathomable emotions and heightened intellectual germination, which very few Australian male writers have done. Wright’s autobiography is a celebration of the myriad creative spirits of women. She never castigates men as unwanted but shows that the complete space of dwelling evolves with equal participation of the both. When Wright forged the strong bondage with Jack McKinney, a wayside philosopher, twenty three years older than her, with four children and a divorced wife, she prodigiously writes in her letter about the strong desirous space shared by two of them: “neither of us is complete without the other”. (With Love 2) After such oppressive claustrophobic space, McKinney exhorts Wright to forge a space for herself as Wright explains:

My experiences of Australian men had been of patronage at best; awkwardness and concealed dismissal were more likely than exchanges of views on an equal basis.

This man was different. He shared his enthusiasms and ideas as though I was an authority. It was a new experience to be asked my opinions on issues and writers. (Half 188)

The poem called “Song” at the beginning of chapter nine titled ‘love and partnership’ reflects how Wright and McKinney have become dependent on each other symbiotically. When the birds of night cry out in the eeriness of an insecure world, when the howling tempest ravages the world outside, she realizes how “for each of us the other’s eye/ restore
the day, the sickness cure." (Half 213) The poet discovers that each is the other's dwelling place, a private world cocooned by 'insistent love' which she claims as "my shield against the world". The dissolution of the 'evil' in her by his love is almost a divine accreditation and a reflection on the purity of their love. Martin Heidegger posits 'the fourfold' or the four elements, the "earth, sky, divinities and mortals".22 which are essential to our sense of 'being' or dwelling. Wright also evokes all these four elements in their space of dwelling. Beside the incomprehensible confluence of divine and human love, there is also the earthly element that keeps them close to nature. The earth, which is the bearer of all the fruits contributing nourishment and growth to life, is seen in Jack's love forming their world of harmony: "as a tree might give/ its fruit, its flower, its wild grey dove--/ the very life by which I live". The 'sky' is related to the rays of the sun that nourishes more and more while the vulnerable weather cannot perturb their love, and hence it is untouched by darkness or storm.

Wright's relationship with Jack McKinney shows that like her unbounded passion, unrestrained creative energy, her love is also manifold in her various roles and appearances in the relationship. It is Wright and not McKinney who has dissolved the financial crisis, it is Wright who has gifted the house called Quantum meaning 'store of energy to begin a new life' to introvert Jack to absorb himself in his world of philosophy. In return, Jack with his fineness and modesty has altered it into a home, a place of dwelling where Judith finds 'a room of one's own'. She proclaims with her boundless joy:

I was lucky to live in a quiet and beautiful place with a man whose jokes and conversation kept me happy as well as in love and too busy to be tempted far into the controversies of the time. I was our chief income earner... and I had told him I was more than happy to be the income producer while he wrote it. (Half 277)
This is the space endorsed with dreams and emotions, an intrinsic heterogeneous space of light and darkness. Chapter ten of *Half a Lifetime* is concerned with this peaceful abode at Quantum which is personified by the poem “Flame Tree” that defines the art of living. Wright synchronizes herself with the tree as her wild passion “branches out of my heart this sudden season”. (*Half* 237) The flaming passionate colour is not the artificial light of the lamp of her father’s house, but this reddening fire is primitive, pure, a poetic expression of resistance to all corruption and pretensions of the cosmopolitan life. It is the expression of the corporeal and spiritual energy of the woman, what Bachelard has called a ‘psychology of primitiveness’. 23 This is the space of matriarchy where the grace of the flowers reveal female sexual anatomy, (*A Human* 27) and the trees, much like the poet herself, are deeply rooted, entangled and coherent with the space. The Quantum is the space of mutual understanding where each of them supported the other to evolve from all constrains of life:

I would never have gone on with the dead-end poems I had been writing before I met him. But my survival as a poet and as a person—which was the gift he had given me—took me further than the readers wanted to go. (*Half* 243)

Wright has emblematised that to dwell in a place of bliss and emotional contentment, racial, social and gender boundaries are meaningless. The time when Wright has given birth to her daughter, children born outside the wedlock of marriage is considered illegitimate and ‘out of place’. Wright has proved the alternate:

I told my family, horrified as ever at my unconventional status, that I intended to go ahead with the pregnancy. In any case, abortion was not only illegal in all states, but highly expensive … In 1949 it was social death to give birth outside matrimony; and especially so if one did willingly. (*Half* 256)
Judith emerges as a successful mother rearing her daughter in an open space on Tamborine Mountain (Fig.7), that stands as a paradise of primitivism, a source of the unconscious, and the fountain of pure organic energy much like Aboriginal Dreamtime.

