judith wright
focus on Judith Wright
for jack mckinney
publisher’s note

We feel that our series on Artists in Queensland requires a few words describing the intent of the series and the method of its composition. The idea was first conceived in early 1966 when it occurred to us that Queensland was responsible for a great many artists—either as a birthplace, an inspiration, or as an influential region. Some of these artists were famous and some were not as well known; most of them were comparatively young—perhaps too young for a full-scale critical work. Moreover, we felt that it was necessary to keep away from the usual area of critical analysis.

Indeed, as the idea for the series took shape, we began to feel that we should eschew criticism to a great extent and that our series should be more in the way of introductions to and explanations of Queensland artists. In fact, the ideal would be to get each artist to write about himself. There were obvious drawbacks to this but these were overcome by using a tape recorder and choosing a close personal friend of the artist as author. We tried carefully to commission people who would be sympathetic and sensitive to what the artist was trying to do.

Armed with a tape recorder and his own questions each author set out to probe the background and artistic thoughts of his subject. Most recording sessions were of several hours’ duration and in every case several sessions were needed. From the raw material on his tapes the author then wrote his own version of his subject’s life and artistic career.

Naturally, there is little uniformity among the individual books in the series. Not all authors have seen their subject in the same light, neither have they asked their subject the same questions. What has emerged, we hope, is a description of each artist and an introduction to him by someone who is privileged to know him well and is passing on his conversation and his thoughts to a wider public.

Published in this series:

Focus on Charles Blackman by Thomas Shapcott
Focus on Milton Moon by Dennis Pryor
Focus on Judith Wright by W. N. Scott

In preparation:
Andrew Sibley
David Rowbotham
Jon Molvig
I wish to acknowledge with gratitude the permission granted by several publishers to quote passages: Faber and Faber Ltd. for the lines from “East Coker” in Collected Poems 1909-1962 by T. S. Eliot; F. W. Cheshire Publishing Pty. Ltd. for the material by Judith Wright from Literary Australia; The Meanjin Press for extracts from five poems in The Moving Image by Judith Wright; Oxford University Press Australia for quotations from Preoccupations in Australian Poetry and Kings of the Dingoes by Judith Wright; Angus & Robertson Ltd. for quotations from poems by Judith Wright in Woman to Man, The Gateway, The Two Fires, Birds, and Five Senses, and from the introduction to Australian Poets: Judith Wright; Jacaranda Press Pty. Ltd. for the extracts from The Focal Word by T. J. Kelly.

My thanks are due to Derrick Stone for the photographs of Judith Wright. The Botany Department of the University of New England kindly provided the photograph of New England countryside on page 8, and the Department of Forestry, Queensland the photograph of Queensland rain forest on page 25.

W.N.S.
The New England Tableland lies south of the Queensland border in northern New South Wales. It is an ancient granite flow enormous in extent, an upland of bleakness in winter and a place of hot brown hillsides in summer. On the eastern edge of the tableland the country slopes away to the fertile plains and rich valleys of the Richmond and Tweed Rivers. Before the white men came the whole face of the escarpment was covered in a dense cloak of subtropical rain forest. This forest cover has largely been cleared now, leaving a

... high delicate outline
of bony slopes wincing under the winter,
low trees blue-leaved and olive, outcropping granite—
clean, lean, hungry country...

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Judith Wright was born into this clean country of grazing sheep and cattle in 1915. In her lifetime she has come to be regarded as one of the greatest woman poets ever to write in English.

Her father's family had been in Australia for almost a century. His mother's grandfather, George Wyndham, had begun the establishment of his property and vineyard, called "Dalwood", in the Hunter Valley in 1828. Judith Wright has told the fortunes of his family in her book *The Generations of Men*, and there is no need to elaborate further here.

