CHAPTER TWO

RESTORATION OF LOST SPACES IN JUDITH WRIGHT’S POETRY

The first chapter has delineated the various discourses on space from varied disciplines to conjure the spectrum of Wright’s observation of Australian space. Wright has left the glamorous domain of poetry long time back and she has always wanted to protect Australia silently. True to her rebellious nature and emotional attachment with the land, her world of poetry shows the interpretative spatial journey from summer to winter, from outside to inside, from light to darkness, from land to habitat, from youth to old age, from the journey of life to the journey into poetry including the antinomies of hope, love, intimacy, identity, birth, death and rebirth.

In Carmel Bird’s novel Cape Grimm, there is a depiction of the painful tormented land of Australia where the character Paul, challenges history and its role in the sorrow of the land: “When people can listen with the heart of dreams and poetry, then they will know its truth.” What Paul is referring to is the cathartic and spiritual power of poetry which unmasks the truth from the charades of history. Judith Wright’s epiphany in the course of spatial detour blurs the all-pervasive historical anxiety of legitimacy and illegitimacy. She emerges as a visionary poet who believes “song still lingers over destitute land. The singer’s word still keeps to the trace of the holy.” The process of Wright’s transgression as a rekindled poetic soul from the claustrophobic imperial ‘placelessness’ to the topophilic sense of ‘being’ is more prominent in her prose works after she discovers the truth in the diaries and records of the forefathers. Her world of poetry reveals a philosophical Wright who, through her poetic imagination tries to feel the essence of archaic Australia.

Wright has observed that the Eurocentric concept of landscape is like a painter’s perspective where the land is framed as an object of intentionality of the ‘gaze’, external to
the self. This concept of landscape is at odd with alternative ways of viewing the land especially for a person like Wright, who has been induced from her childhood into the land. Unlike the settlers with their 'selective vision', Wright's wondering passion for the land as the archetype of cultural memory makes her enter into the consciousness of the land through her poetic sojourn. In her essay “Patrick White And The Story Of Australia” she writes about this Spatial History as the only means to revive the long buried dream tracks and a culture that has remained in oblivion:

These hills and plains, these rivers and plants and animals were what I had to work with as a writer, and they themselves contain the hidden depths of a past beyond anything that cities and the history of British invasion had to offer.

(Going on Talking 51)

The more Wright is alienated, the more desperate she has become for an alternate way to unleash the truth about her predatory race who ostensibly has evacuated the natives from their land by genocide. Gig Ryan comments:

There is a fundamental conflict within Wright’s work between the possessiveness of love and the recognition of prior claims. That is, if nature is the impetus for her work, and if language creates meaning and thus ‘fusion’, then the land she conceives in her poetry should by her effort be hers; yet she knows this is not historically the case, and that no amount of art or love can claim ‘her’ land for herself. 4

In her magnanimous collection of eleven volumes of poetry beginning with The Moving Image, Woman to Man, The Gateway, The Two Fires, Birds, The Forest, The Other Half, Shadow, Alive, Fourth Quarter and the last of all Phantom Dwelling, we get a bounteous collection of poems written at different periods from youth to middle age, giving us glimpse of ‘space’ in its manifold meanings and configurations. This spatial dimension invokes
extensive space of the Aboriginal bush land that cannot be captured by the cartography of the explorers. Her poetry glosses over the postlapsarian paradise, pre-metropolis, primeval continuity, preternaturally alive and fresh world of her 'dwelling' and her integral self, that preoccupies the microcosmic region of battle, strife, love, hate and resurrection within the macrocosmic space of the nation. Her vivid and overwhelming phenomenological understanding of the Australian space in the poetic hinterland creates an uncluttered communion with the past. Ironically while for the first generation, the land is an object of awe, for Wright it is a relapse of time allowing a free play of her imagination.

The interplay of possession and dispossession of the space is a recurrent topoi in Australian colonial and postcolonial literature. For Judith Wright it is more traumatic because of her guilt conscience of the past generation has not repelled her from the land unlike the other Anglo Australian writers who oscillated between claustrophobia and agoraphobia. By the time she is fully aware of the measureless labyrinth of guilt, Wright has harnessed a topophilic transgression from the unknown space into the 'intensified' place of association. Wright realizes that repentance is not enough and surges for phenomenological observations. Wright's spatial peregrination is an attempt to move from the margin to the center of the throbbing culture that the explorers hardly ventured in. This process of peregrination is well defined by Edward Relph who comments that to

...come to know the individuality of a landscape through careful seeing and reflection is a considerable achievement: but to identify the broader principles implied in the landscape requires ..... an effort of imagination that makes it possible to grasp the whole nature of something of which we know only a fragment.5

How has Wright traversed back into the ancient world of the Aborigines without being influenced by the conventions of Imperial History? She has applied a meditative means
through the ‘parabolic vision’ of a poet that ‘runs beside or beyond the world of everyday’. (Because I Was Invited 1) This is what Gaston Bachelard describes as pure phenomenology that indulges in the poetic immensity through the meditative contemplation of the poet from the immediate context to a world that “bears the mark of infinity.” It suggests an alternate reading of history, deliberately escaping the already paved path. Phenomenological study refers to an immediate understanding of phenomena as it appears—the sudden salience without being tainted by Imperial History. The art of poetry is the best means to capture this sudden spark of meanings of phenomena. Through this phenomenology ‘space’ in Wright’s poetics, extends beyond the Imperial History into the penultimate state of ‘being’—an imperishable union of the self with the surrounding that reflects the dreaming consciousness.

The settlers when first arrived in Australia, they have ignored the spatial epistemology of the land and reorganized it under the shadow of England. In Wright’s poetry the natal landscape sometimes appears to be colorful and apocalyptic, as in “Bullocky”, sometimes imperceptibly humanized, sometimes endowed with some extravagant power, sometimes it provides the enclosing place to hide from the strife of the world as we find in “Hawthorn Hedge” where inspite of the domestic world, the hedge provides the woman an abode to hide from the world of harshness. For A.D Hope the poem “Bullocky” may appear to be a celebration of the heroism of the settlers which unfortunately is strongly detested by Wright since Jenniffer Struass has explained how the poem turns to be intolerable to Wright when she has found it as the endorsement of the guilt among the readers. The poem captures rather ironically the sensorial presence of pre-colonial Australia. What is most striking in Wright is her conviction and involvement with the plentitude of Australia as a place. In the poem “Eve to her Daughter”, Wright emerges as the revolutionary Eve who realizes the new role of not being a blind follower of Adam but to teach the next generation how to love the nation. Adam here functions as the paternal figure in the world of patriarchy, practicing imperial
surrogation with the determination to be the master of Eve as well as of the new land: “Where Adam went I was fairly contented to go./ I adapted myself to the punishment.” (A Human Pattern 134)

Adam is dissatisfied because he searches for an Eden which is the metaphor of England. Adam too is determined to set a ‘New Eden’ with all the western implementations like ‘mechanical harvesters’, ‘combustion engines’, ‘escalators’ and ‘refrigerators’. Eve loves the native world of ancient culture that actively refuses demarcation. Cartography is an authoritative representation of space based on the assumptions and preferences of the representative body. Judith Wright attempts to interrogate those fissures as partitions concealed beneath a veneer of representational verity. She visualizes space as continuous cultural moorings of its inhabitants and interconnects the apparently disconnected junctures through cultural distinctiveness. This open space that Wright desires for, is the space of true democracy--- boundless and limitless much like Edmund Husserl’s ‘horizon’, a key concept in phenomenology developed in his Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology (1913) that refers to the circumference in which all things, real and imaginary, are bound to appear spread out in space, and in time becoming and become, without end. In Husserl’s phenomenology the horizon is the principle by which both meanings and its open possibilities appear to us. While the ‘boundary’ remains central to western epistemology, it is the ‘horizon’ with its merging of location and possibility that offers itself as the most productive principle of postcolonial subjectivity. In the poem “River Bend” we find Australian space as ‘horizontal’ reflected in the land with a deep sense of intimacy of a place. The immense texturology of the primal scene of riverine emerges as a place of intense history. Wright’s dark sludge of memories at the river bend is a disquisition that unravels the callousness of the settlers. This morbid reflection on the Australian space reveals the nexus of belonging and
unbelonging. The bend in the river is a curve that refers to the absence in space of what has been eroded.