Fig. 7. Judith Wright with her daughter Meredith McKinney in the Tamborine rainforest outside their house called Quantum. Half A Lifetime ed. Patricia Clarke (Melbourne Victoria: The Text Publishing Company, 1999) 152.

The other house called Calanthe owned by Wright is named after a rare white orchid that is untamed and sublime:

I remember sitting at the foot of the back stair on one of those desirable tankstands. Surrounded by golden cassia flowers with two handsome large azalea bushes nearby, and wondering what we had done to deserve all this……the garden was almost impassable with kikuyu grass and tobacco bush seemed nothing compared with the riches we had found. (Half 274)
Thus what Wright is suggesting is that, the space of dwelling is not the place which is constructed by society that humanist geographers like David Harvey or Edward Casey has suggested. Wright believes that place is not a forcible reduction out of human practices nor it is a social construct determined by its materialism, rather it is a natural phenomenological world of dwelling where humanity finds its tap-root of memory and essence of living embedded in it.

The final area of discussion in relation to Wright’s autobiography is the emanation of the feminine rhetoric as a means to articulate the silent ‘she’ residing for centuries. The women of the last four generations of Wright’s family cannot see themselves beyond the Penelopian role of a faithful wife whose history is manipulated, violated, denied and therefore has remained unwoven. Wright satirises this ‘closure’: “the private life of a woman leaves less trace than the silver trail of a slug which dries and blows away.” (Half 290) Of all human accomplishments, Sigmund Freud has granted women only the art of weaving as a devise to conceal their ‘lack’. In contrast, Wright’s autobiography is that feminine space where she indulges in pursuing the elusive voices of the antecedent women and finally releasing those forgotten repressed selves of her mother, grandmother, aunt who stand in a shimmering past without any substance. This space is personified by the artist’s room in her house at Tamborine Mountain where the pen, the desk, the land outside and the poet’s moments of creative frenzy have dissolved into thousands of molecules and atoms to form a space enmeshed with her essence, hence it is beyond the representation of cartography. Her autobiography is therefore a space of resistance, defiance and accommodation of all those lost voices as Cixous explains: “we extend ourselves without ever reaching an end; we never hold back our thoughts, our signs, our writing; and we’re not afraid of lacking” 25. Unlike her forefathers, Wright does not want to shape history but she has created the space of ‘alterity’
and empowerment just the way Cixous suggested: “woman must write woman” 26. In the poem ‘Eve To Her Daughters’ she writes:

But you are my daughters, you inherit my own faults

of character;

you are submissive, following Adam

even beyond existence. (A Human 135)

Wright in her autobiography has overthrown submission, exonerated libidinal energy in the form of continuous transgression of one self into another without any infiltration by the ‘other.’ The phallocentric diaries of her forefathers have never permitted women to enter into the imperial archive with self-expressive power. Judith Wright, being the first woman from her family, grounds a diverse conception of Australianness through the evocation of a space with a sense of belonging. This space unravels so many untold emotions and nostalgia reflected in her pondering: “‘I’ is endless, a procession beginning—how far back?” (Half 291) For though her mother lived only for the first eleven years of her life, yet she cannot forget her essence left in the scrapbook where she has treasured all the collages of poetry and letters of her daughter that are being published in *Sydney Mail*’s Children’s Page addressed to the editor named ‘Cinderella’. This immense dream house is not merely memory preserved as the lost love but it is the geometry of her inchoate desires whose trail cannot be found in the diaries of her father. Her autobiography is that space of strength drawn from the suffering women before her, proclaiming the potential energy and the real symbolic bondage between mother and daughter. This bondage is also re-visualised in the form of sisterhood between black and white women like Wright and Kath Walker. In this extreme tenuousness of intense dream, Wright provides that exclusive space where she pulsates the feminine world with innumerable selves of the woman— from confused innocent child, belligerent adolescent, combative youth fighting against a paramount of social obligations, to a daunting lover, an
adorable mother and a confident dreaming poet much suffered, much abandoned, and yet coming with a voice that:

touches you, the equivoice that affects you, fills your breasts with an urge to come to language and launches your force; the rhythm that laughs you; the intimate recipient who makes all metaphors possible and desirable

The poem selected for chapter twelve of *Half a Lifetime* called ‘Lake in Spring’ unsnarls multiple reflected selves in the water of the lake probing the poet to unknot between “but who is this, and who am I?” This lake of ‘waveless blue’ reflects that the several identities she has gathered are incessant, like her own fecund creative spirit:

A ripple goes across the glass.