Her mother's family came from England but already had strong ties with Australia. Her maternal great-grandfather had ridden with Leichhardt on one of his expeditions. Judith Wright’s mother was Ethel Bigg, eldest daughter of her family and a lover of poetry. She read aloud to her children when they were small, and often she read them poetry. Tennyson and Will Ogilvie, Burns and Henry Lawson, Shelley and A. B. Paterson, all these were familiar names to the little girl and her two younger brothers, Bruce and Peter. She was lonely, despite the companionship of her brothers. Her only friend of her own age and sex was a cousin who lived on a property twenty miles away. The girls would often ride to meet each other about halfway between the two stations, to eat a picnic lunch and talk before riding home.

Though they love it in all its moods, the New England country can be hard on its people. The poet remembers helping to dig sheep from snowdrifts in a bitter winter. Her recollection of the remote lonely land rings in some of her early poems:

Night runs an obscure tide round cape and bay
and beats with boats of cloud up from the sea
against this sheer and limelit granite head.
Swallow the spine of range; be dark, O lonely air.

Her mother died when she was twelve, and Judith Wright first went to a formal school when she was thirteen years old. She had previously studied by correspondence, supervised at first by her mother and later by governesses. Lessons were in the mornings, but afternoons


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were free. Freedom meant wandering over the country with its wide sky and rolling hills. The country was the school for her spirit. Then she was sent to school, a boarding school in Armidale. She was unhappy, of course. She came from a strongly individual and adventurous family, and it was difficult to settle to what seemed a drab routine. Of course the sudden transition from the free and easy, almost feudal life on a big station property to the necessary regimentation of a school was difficult for any bush girl to endure. Having had the hills, the secret gullies out of the wind where the rock lilies bloomed in golden cascades down the wet rocks, the brackened uplands of clear air and light for playground and treasure house, she found it hard to settle to dormitories and lessons and always the regulating bells.

There was one bright thing about school for Judith Wright. This was her English teacher. Judith had been writing poems since she was able to put words on paper; now she had a critic and mentor who helped her tremendously. In the twenties there was little Australian poetry taught in the schools. She confesses now that it did not occur to her that there might be others also trying to write poems about the country and people she loved. Writing became her goal. She gave up the study of mathematics before she reached Intermediate standard. In 1933 she reached Matriculation level and in early 1934 went to the University of Sydney as an unmatriculated student to do an English Honours course under Professor Waldock. At the end of 1934 she achieved first year Honours but privately came to the conclusion that the formal course was not going to be of much value to her. She had gone to University for one reason only, to learn to be a writer, and she says that it occurred to her that the intensive study of Anglo-Saxon was not of much help in achieving her ambition. She accordingly stopped formal attendance at lectures and began to read extensively in the Library. The University was not pleased by her decision, but she was strong-minded and decisive as to what she wanted to do, and had her way. Obtaining a copy of Ezra Pound’s *Guide to Kulchur* she set herself to read steadily through the books it recommended, and found it brought her into contact with much that she would never have seen and studied had she stayed with the more formal University course.

Every subject she took reflected the aim of her life. She studied Italian for a year and read much Italian and French poetry. She studied anthropology because she wished to widen and deepen her knowledge of the native people of her country, philosophy and psychology because
she was interested in people and their motives. She studied history, especially Oriental history, under Professor A. L. Sadler, who was married to a Japanese woman and whose home was furnished in Japanese style. With other students, Judith Wright was a frequent guest in Sadler's home, and she has said that she learned more about aesthetics from him than from anyone else. While an undergraduate she was on the staff of *Honi Soit,* the student magazine, and thus got her first experience with printers and print, the mechanical problems of publishing. James McAuley was a fellow student. She remembers him as being a far more serious student than herself. Still, she was concerned with learning to be a writer and was not so concerned with taking a formal degree. Her studies at the University ended in late 1936 when she reached graduation standard.