The boundless and limitless space can also be seen in the form of cultural discourse in Wright’s poetry. In the poem “Smalltown Dance” the secret, furtive indulgence of the two aboriginal domestic hands assumes the stature of a spatial opera of historical effect and affect. Bachelard explains how the regress into a cupboard is a relapse into the daydream of history; similarly Wright also indulges in such regression. The daydream of a shared native dance “fitting in the smallest space” (A Human 219) becomes the gesture of freedom. The tragic fact remains that the absence presence of the dance creates the desired space as the bedrock of the surviving culture:

.......................................................................Fold

those beckoning roads to some impossible world,

put them away and close the cupboard door. (A Human 219)

The phenomenology of dwelling is pervasive in Wright’s poetry. Whether it is the antipodean landscape of desiccated specter of the natives or it is the flora and the fauna, all of them are an extension of the Aboriginal way of living. For Paul Carter “architecture of migration is the phenomenon of privatization.” 8 Unlike the western concept of space, which is static and fixed, the Aborigines dwell all over, shifting randomly without any definite pattern. What is significant in this evocation of the pre-colonial space of Australia is that, Wright has abandoned the linear logic of time. In the section “Rock” of the poem “Notes At Edge”, Wright has etched the axis of her desire to find the turf of discursive freedom. This imaginative archaeology of space is the ‘no-where’ of time. A spatial figuration is found in the act of picking up a rock. The rock allows her to enter into the burrow of art, free from the depredations of history where the lost archives of memories remain buried despite enduring the tides’ long durée. 9
In the limitations of geometrical space, the land as 'terrae incognitae' may undergo distortion, adaptation, accommodation and improvisation under the traumatic effects of colonization, but the primary essence still linger with the aboriginal’s sense of belonging. These phenomena that range from the various trees, birds, animals evoke the cultural geography of the superabundant space affecting Wright to penetrate deep into the psychological realm of the land. In the 1998 Boyer Lecture, “The Making of Australian Consciousness”, her contemporary writer David Malouf claims that Wright makes an incredible contribution in shaping the national consciousness of Australia:

She points out that ‘except for the wattle...there is very little mention of trees, flowers and birds by name or by recognizable description in Australian verse during the nineteenth or early twentieth century.’ This is not because they were not there in the landscape, to be seen and appreciated, but because there were as yet no place for them in the world of verse. The associations had not yet been found that would allow them entry there. Currawong and bangsia carried no charge of emotion like ‘nightingale’ or ‘rose’.

A series of Wright’s poetry are replete with local trees and flowers that initiate a catalytic interaction between the space and its phenomena. In a poem like “Flame-tree in a Quarry”, the flame tree is the spatial metaphor of the imperishable joy of life despite the several wounds inflicted on the earth’s bosom. The flaming colour is an illumination of the place itself:

Out of the very wound
springs up this scarlet breath—
this fountain of hot joy,
this living ghost of death. (A Human 37)
For Wright, the ‘Flame Tree’ with profusion of brightness is that spatial configuration that withholds the geological history of the land. The coral petals with their vivid density looking upward at the sky reveal the gesture of freedom and the continuous process of ‘being’. Wright’s delineation of that entire occluded space with human embodiment like the ‘broken bone of the hill’, ‘wrecked skull’, ‘bush of blood’, ‘the torn earth’s mouth’ not merely unravel the dark laden history of imperialism but more importantly, she evokes the Heideggarian sense of ‘grounding’ of the natives within each mouldering component of the space. This is explained by Gaston Bachelard who believes that “through the brilliance of an image, the distant past resounds with echoes.” 12 In her presentation of trees and plants, Wright uses the vortex of organic root as phenomenological antenna that allows her to enter the igneous and secret heart of the land’s being. Wright’s use of trees outlines a discursive natural archaeology of fond reflection. Besides, her exfoliation of native Australia’s botanical gardens suggests an Australian essence all over the space.

“The Garden” is one such poem significant for its eternal fecundity and lushness. In the poem, though the black Aboriginal woman as the old Eve is replaced by the new Eve, yet the garden neglects the imperial ordering of nature. Wright’s poetry reflects that space is not ‘a priori’ where the settlers inscribe meanings with their intentions. The poem “Wonga Vine” essentially depicts the ‘lived space’ where the vigorous and stunning climbers of New South Wales (Victoria) are vivacious with energy and growth. The flowers with its chromatic band of colours like red, yellow and white have bloomed spontaneously everywhere like Wright’s own poetic movement across the pages, unbounded and untamed evoking a topophilic approach to the space of dwelling. This Wonga flower is the poet’s ‘white waterfall’, withholding the spontaneous rhythm of living, the rhythm that holds the sensitivity of dwelling. This flower creates osmosis between the interior space of the self and the exterior space of dwelling as she tells the flower: “Lie on my eyes like hands”. (A Human 36) This
unforgettable intimacy evokes the ‘enclosed space’ of happiness and warmth unlike her colonial enclosed space of domesticity where enclosure refers to surveillance. When she directs the Wonga Vine to move to the ‘hidden pool’, her sensitive observation unlike the explorers’ gaze is referring to that secret spatial intimacy where memory is sedimented with an affective bondage. This ‘hidden pool’ is the place of synthesis and complete union between the subject and the object.

For Wright the Aboriginal cosmography that primarily consists of the entire space is not abstract but it is a space of mutual relations between the living world and the spiritual world. The “Cicadas” is another poem where Wright concentrates on the microscopic beauty in the Australian flower that explains how fecund ‘silence’ fills the spatial dimension of the Aboriginal land. Blaise Pascal’s dreadful feeling of eternal silence of the infinite space as he explains “The eternal silence of this infinite space frightens me” is foreign over here. Wright finds an origin of the ‘place’ in the ‘space’ where irrespective of past and future, it ventures into the pre-linguistic state, ‘crouched alone and dumb’ in ‘the humble dark’ of the ‘world below the world’. (A Human 29) The cicadas are wrenched out of their slumber and hardly aware of the imperial world, but they are holding a primal embedded relationship with the earth. The cicadas will never die because they are in continuous flux of regeneration. The poem takes us back to the primordial time of molten geology and biology that resonates the place with the sense of ‘dwelling’. For Bachelard the power of phenomenology is so strong that “it can transform a man of the hills into a man of islands and rivers”. For Wright the phenomenological reflection of space makes her inter-subjective to that space where she develops an unconscious association, addressing the insects personally as ‘brothers’, and commanding them ‘Sing now’. Earlier the theorists have emphasized the predominance of time over space; Wright shows that this place is independent of cosmic time because the past merges with the present eternally. Wright thus deconstructs the imperialist attempt to impose
the element of amnesia on the space. This space is not abstract or absolute as the western theoreticians like Newton has attempted to envisage, anticipating Enlightenment of the colonial space or the tabula rasa.