The face break and blur and pass

as love and time are blurred together. (*Half 288*)

Wright’s autobiography is always a constant discourse in motion, never fixed with assertions, nor stipulated by time or ultimate proclamation. Such sporadic overflow in her autobiography outrages any closure in space and language. If the memoirs of her forefathers present the Australian land as an empty slate to be inscribed with imperial inscriptions, Wright’s autobiography presents the land as an archetypal memory that cannot be erased or over-written. The same uncanny country which has appeared to Albert Wright or George Wyndham as untamed, uncivilized, emerges in her autobiography as the harmonic lived space of dreams, the precipice of immense energy to human creativity. Being a discarded self at the fringes of history, she seeks to interrogate in her autobiography, the distortion of truth and fiction done by her race. The autobiographical space teases the white man’s ego buried in her forefather’s diary:

Yes, he got the centre

where nothing at all can be demonstrated.
And clearly he doesn’t exist; but he refuses
to accept the conclusion.
You see, he was always an egoist. (*Half 87*)

Wright never affirms that her autobiography is the only truthful enumeration but evokes it as
endless, uncertain and unpredictable.

‘I’ is a shimmering multiple and multitude, it seems. Those early memories
could have been written in a dozen different ways, even then, while now that
multitude has expanded in all directions. (*Half 289*)

In her hinterland of écriture féminine, Judith Wright is always detouring; her
autobiography is open ended, without any definite end just as Roland Barthe in his book
called *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes* writes:

*What I write about myself is never the last word: the more ‘sincere’ I am, the
more interpretable I am, under the eye of other examples than those of the old
authors who believed they were required to submit themselves to but one law:
authenticity.*

*Half a Lifetime* is an unending journey punctuated at several junctures by memories that
have remained embedded in darkness and in light. She is indefatigable in this journey while
her male predecessors who has once written their memoirs have fallen asleep under the
rubrics of colonial history. Wright’s autobiography as an amaranthine road is a home in
motion, a place of reverie, where she treasures all her memories, intimate emotions and her
identity. Places like Wallamumbi, Thargarrah, Wongwibinda, Kindon and Bukkula re-emerge
with a new dimension. They are not blank spaces to record the impression of colonial
despotism but appear as cultural repository. Wright’s autobiography is the ‘Thirdspace’
which according to Edward Soja is the lived space consisting of the ‘real’ and the ‘imagined’.
For Soja, ‘Firstspace’ is the colonial land of clearance, which is renamed and owned.
‘Secondspace’ is archival where the cultural and emotional relics survive. Wright’s narrative space moves from ‘Firstspace’ to ‘Secondspace’ and finally becomes the ‘Thirdspace’, which is fluid, unbounded and without any periphery. It is in this ‘Thirdspace’, she writes:

Even now, when the country has changed so sadly, and fifty years if absence should have dimmed it, I can take my horse in memory across those hills and valleys, with the Snowy Range closing off the horizon with blues and purples, and taste the water in the creeks we drank from. (Half’162)
NOTES


7. 'Lost Generation' or 'Stolen Generation' refers to partly Aboriginal children who are segregated at a very early age from their mothers and families. It is done in a scrupulous legislative manner so that unlimited guardianship is granted to the Aboriginal protectors while the original parents have no right to claim their children. Although the process started around 1940 but the original act has been continuing long before. The fear of the extinction of pure Aboriginal blood resulted in this process. Most of these children are mixed descent born out of Aboriginal mother and white father. The black women in their sexual encounter with white men whether being exploited or forced, give birth to these ‘mixed blood’ children whom the nation is afraid to confront. They are variously named as half-caste, crossbreeds or quadroons. Australian prime minister Kevin Rudd apologized in 2008 in the parliament saying "We apologize for the laws and policies of successive
parliaments and governments that have inflicted profound grief, suffering and loss on these our fellow Australians," and he further added "For the pain, suffering and hurt of these Stolen Generations, their descendants and for their families left behind, we say sorry," For details see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stolen_Generations


16. Dora Falconer, whose pseudo name is Louisa Lawson, mother of Henry Lawson, has been the famous feminist journalist, poet and the editor of the first feminist journal called *Dawn* published in 1888. The journal is concerned absolutely with issues related to women and their position in domestic world, her predicaments and trauma. It is through *Dawn*, she launched her campaign for female suffrage. For


19. This term is suggested by Hille Koskela in the essay “‘The gaze without eyes’: video surveillance and the changing nature of urban space” 24:2 *Progress in Human Geography* (2000) 243-65.


27. Cixous Signs 882.

28. The term écriture feminine is first used by Hélène Cixous in her essay “The Laugh of the Medusa”. By this term, she wants to denote gendered women’s writings. This term is then used to promote women’s experiences and feelings absolutely written from their point of view.