In the poem “Gum-tree Stripping”, the ritualistic form of stripping the gum tree evokes the idea that the tree itself entails the mysterious space that contains the life force. This is the cultural space of the Aboriginal world. The tree itself is a house of thought, an accumulative space with its cultural figments. The way it can be “split down and strip to end the season” (A Human 75) reflects that this space is forever filled with pace unperturbed by the world. The morphology of the trees and plants reflect the metaphysical anchorage of the community in the place. Wright often indulges in the geographical decoding of places. Wright’s favourite tree is the Eucalypt for its strength and flawless artistry. In the poem “The Eucalypt and The National Character”, Wright singles out the Eucalypt for its special commendation as the arch orchestrator of the utopian symphony of space. Here, Australian memories as history encompass a space in this poem. The unending pain and tortuous suffering of a past national life might be exorcised by adhering to the example set by the Eucalypt. Its growth and thriving preaches the white Australians how space becomes place through dwelling and not through an act of annexation and cultural annulment by force. Like the Eucalyptus, the Flame tree also becomes the treasure house of ‘dwelling’, teaching Wright the corporeal engagement between self and the inhabited space. She asks the tree about the art of living: “How to live, I said, as the flame-tree lives?” and shows her gratitude to the tree for being her preacher: “How shall I thank you, who teach me how to wait/ in quietness for the hour to ask or give”. (A Human 57)

Wright shows this living space is limitless, extensive and cannot be measured. In “Camphor Laurel” this space extends beyond optical or auditory sensation,

Under the house the roots go deep,
Down, down, while the sleepers sleep;
Splitting the rock where the house is set,
Cracking the paved and broken street (A Human 25)

The act of breaking the paved street is a symbolical representation of the fact that concretization does not necessarily mean fixity. This is the acoustic space of opposition between the inadequacy of the settlers who want to tame the space with buildings and streets and the simple but eternal life of the camphor laurel tree that “breathes honey and moonlight”. These trees encompass vertical spaces that stand for stability and endurance. The cooling shadow they provide creates the essence of a place. They externalize depth and attachment, rootedness and antiquity. Another essential aspect of Wright is that she has invoked the image of bud in many poems like “The Cedars”, “The Forest Path”, “Metamorphosis” and “Orange Tree” where the bud holds that mysterious space of the future to be unfolded. Its spatial dimension encapsulates the unspoken design that will shape future. This space presages a new agreement and is the harbinger of renewed energy and love.

Not only the trees and plants, but also the other living souls of the land in Wright’s poetry reflect the tradition of living the life of the land evoking the space as a place. Wright’s ‘trapped dingo’ in the poem “Trapped Dingo” ushers in the natural Aboriginal primeval space. Among the antipodean writers the dingo has always been the epitome of promiscuousness and cunningness. In 1850s due to the rise of the economic farming wealth, the colonial Australia indulged in trapping dingoes leading to their extinction. The explorers have commented how the dingo has been the metaphor of deceitfulness. Wright’s poem “Trapped Dingo” is on this king of Australian bush where the ‘twisted steel’ of the cage symbolizes the claustrophobic space that the settlers attempted to impose by territorializing space within the circumference of the cage. Wright here invokes the process of ‘auscultation’—a medical methodology used to listen to the interior space of the body with a
stethoscope. In a similar way, Wright’s poetic auscultation follows the spatial trajectories in the crying of the ‘trapped dingo’ and hears “voices from the hills and the river drunken with rain.” *(A Human 3)* Similarly Wright’s deep dive into the spatial configuration of the “shinning eyes of the lion” makes her discover “crystal glance of love”. *(A Human 53)* This same aspect can be seen in the poem “Eyes” that reflects on the spatio-temporal ephemeral world. It reveals Wright’s effort to connect the senses of ‘being’ to a transitive field of action. According to Heidegger ‘rootedness’ involves commitment which he has termed as ‘sparing’—meaning letting things as they are with their essence, the voluntary topophilic willingness to leave the place as it is. In “The Killer” Wright describes the vivifying process of killing the snake as a way of interrupting Australian bush life that stands apart without disturbing the world. The settlers are afraid of snakes and Wright therefore hints at the dilemma between primal instinct and sham morality of the civilized race so that at the end of the poem, more than the snake, the killer’s vivifying cruelty is the object of irony: “O beat him into the ground/ O strike him till he dies”—and she further adds “I struck again and again.” *(A Human 33)*

Her collection of poems called *Birds* exemplifies the new spatial dimension where the curious Australian birds with their varied colours, form the spatial matrix that blurs the territorial demarcation in cartography. In “Reminiscence” Wright describes such spatial dimension:

“*I was born into a coloured country;*

*spider-webs in dew on feathered grass,*

*mountains blue as wrens,*

*valleys cupping sky in like a cradle,*

*christmas-beetles winged with buzzing opal;*

*finches, robin, gang-gangs, pardalotes*
tossed the blossom in its red streaked trees.” (Birds 76)

Whether it is the Winter Kestrel, the Thornbills, Magpie, Butcher-Bird, Egrets, or the wild Currawong, quarrelling, chirping, crying, or the Swamp Pheasant who “runs to the fence and scrambles out” (Birds 18)—all of them communicate endlessly with the living space as they fly, glide, soar and dive crazy paths. It is the same journey that Paul Carter has described about the Aborigines who have moved through the inconvenient rugged mountain paths much like the birds’ zigzag journey. They inhabit a pre-linguistic space of optimism, simplicity and wilderness. In the poem “Peacock”, the bird holds an interior space that cannot be destroyed although it is captured in the dirty cage: “How pure the hidden spring must rise/ that time and custom cannot stain!” In that Australian peacock, Wright shows Eros and Thanatos as renewal and transcendence coexisting in the body of the bird:

And yet the Peacock shines alone;
and if one metal feather fall
Another grows where that was grown.
Love clothes him still, inspite of all. (Birds 18)

The poem “Seasonal Flocking” shows the extensive space of the birds where dwelling does not include any proprietorship. The phenomenological reverberation of the birds can be traced from “the mountains/ and the snowcloud”, from “the road to town”, till “they are hidden under summer-forgotten gravestones”. (Birds 78) With their mysterious survival mode, the birds do not need maps and cartography; they fly in the invisible routes and yet never get lost much like the Aborigines. Their amazing directionality and an alternate eye to imperialist ‘gaze’ beholds a space of limitlessness where they dive unbounded. One such evocative spirit of the cultural space of Australia is found when “The small blue Arab stallion dances on the hills”, (A Human 3) reminiscent of the corroboree of the Aborigines. The reference to James Clifford’s discourse of ‘traveling culture’ discussed in the previous
chapter is significant here where the cultural chronotope is characterized by transience and mobility in contrast to the panoptic space marked by boundaries. This space is in the continuous process of becoming. Like these birds who exemplify the traveling culture, whose movement in the space is full of freedom, Wright realizes that restoration of the past is not treading the land more firmly but it means releasing language like free movement. Wright’s poetry is strolling metaphorically through shadowy tangles of the space where pre-history is embedded in measureless caverns and gorges. The birds much like the Aborigines invoke the pattern of a perfect ‘place-ballet’ where dwelling is not in fixity but in motion—grounded and yet moving. Wright’s indefatigable poetic journey is much like the Australian birds, carefree of the stigma of anonymity, moving fluently through the limitless promenades of silence. For Bachelard, the birds’ nest is the space of primitiveness, perching of dreams and yet a place hidden from modern architectural space. It mocks with its simplicity the complex architectural design of a cityscape. This space is the natural abode built from the body with its warmth and intimacy without any modern implementation.

In the poem “Birds” Wright desires to be like birds who are devoid of greediness unlike the settlers: “all are what bird is and do not reach beyond bird”. For the birds, the land as the dwelling space provides provision but she is intrigued by the birds’ struggle for freedom: “my heart is the house where they gather and fight for dominion—”. Like the birds, Wright’s dauntless soul desires for the unseen path to unite herself with the boundless forest of intimacy:

If I could leave their battleground for the forest of a bird
I could melt the past, the present and the future in one
and find the words that lie behind all these languages.
Then I could fuse my passions into one clear stone
And be simple to myself as the bird is to the bird. (A Human 52)
The desire to be like the bird is because of the memory of white Australian guilt and the awareness that the land that belongs to her and yet not to her. This is captured wonderfully in the phantasmagoric curve of the benighted flight through the dark forest, signifying the limbo of history which the poet’s subjectivity desperately tries to refashion:

Till from those centuries I wake,

naked and howling, still unmade,

within the forests of my heart

my dangerous kinsman runs afraid. (A Human 114)

The beauty of this journey lies in its incompleteness. In its very figuration a violent opposition to the cogito of the Eurocentric mind, is at work. The metaphor of a journey is here rendered as bereft of all purpose and objective. This journey takes her to an enhanced perception of the space beyond the one-dimensional Cartesian line of reason. It ventures into those heterotopic places where imperialism has failed in its conquest.

How is Wright guided in her poetic journey to venture into those heterotopias? She turns the land into an imaginative haunting space and adopts the strategy of phenomenology of ‘dwelling’. Wright continues in her search for those difficult spaces through her meditation on poetic intensity which is the outcome of interiorisation of the self and the space. In “The Beach at Hokitika”, Wright indulges in a promontory walk, memorialized in poetry to characterize the quality of being spatial. The discourse of nationhood becomes one of the geographical alterity that drags Wright from the alienness of the New Zealand coastline towards the greater alienness of Australia. She marks space as a tourist place in New Zealand, a rebel in Australia, and as an interdict in the Old Country. The Beach here is the horizontal exposed space where man is excoriated by the brilliance of the sun.

Wright’s motiveless spatial journey indulges in dream, an essential element of transcendence. Dream or daydream is an essential medium for phenomenological reflection.
The retreat into the pre-colonial world does not need to follow a thread of narrative of the Imperial History. Bachelard has referred to water as the origin of dream because of the imaginative resonance that water holds and for its elemental necessity. Interestingly in “Half Dream” Judith Wright plays with the lapping music of phantasmic waves as it opens up an uncanny dimension for poetic sauntering. Here dwelling on the echo creates an effect of the evanescence of a place. It is as though the consciousness is in its crevice of walking. Slumber has gone walking about like an Aboriginal, who follows the dream-track and the song lines.

Half dreaming half awake

I felt the old boat rock at the lake shore;
small pulse of waves in the moon-road
slop, lip, withdraw; (A Human 190)

The boat is the space in motion providing a rhythmic pattern to the dream journey. In the poem “Dream”, Wright further makes a lonely crossing through the wilderness of the unconscious where the journey is like personified time moving through spectral space. In the broken landscape of the psyche, history lies in the deep ravines waiting to ambush. The poem uses the myth surrounding the 1839 shipwreck of the Stirling Castle at the coast of Queensland when the captain’s wife, Eliza Fraser is marooned on the Fraser Island and is being held captive by the Aborigines. Wright uses the dream allegory analogous to self-reflexive meditation, to delve into the limbo of national history where the Imperial British nightmare is reflected in the landscape and the seascape. Wright uses the memory of Eliza Fraser incident to critique colonial stereotypes of Aborigines raping innocent white women. Wright’s heterotopic journey deconstructs the hegemonic tropes of imperial cartography. She metamorphoses herself among the phenomena of the space and among the ghosts of Australia’s collective past. In “Carnarvon Range”, the history of cultural dismembering is carefully sutured by poetics of habitation and aesthetics of topophilia. She takes only an
orchid and a fish thus signaling towards an Aboriginal way of peaceful coexistence with nature. The delineation of space in this poem is a protest against the reductive strategies of pillage and usurpation. Here space is ethical tenure; a long promise of time. Wright’s powerful poetic rendition of the landscape’s phenomena challenges us to read the phenomenal signatures:

I will sing for you –
each phrase
the size of a stone –
a red stone,
a white stone,
a grey,
and a purple; (A Human 76.)

Heterotopias are not merely fixed places but can be in constant motion like a floating piece of place in movement. Like Foucault’s reference to boats and ships, the train in the poem “The Train” is a moving heterotopia which is the repository of the horror of war. The whistle of the train reverberates the pent up history of war. In the same poem, Wright draws in the image of the tiger as an Asian threat to the White settlers. The train that pervades through the dales and the hills is the disquieting threat of Japanese invasion to the Australian social consciousness. It also juxtaposes several heterogeneous spaces of consciousness and belonging of the original inhabitants. The Japanese legend says that the tiger roams over a thousand miles on its hunt but will return home safely. Wright counters the Japanese imperial desire for spatial extension. The spatial image of a train is once more evoked in the poem “In The Railcar”. The railcar becomes the epitome of panoptic power, a module of imprisonment that makes possible the production of an order and discipline in the western context of ‘civilization’ regulated in the spatial grid of the rail track. At the same time this railcar is the
space in transition that precludes stopping. The land is described from the conventional white
gaze as ravaged and lacking fecundity. The motif of an insurgent meteorology and
inhospitable habitus is the spatial rendition of the lack of a European dwelling. The more she
journeys into the limitless spatial abyss; she realizes that space is infinite.

My search is further.

There’s still to name and know
beyond the flowers I gather
that one that does not wither—
the truth from which they grow. (A Human 104)

Foucault in discussing heterotopia has exemplified how the prison is a classic example of
crash and Wright’s poem “The Old Prison”, reveals how the prison is an abode of the
convicts reflecting both types of heterotopia—heterotopia of crisis and heterotopia of
development. The poem refers to the ruin at Trial Bay where the construction of the prison
started in 1879. More than five hundred prisoners are held there and the prison has been
closed during First World War. What are left now are the ruined shells as the token of the
savage war. In this poem, Wright renders an axial private space. Like Foucault’s concept of
heterotopia, Wright’s prison is more than a space of confinement where the logic of place is
characterized by strictures placed on bodily movement. Instead, it is a space of liberty
allowing an easy associative escape to socio-historical perspectives. The convicts here
indulge in spatial fantasies that give rise to an alternate history and unofficial stories. Paul
Carter throws a new focus about this alternate history of the convicts. These convicts have
escaped not through concretized western roads but through Aboriginal tracks which Carter
calls as a “gap suggesting escape, a promise of direction.” 17 Carter further explains how the

.....relegation of convict tales to the realm of myth is itself based on a mythic
notion of history where space is passive, where events unfolded according to
the logic of cause and effect. The passivity or emptiness is a sign of reason, a
device for concealing those spatial uncertainties which no rational plan of
action could wholly foresee or neutralize.\(^{18}\)

Further the tension between private and public that Foucault emphasizes comes over here.
Between the elemental diatribe of the sea and the land on the one hand, and the elided
histories of the penal denizens on the other, the poem reconfigures how the prisoners in that
prison can be ‘out of place’ and yet within the place. It is out of place because the prison
separates the convicts from the society. However, the prison offers secret escape routes to the
convicts allowing them to intermingle with society that in the first place has banished them.
For Wright it is the personification of the transgression.

Wright’s sense of dislocation in such heterotopia can be seen in the poem “At Cooloola”.
The limnological aspect of the poem reveals that the lake Cooloola is the repository of spatial
history. Cooloola withholds the dialectic of the unperturbed pre-colonial Australian space.
The lake here is the reflection of cosmic narcissism, it is the landscape’s most expressive
feature like an eye where Wright measures the depth and the truth about herself and her
buried past. It is a confrontation with the ‘uncanny’ that abandons and overwhelms all
boundaries. Within this invisible space, the pensive lake holds motionless memory where
Wright’s venturing is an attempt to penetrate into the unconscious of the space. This vital
space is induced with some spiritual power while the ghost from the past has engrossed the
land discarding the settlers’ history as a troubled memory. The ‘white shores of sand’ is the
trajectory of the poetic space where Wright feels: “walking on clean sands among the prints/
of bird and animal, I am challenged by a driftwood spear”. (A Human 83.) There is an
unspoken cosmological theme of attachment and detachment in the poem. This vast and
boundless space engulfs her into its psychological threshold while “the invader’s feet will
tangle/ in nets and his blood be thinned by fear.” (A Human 83.)
Another cultural archive of heterotopias can be seen in the poem “Bora Ring” where the Bora ring is an accretion of feeling that indulges in the digging of the collective memories where “the apple-gums/ posture and mime a past corroboree”. (A Human 2.) This is the phenomena that exist and yet not exist—“a litany of absence that are somehow more potent than any presence could have been.” 19 The liminal space marked by the bora ring not merely correlates the lives once lived, but this microcosmic space is a reflection of the macrocosmic space of indigenous Australia. The ceremonial ring with its spatial design has permanently transformed the space into a place. It evokes “sightless shadow” and unsaid word, the “unseen presence” as Veronica Brady has explained how this place has tormented Wright “as a kind of a melancholy longing for a vanished space, a grief for a lost country, a lost paradise”20. The apple-gum tree that reflects the corroboree is the phenomenological evidence that shows how culture involves an incorporation of the subjectivity and spatiality. This is what Bachelard also referred to as the recuperation of space from the Euclidean geometry. What Bachelard celebrates as poetic discourse in the intimacy of space, Wright practically performs in her poetic sojourn inundated by phenomenological significance of the Australian subjects.

In another poem called “Eroded Hills”, Wright ventures into those heterotopic spaces that are not merely eroded by the explorers like her grandfather, but Wright comes out of herself through a process of self-erosion and erosion of time, enduring and feeling more than the life of the replanted trees. This space of erosion is the direct confrontation of Wright with the pseudo-history of imperialism where the explorers are apotheosized. What is significant is Wright’s attempt to evoke the Aboriginal way of living on the land, manifested in their art of body paintings. This appropriation of bodily metaphor in depicting the landscape and its intersection with the mindscape of cultural guilt is vivid in the poem:

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

they crouch like shoulders naked and whipped –
humble, abandoned, out of mind. (*A Human* 49.)

Unlike the enclosure of imperial space where one requires gratification and permission for an entry, this invisible road of imagination brings her into unending intimacy. Bachelard writes: “One of the charms of the phenomenology of the poetic imagination is to be able to experience a fresh nuance in the presence of a spectacle that calls for uniformity.” (*A Human* 204) In “Nigger’s Leap: New England”, Wright experiences this fresh nuance through the intimate space of the night “that floods” “suddenly as history”. (*A Human* 8.) This night that extends over the bay, range and sea has become an extension of infinite space. This darkness of the nocturnal space scared the settlers, but for the individualists like Wright, who has dared to walk lovingly on the perilous shore of the unconscious, it is pregnant with macabre memory. Veronica Brady writes that the story of genocide for others would make them “shuffle back into a violent and miserable past”, but for Wright, “that dark cliff head with the depth of shadows below it in the gulfs, is still a potent place”.21 Wright’s lacerating question still haunts us: “Did we not know their blood channeled our rivers,/ and the black dust our crops ate was their dust?” (*A Human* 8.)

Heterotopia exists as counter site to utopia. For the settler this utopian Australia is seen through the cartographic eye and fantasy of power as Wright captures in “Canberra: City and Mirage”. Walter Barley Griffin, the American architect and landscape designer who has won the commission to design Australia’s capital in 1913, becomes a ghostly presence in the poem. In this poem Wright talks about the dream about the terra nullius and the trajectory of national reconstruction that runs counter to it. The utopian Australia at Griffin’s elfin fingering “with his gaze” for “arena, amphitheatre, gallery/....of quivering marble” (*A Human* 193) is attempted at the cost of distorting the contours of heterotopic bush. This
reductive and reactionary national heritage site is seen by Wright, as a forcible bow towards the whims of maverick South Australian politician King O’Malley, ‘the bald eagle’. Griffin’s reference in the poem is significant because although Griffin has initially made the plans in 1921, he has become disenchanted with his Australian employers and ultimately left. Griffin’s design has been altered at the end. In his book *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Michel De Certeau sees this ordering of the urban space and the city’s well planned arcades tactically confusing. What De Certeau has diagnosed as repressed truth is also detected by Wright in the apparent modernized buildings and architect. Wright is thus spatially defying the discursive strictures of the imperialists’ utopia. Griffin has left legacy of a particular dream of the intended city: a surreal non-place. Judith Wright tries to enter that dreamscape, the thought holes of memory and disciplinary training where the settlers’ mind is tossed in the infinite space of limitlessness and in the regularized refuge of architectural fortification. The “Fantasies of Power” that Wright reflects in the poem is the hegemonic field of visibility and surveillance. Heidegger believes that ‘inauthenticity’ or ‘placelessness’ is the outcome of dictatorship and manipulation. Wright is also aware that “Cities are made of man” as Susan Langer writes in *Feeling and Farm*:

….a ‘place’ articulated by the imprint of human life must seem organic, like a living form…. The place which a house occupies on the face of the earth, that is to say its location in actual space, remains the same place if the house burns up or is wrecked and removed. But the place created by the architect is illusion, begotten by the visible expression of feeling…… This kind of place disappears if the house is destroyed.23

The same vehemence of protest and refusal of urban space is found in the poem “Builders”. The ordering of space as a sprawling suburb is once more seen here in the ‘stylized trunks of metal forests’ where the poet describes the struggle against the dictates of
national archive. The huge buildings are an attempt to command the space in contrast to the natural huge trees that are emblematic of the poet’s cultural significance of a rich life. The incompleteness of spatial construction manifests itself in the many-headed angular trajectories of dwelling. Wright reveals how the Australian space protests against such attempt: “How whatever we construct gets complicated,/ gets out of order and beyond control.” (A Human 196.) In her poem “Brennan”, Wright pays tribute to Christopher Brennan, the 19th century Australian poet and academic, whose great forte lies in his unsentimental attempt at great buildings. Brennan is dreaming of attempts of raising buildings in the Australian space which never in the past has seen such concrete erections.

In contrast to this utopian construction, poems like “South of My Days”, “Australia 1970”, “Rainforest”, “Landscapes” and “For New England”, are Wright’s counter discourse of ‘orphaned landscape’ as heterotopias. In the forbidden mythic landscape in the poem “Landscapes”, space appears as a classic aporia and is the vision of the impossible. Wright philosophises, that to know the landscape one has to “move into the dark and out again”. (A Human 84.) The landscape envisions a new history, the history about “the newly dead”, or the Aborigines. What is significant here is that, in the Aboriginal cosmology death is not the end. They never die but continue like the cycle of nature unlike the Europeans for whom the graveyard is a derelict space of discursive past. For the Aborigines this is not a defunct space of morbidity but littered with the essence of the natives forever. Wright evokes the landscape’s geology, paleontology and geography in the description of the ‘brilliant leaf’, ‘men and trees and grasses’, and ‘aeons of soil on rock’ in order to accumulate its mystery. This space is a dense text that calls for a tenacious hold on the human imagination. The cultural ecology can never be abandoned to the vagaries of mental process.

In “Australia 1970”, Wright ventures into the abysses of the inexplicable space of the primitive land while the nation celebrates the bicentenary of Captain Cook’s discovery of the
coast of Australia. Wright evokes a contested space, “the living soil ebb with the tree/ to
naked poverty”. This contested space is between the ‘conquerors’ and the land’s spatial
signifiers whom Wright addresses:

I praise the scoring drought, the flying dust,
the drying creek, the furious animal,
that they oppose us still;
that we are ruined by the thing we kill. (A Human 152.)

In the same poem, Wright challenges this spatial anxiety further when she addresses the land
to die

.................like the eagle hawk,
dangerous till the last breath’s gone,
clawing and striking..............,

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

.....like the tigersnake

that hisses such pure hatred from its pain
as fills the killer’s dreams
with fear like suicide’s invading stain,

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

.............like the soldier-ant

mindless and faithful to your million years.

Though we corrupt you with our torturing mind,

stay obstinate; stay blind.

These endangered predators with their atavistic pure energy are free from pretentions.
They represent the unconditioned ‘other’, the sensual organic energy of life. In her command
to die, Wright perhaps celebrates their purity untouched by the poison of colonialism. Wright
knows even if they die, the space will forever be theirs. In the recalcitrant darkness of death, their essence will always be embedded in that space. Wright knows that by denying the past, one cannot belong to the future by forging national identity out of the present. The abstraction of space combined with the emotion of a place contributes to the formation of nation. Wright is therefore mocking at the celebration of Cook’s discovery that excludes the tremulous space of sensibility. Wright’s poetic is an attempt to give rise to a nation where identity includes past and present.

In “South of My Days”, a poem written just after her return from Sidney amidst the poverty and depression, the fragile landscape is replete with memories. The hungry hill is the mnemonic contour that bears the witness of several stories to be unfolded. Wright in this poem initiates a process of visceral geography that internalizes the discursive landscape with the vivid process of inhale and exhale. Wright reshapes the White man’s dream of wilderness in this poem. The process of delimiting meaning by gestures of spatial annexation is critiqued by Wright. The figure of ‘Old Dan’ as the lonely Aboriginal man stands as an example of haunting Australia revealing the brutality and lack of tenderness:

South of my days’ circle  
I know it dark against the stars, the high lean country  
full of old stories that still go walking in my sleep (A Human 11.)

This ‘lean country’, is not an empty signifier of space but rather, it is constitutive of fugitive histories, maimed ‘old stories’ that are still lingering although the space is marked by violence. In Wright’s poem “Sanctuary”, the board screaming the name, “Sanctuary”, does not suggest a resting place but instead, becomes the locus of several routes of perception, several trains of desire. In the dangerous vast span of proliferating arteries of belonging, the fugitive muse of history finds this imaginative pastoral refuge as the gateway
to the nightmare of spatial ubiquity. This “Sanctuary” witnesses the continuity of experience without any attempt at ‘museumisation’. This space is in continuous motion and not static:

what has the sign to do with you? The immense
tower of antique forest and cliff, the rock
where years accumulate like leaves, the tree
where transient bird and mindless insect sing? (A Human 82.)

In the poem “For New England”, Wright shows the transgression from ‘placelessness’ to place by introducing the discourse of spatial experience. The landscape makes lost time tangible and memory and desire linger in the legacy of frosty hill, dusty road and trackless sea.

.........Many roads meet here
In me, the traveller and the ways I travel.
All the hills gathered waters feed my seas
who am the swimmer and the mountain river (A Human 13.)

Wright reflects through the cognitive and corporeal elements of space, the multisensory experience of place. An interesting passage about the Aborigines called the ‘Aranda’ from T. G. H St Rehlow’s Aranda Traditions is significant over here. The mountains, rivers, forest and water holes are to the Aranda the handiwork of ancestors from whom he has descended:

He sees recorded in the surrounding landscape the ancient story of the life and deeds of the immortal being....many of whom he has known in his own experience as his fathers and grandfathers and brothers, and as his mothers and sisters. The whole country side is his living, age-old family tree. 25

Wright, like the Aranda, feels that the true sense of the art of living is evoked when the body and the space become one. Wright’s implication of the body as the metaphor of space or
space becoming a body scratched and scored with temporal signatures is unique in her poems.

According to Bachelard, the intimacy and intensity of poetic imagination can recover the invisible or the lost space from the mist of forgetfulness. It is so strong that the external geometric space is internalized, a process which he defines as "a sojourn into the limbo of being". Nothing can be more relevant to this explanation than Wright's poetry where she absorbs herself in the fugitive landscape, the bush expanding and exceeding beyond the bounds of conventionalized discourse of Imperial History. In "Woman to Man", a poem written while celebrating her pregnancy, the womb is a spatial configuration of the land, a place of nurture and desire. This womb is the zone of spatial rhythm with its own panorama of life "where out of darkness rose the seed", where "moved the multitudinous stars/ and coloured birds and fishes moved". (A Human 20.) This seed is the most intimate continuous space of love. The same mood is reflected again in the poem "The Maker" where the woman's inner space is superabundant with vitality holding 'crimson fruit', 'plumage of the palm' and 'flame tree'. When the poet claims "I am a tranquil lake/ to mirror their joy and pain", (A Human 23) she refers to the huge depth of the vertical space she has encompassed within herself. Perhaps, Wright here is constructing the counter discourse to the concept of 'wondering womb' of Freud, for whom, hysteria is the result of an empty womb that requires "hand of a masterful self-controlled man".27

Woman's body often appears in post-colonial literature as the space on and through which larger territorial and cultural battles are being fought. In her poem "Naked Girl and Mirror" written in 1966, the decade of female liberation, it is shown how the girl developing from her childhood to womanhood while her smooth body undergoing changes, confronts her naked body in the mirror as the unknown, unraveled space. This body is the space of cultural crisis because this is a hybrid space, "You are half of some other who may never come". (A Human
Though there is a detestation to acknowledge this space as reflection of the self, yet she calls this body as ‘lovely’ ‘deceiver’. The ‘hateful naked’ girl’s indignation is because this individual space of admiration will soon be encroached by the ‘other’ deviant lustful gaze, much like the land which is a site of conquest in the imperial regime. Thus the girls’ detestation is a protest to endorse the traditional signifier of gender classification ascribed to the space much like Gloria Anzaldúa’s voicing for the “freedom to carve and chisel [her] own face.” In contrast to this poem, “Woman in Orchard” is the narcissistic celebration of the body as the alluring space in the absence of the patriarchal gaze: “The peach-furred breast, the rufous hair,/ the thigh’s muscle, the heart’s good”. (A Human 203.) The patriarchal categorization of national space in terms of gender classification is opposed by Wright. Wright’s evocation of emancipatory space in the body of woman is further discussed in chapter four.

In her later poems, Wright has celebrated motherhood as the creative space of integration of dreams and aspirations. This space does not serve the function of re-population in the interest of expanding the empire. In the poem “The Unborn”, Wright interiorizes the metaphor of pregnancy as empowering and desolating, unifying and estranging. The unborn fetus is seen both as history and space which is psychic and domestic. This space of the fetus is described as “You footless darkness following where I go,/ you lipless drinker of my drowsy breast ”. (A Human 31.) This womb is the mysterious Heideggerian space: “unbounded whole of the Open…and invisible region”, it is tender, fertile and alluring and entails the secrets of love.

In the section called “The Body” of the poem “Flesh”, Wright views the carnal topography of organic space in terms of its various phenomena. Veronica Brady in South of My Days has claimed that “Her body had spoken in her poetry.” Besides the land voicing through the
self, the female body has also been the spatial configuration of paternal surrogation and ‘instrument of’ ‘uncertain love’:

I am your notion of Hell
and your tool for discovering heaven. But perched on me
you lean out with your arrogant polished eye—
trying to be God. Look down; remember where you are
I am the strata that reach from earth to star
And the great cliff down which your father fell. (A Human 86.)

She finds this body as the perfect abode of intimacy, the secret home of love, the inhabited space of togetherness:

I am your blundering kind companion.
I am your home that keeps out bitter weather.
I am the perilous slow deposit of time’s wisdom.
You are my threat, my murder. And yet remember,
I am yourself. Come, let us live together. (A Human 86.)

In section one of the poem “Flesh”, called ‘The Hand’ we see the limb as a spatial extension of the poet. However, the miracle of movement at the extremity of the arm is not seen as isolated magic eruption of action, but it is seen as a spatial rendition inseparable from the body: thus showing a single living cohesion. The hand that fingers the space of action does not constitute the world but figures the world all-around with desire. The hand is seen as the space that stands for action; this space is dynamic and interactive as the hand itself claims “My shape is action”. This hand is also the poetic hand that gives the direction to the untrodden ground of Australia: “I am the road, the bridge,/ not starting point nor goal nor traveller.” (A Human 86.)
This body as a space is therefore a composite signifier. Wright has also focused on the bodily space of the Aborigines. The ritualistic body of the aborigines rejects imperial discourse and refuses captivity. The Aboriginal body is not the spatial locus of violence, but it is the place where Australia emerges as the natural craftsmanship of nature, so that, the body transforms to earth, water and fire—excelling and expanding beyond the limitations of time and history. This reflection is seen in the poem called “The Dark Ones”. The same body withholds a cognitive relation with the land while it also epitomizes the writer’s space. In the poem named as “The Marks”, Wright concentrates on her own emblematic body as the site where the traversed space of her writerly and womanly life recur and stand, renovated by the permanence of bodily signatures. Time here is featured on the horizon of the body as memory. This poetic convention in terms of spatiality is also well captured in the poem “Tightropes” where the movement between free verse and rhymed verse emerges in the spatial canvas of poetry. Wright visualizes herself on a tightrope where the body’s movement should be balanced with perfectness. The traversal of poetic space should also be unhinged by the manacles of language. Wright here also poses the question on the writer’s space of freedom and aggressive violence. In the poem “For M. R”, writing assumes the configuration of a space that connects with the legendary Dreamtime:

Martin, we have been writing to each other
for years, telling joys, grieves, happenings,
family gossip. Lives don’t fit into letters
over one-half of the world. But talking over that space
we’ve been—what was it Plato said?—
happy companions in our pilgrimage. (A Human 206.)

This space of healing reminds one of those 19th century letters by an Aboriginal woman named Kitty Brangy (1881) to her sister Edith in Coranderrk. The estranged physical space
between the sisters is bridged by eighty three kisses symbolized by crosses. Thus the immensity of geographical distance and emotional longing is seen spatially in the form of linguistic sign. Wright in her poems also makes an offer to reconfigure the geometry of limitless desire.

In contrast to the limitless desire, the economy of a small flower in the poem “Wildflower Plain” mollifies terrestrial harshness and rude geography into tender dwelling. In “Rockface”, Wright posits western man’s lust for power as not only an attempt to control the radical trajectories of bodies as bio-power but also reveals, how the rock is interrupted by western man’s desire to engrave his signature as his own property. Wright denies herself the pleasure of spatial re-inscription: “I’ve no wish to chisel things into new shapes/ The remnant of a mountain has its own meaning” (A Human 234.) This mountain can be bare and grotesque, but etched with the living wrinkles of the Aborigines and their emotion.

Foucault has believed that crossing the boundaries entail a reconstitution of the body as well as of the society. Discipline and punishment are not merely inflicted on the body but also inscribed on the body and thus bodies become the nexus where power is produced. In a poem like “Two Dreamtimes”, Judith Wright re-contextualizes spatiality in terms of gender and race. The poem as a tribute to her fellow Aboriginal woman writer Kath Walker or Oodgeroo Noonuccal describes the demise of their two dreamtimes. Wright evokes the radical gendered space of two women segregated by the inscription of miscegenation and sexual contagion: “You were one of the dark children/ I wasn’t allowed to play with”. (A Human 166.) In the same poem, Wright further focuses on the bodily inscription on the ‘cruel faces’ of her ‘righteous kin’ and also the native body’s capacity to retain, react and resist in the form of memory:

With a knife blade flash in your black eyes

that always long to be blacker,
your Spanish-Koori face

of a fighter and singer

Wright shows the futile attempt of the hegemonic strategy to create a ‘difference’ and thereby disfigure the space of dwelling. She transgresses those idealized colonial boundaries addressing ‘Kathy’ as ‘my sister’ to “go back to that far time;/ I riding the cleared hills,/plucking blue leaves for their eucalypt scent”. Both their bodies embody compassion even after ceaseless violence. Wright makes it clear that the Australian essence of the natives will linger forever so that even the sharp knife of conscience is the talismanic for bush life:

The knife’s between us, I turn it round,

the handle to your side,

the weapon made from your country’s bones.

I have no right to take it.

Space for Wright comprises the inward and the outward part of human experience. In the poem “The Sisters”, the verandah is the spatial juncture between the conscious and the unconscious of the two sisters who in the midst of their lives, ‘under the yellow leaves’ reminiscing on the domestic and intimate secret spaces of their lives:

My life was wide and wild,

and who can know my heart? There in that golden jungle

I walk alone. (A Human 165.)

This verandah is a space of ambiguity that determines the dubious position of white settler women who are neither wholly in nor wholly out. It is a reflective pause between inside and outside, much like the women themselves who acted as the cultural mediator. The verandah is therefore that space which acts like the austere stage of epiphany. Interestingly the ‘golden jungle’ symbolizes that extensive complex space of the self where none of the sisters has dared to venture into each others’ space although they hold adorable sisterhood. This alien
boundless jungle of incredible complexities and outlandish peaks of emotion is also seen in
the poem “Space Between”:

What is the space between,
enclosing us in one
united person, yet
dividing each alone? (A Human 24.)

For Wright, what fills the void in between the space is silence. This silence, a metonym
for Wright’s encroaching deafness, is the same silence as eternal truth that exists in the graves
of her predecessors. The poem “Company of Lovers” written in the post world war desolation
shows the irony of the word ‘company’ where “the lost company,/ take hands together in the
night”, “remembering that in the narrow grave/ we shall be lonely.” (A Human 2.)

Wright transforms the western, Cartesian search for exclusive dwelling places into a
natural abode of living. In “Remittance Man”, Wright creates a counter discourse to the
antipodean feeling of a hostile land. The exiled man as a disgraceful English explorer in the
penal colony is an alien figure in the landscape. The attempt to transform the space as place
of dwelling and not of controlling is further carried on in the next poem called “Soldier’s
Farm”. In this poem, Wright remembers how an ancestor discovers an enhanced perception
of dwelling among the ‘dancing trees’ and a new sense of belonging in ‘the dust of dreams’
as he copes with the passing of his wife. Though the man is ascribed as a misshaped figure, a
monster because of his Englishness and pallor of his skin, yet it is a poem about the land with
memories of daily habitation:

so now his willing blood moves in these trees
that hold his heart up sunward with their arms.
The mists dissolve at morning like his dreams
and the creek answers light as once his eyes;
and yet he left here nothing but his love. (A Human 5.)

Wright is also concerned with the spatial dimension of her own house which is the abode of memory and dream. The house exemplifies the inhabited space. It transcends from mere geometrical space and acquires the physical and moral energy of its dwellers. This spatial dimension in Wright’s poetry can be seen more analytically in her Alive Poems written in her fifties, while living in a house which is also in its fifties. Most of these poems are dual meditation on herself and on her house turned home. Most of these poems are phenomenological investigation on the poetics of the house, the roof, the cellar, the interior and the exterior, the staircase, the bed, that exemplify the recesses of memory and disembodied consciousness and unconsciousness. The opening poem called “Habitat” is a pondering over the arrangement of space and the phenomenological dimension of dwelling in that space. This habitat is the repository of Wright’s emotions where Wright shows, that the spatial configuration is not geometrical but emotional so that after the demise of her husband, she is left with emptiness:

When we first came
the house seemed too big,
then too small
now too big again. (A Human156.)

Significantly the concept of an ‘empty space’ is more psychological than physical. The alteration of the size of the house is more a reflection of the mind than physical presence in it. This space of dwelling has a character of its own, a psychology surcharged with Wright’s sense of togetherness of her warm conjugal life, her feeling of motherhood or the frantic emanation of an artist in the middle of the night. This habitat is a transcendental signifier as Heidegger writes in his essay “Building Dwelling Thinking”: “building and thinking, belong
to dwelling...... and know that each one, like the other, comes out of the workplace of a long experience and unceasing practice.”32 Wright also evokes the same idea when she asks:

You and I, house,
are in our fifties;
time now to pause
and look at each other.

She evokes the various dreams and pains, love and affection, security and protection that overflow into physical space and affect the dwellers in a bodily way. What is significant is that this space of dwelling is not merely a place of accommodation but it forms a symbiosis with the poet in her lonely journey accompanied by nostalgia:

We’re perishable, house,
but nourishing.
I too am hostess
For numerous inhabitants—
A rich bacterial fauna.

The two spaces that Wright invokes here have intense affinities to dream. Thus the subject and the object in the space are becoming one, unselfconsciously within and without. Both of them have journeyed through a series of transition and Wright evokes a space where she reconciles the near and the infinite, the past and the present:

Remember the three-day cyclone?
You rolled like a wooden ship
in waves of violence.

but we rode it out.
What history cannot record, poetry can revive vividly. The furniture, the corners, ceilings are invested with psychology of the dweller. The poem “Bed” written after the death of her husband, Jack McKinney, is the personal space of intimacy that converges with past and present. This bed is the metaphor of a confluence of feelings—profound care, love, togetherness, loss and death. Whether it is the house, or the bed or the furniture, Wright concentrates on the architectures of intimate places as sites of intimacy.

Wright’s sense of dwelling is also captured in her poetic imagination of such natural phenomena like conch-shell. In the riddle of immensity posed by the unfathomable sea, the conch-shell is a perfect refuge of peace and solitude in the poem “Conch-shell”. The conch-shell becomes the Bachelardian cubby-whole where space emerges as intimacy unburdened by history:

Virgin and cleaned the house is washed, and empty
the wave withdrawing leaves it to my hand.
The spiral passage turns upon itself.
The sweet enclosing curve of pearl
shuts in the room that was the cell of birth
and is a windless shelter housing nothing (A Human 22)

Wright visualizes the intricate curves and bends, directions leading to spaces beyond. Within each mouldering structure of the conch-shell, dwells eternity unknown to humanity and so it remains virgin from human intentionality and desires.

Wright’s poetic journey across the spaces of Australia reflects that the place like the self undergoes cultural transmission with a deep embedded psychology. This journey involves a transition from the psychosis of fear of a whole generation to a sense of guilt and love. In poems like “Growing Point” and “Platypus”, Wright explores space as the hierarchical density. In “Growing Point” the growth of the poet’s mind is plotted upward in the extension
of time versus space. Memory in this poem acts as the spatial distension while in the poem “Platypus”, space emerges as recovered time. The Platypus’ body movement shows immense variations which contradicts homogenization of the Australian space. This similar protest can be traced in Paul Carter when he writes how history in its own tradition excludes spaces of our existence:

History has a historical horizon which is constituted by the activity of history itself: the horizon of writing. It offers the mechanism for generating a tradition, but not the means on reflecting on validity of the tradition itself. In this sense, it may exclude much of the past which matters to us—our own spatiality, for instance.33

For Wright each place is intimate with its own psychology. The same bush makes the antipodean soul feel the desolation of being placeless while for Wright it holds a theatre with its panorama of life. For them the eerie sound may be a reverberation of a deserted house, but for Wright it evokes a communal space of the living, where wilderness is admiringly habitable. The huge unknown trees might have emasculated them but for Wright, they bring her close to a world of boundless sky, the freedom to fly and the abode of reverie. Carter writes: “It was the tree as icon of place that they worshipped. It was the tree as a figure of their own.....that they clung to it in order to articulate the spaces of their intimacy.”34

The forcible attempt to impose a constructed history on a place is vehemently protested by the place itself and Wright reads the painful psychology of such places in a poem like “From The Wellington Museum”, where she has contrasted the neat pattern of Maori history as a topological expanse in the “carved paths through forests/ inscribed with life-forms, coded histories”, fragmented by amnesias of western usurpation and geological obliquity in the shape of “the museum/ (built, like the city, on a fault line,)”. (A Human 216) The deep psychology of the place is reflected in the natural features as spectral presence in the scenery
of west coast of Ireland. Wright has discovered that on the edge of Imperial History, the Aborigines are loitering as ghostly figure, throwing spears of indignation to prick the guilt conscience.

The psychology of the place is best expressed repeatedly in water bodies especially in poems like “At Cooloolah” or “The Lake” where a watchful presence of the place and its essence is captured in the lake: “..I looked, and there my eyes met eyes,/ lover to lover. Deep I looked and saw.”(A Human 107) The lake as a spatial dimension strikes into Wright's psychosis and revitalizes the Australian essence: “it spreads its smooth eye wide for something’s sake”. Condemned by Imperial History, how far Wright with her implacable poetic voice is successful to heal the ‘wounded space’ from the nation’s cultural amnesia? The best answer is given by Wright herself:

I am what land has made
and land’s myself, I said.
And therefore, when land dies?
Opened by whips of greed
these plains lie torn and scarred.
Then I erode; my blood
redds the stream in flood. (Collected Poem 280)

Wright through her poetic overture has celebrated her undying romance with Australian space and in the process has given eternal voice to the muffled sobs and strangulated spirit of pre-colonial Australia. However, she has not stopped personifying space and its battered psychology in her poetry but magnified her intense love and repentance through her memoir and biography which will be examined in the next two chapters.
NOTES


9. Durée has come from the word *longue durée* used first by the French Annales School of historical writing to explain their individual approach in looking at history. This term has been originally coined by Henry Bergson to mean duration. Bergson has suggested that the clock time is the fabricated time of the intellect; in contrast the real time or the duration is the change in reality which is continuous where everything participates. For details see Henri Bergson, *Time and Free Will: An Essay on The Immediate Data of Consciousness* (New York: Cosimo, Inc. 2008)
10. Terra incognita is also known as terra ignota, a Latin word which means unknown land. This technical term belongs to the field of cartography to denote places which are not mapped or recorded. The term is first used in Ptolemy’s Geography circa 150 CE. From terra incognita, the word terra Australia is derived which means imaginary continent. Terra incognita is a justification of the Europeans to occupy the continent because for them it means uninhabited. Terra nullius is a Roman legal concept which the Europeans adopted to legitimise their act of colonial usurpation. To know further see Alex Zukas, “Terra Incognita/ Terra Nullius: Modern Imperialism, Maps and Deception” Lived Topography And Their Meditational Forces ed. Gary Backhaus and John Murungi (Oxford: Lexington Books, 2005) 49.


16. Stirling Castle is a ship of the English Royal Navy built in 1679. The story of the shipwreck is based on the contemporary explorers’ documents and Mrs. Eliza Fraser’s version. On the night of 21st May, 1836, the incident occurred when the ship under the command of Captain James Fraser struck the Queensland coast. Only eighteen men and women survived and are taken towards Mereton Bay. The news first appeared in Gazette in September 1836. Eliza Fraser has become the centre of attraction in the incident and in recent studies the feminists and the anthropologists have become more
curious about her character. The survivors of the shipwreck are rescued by David Bracewell and his crucial role in the expedition was popularized. David Bracewell is described by Archibald Meston as ‘wild’. This incident also marked the beginning of the entry of the English men at Cooloola. See John Curtis, *Stirlign Castle, And The Cruel Murder of Captain Fraser By The Savages*. (London: George Virtue, Ivy lane Retrieved 2009-08-15)


18. Carter *The Road* 503.


22. For De Certeau urban space is made up of accumulated broken pieces of the city’s past, which he is referring to the deforestation, erosion, genocide of the natives, and destruction of the past life. For him the city is the ‘suspended symbolic order’ and the city cannot suppress its violent origin. What he is suggesting is that no matter what we repress below, it will reflect back on us. He thinks that this silent violence is the partner of our existence in the urban space. For further study see Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*. (London: University of California Press, 1984)


24. Christopher John Brennan (1 November 1870 – 5 October 1932), the Australian poet and scholar is famous as a lyricist whose poetry is tinged with architectural and mythological essence. For details see [http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/brennan-christopher-john-5345](http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/brennan-christopher-john-5345)


30. Brady, *South* 446.

31. Kath Walker’s (3 November 1920 – 16 September 1993) Aboriginal name is Oodgeroo Noonuccal. She is an Australian poet and activist. Her most celebratory poetry like “The Last of His Tribe” or “We Are Going” are concerned with Aboriginal life and their suffering in the face of oppression and adversity. Her poetry has the deep characteristic of evoking primitive culture in the form of elegiac lament. Her poems are often criticised as political propaganda but her art has proved that it is above such narrow observations. She has been directly involved for scripting Australian Pavilion’s major presentation at World Expo 88 and has been the Queensland state secretary in the 1960s. For biographical information see [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oodgeroo_Noonuccal](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oodgeroo_Noonuccal)


35. The Maori Legend is about the courageous indigenous people of New Zealand who arrived in 1280 A.D in the land. They belong to the archaic period of the history of New Zealand. Captain James Cook in 1769 had a direct conflict and confronted the race. The tribe is known for its resilient struggle against European colonialism. To know further see Angela Ballara, *IWI: The Dynamics of Maori Tribal Organisation from c. 1769 to c.1945* (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 1998)