In early 1937 she sailed for England and the Continent accompanied by a cousin. As so many young Australians have done, she toured widely on very little money. Her ventures included a walking tour of Scotland, hitching rides on trucks and sleeping at farmhouses. In a sense it was a homecoming, because the Wrights had strong links with Scotland, though they had originally emigrated to Australia from Cornwall. In 1745, a young member of the Clan Macgregor had been proscribed for fighting for Charles Stuart, and had been forced to fly for his life to France, the traditional refuge for Jacobites. The proud Clan Macgregor was officially abolished by Act of Parliament, a dubious distinction that proved the turbulence and fighting spirit of its members, if nothing else. Judith Wright's ancestor had proved his courage and independence; his son in turn proved his by changing his name to Wright and returning to the country of his enemies to live in Cornwall, where he eventually married a Cornish woman and settled to live the rest of his days in peace. To Judith's knowledge the name of the family was never officially changed to Wright. A homecoming indeed for the equally brave and independent young woman, who crossed the width of the world to see the country from which her family had sailed to settle in a New England. She loved the Scottish land of cold winds and enormous highlands, though her affections were bound up with her own country, a landscape that would one day sing through her poems and a people for whose inarticulateness she would one day find words.

She toured through Europe in the uneasy days of the autumn of 1937, with a friend. They walked through Germany and Austria. The harvest had been good in Austria and bad in Germany. There was a smell of smoke on the wind
and a feeling of apprehension among the diplomats gathered at Geneva. The Treaty of Versailles had expressly forbidden the union of Germany with Austria but in his book *Mein Kampf* Adolf Hitler had proclaimed his wish to see his Austrian fatherland joined to Germany. It was a difficult and suspicious time, with German troops gathered on the Austrian border and the Austrian people fearing imminent invasion. The actual invasion did not come until March 1938, but strangers were treated with caution and some suspicion. On one occasion the two young people, Judith Wright and her companion, were on a mountain top and saw troops moving. They thought the invasion had begun, but it turned out to be a false alarm. They were happy to move on to Hungary.

She has happier memories of Hungary. She found a land of wide plains, mile after mile of grass brown after summer where the people pastured great herds of horses. Despite the differences in language and customs she felt at home, for she knew about horses and the people who love horses. Leaving brought regret, especially as she could not now return to England through Italy as she had planned. Mussolini was at war with Abyssinia, and there were sanctions and currency restrictions that made the projected visit impossible. She returned to England by way of France and Switzerland, and after a brief stay there went to Ceylon, where she lived for a few months as a guest with a relative on a tea plantation in the hills near Kandy.

In 1938 she returned to Sydney, greatly changed. The bush girl, the university student with such steadfast and emphatic views about what she wanted from that seat of culture, returned as a mature woman, an experienced traveller. Observation and experience were combining in her mind and heart, and bringing her to the insight that illumines her poetry. Being essentially a realist she knew that she could not make a living by writing poetry, so she enrolled in a secretarial school and studied for six months.

For the next three years Judith worked to a plan. She would get a job as a typist or secretary, always choosing where possible a job that involved some overtime, though she hated it. Wages were poor, about three pounds a week, and the only way she could save enough to support herself for a period between jobs was to work overtime. When she had enough money put by she would work at her writing until lack of funds forced her to seek work again. She lived in various rooms and flats around Springfield Avenue in King’s Cross, sometimes alone, sometimes sharing with other girls.
The poet and W. N. Scott talk in her garden.
Early in 1940 she began working for an oil company, and from there she went to work for an advertising agency where she did market research, by doorknocking and asking questions about the use being made of a sponsor’s products. Sydney was divided into income groups for the purpose of these surveys, and it was by choice that the young poet found herself working in the districts of Redfern, Surry Hills, and Golden Grove. Low income groups have traditionally a more realistic approach to life and a more direct way of solving its problems than people with pretensions of gentility. Some of the replies that these people gave to questions about soap powder and baby powder, toilet paper and cigarette papers, could never have gone into a report to the client of any advertising agency! After some weeks of this sampling of opinion, the poet and some of her workmates began their own organization on the side for fun. It was a business that aimed at getting and summing up public opinion on other matters for possible sale to newspapers. This activity had some success, but it earned no extra money to enable Judith to find more time to write. Time was the problem, as it has always been for writers in Australia.

Although she was still not writing anything that met her own standards, she published a few poems about this period. There were few places to publish poetry in Australia, even less than there are now, though the Sydney Bulletin was publishing a considerable amount. However, she did not submit anything to the Bulletin at that time, and has never been happy about the fact that some of these poems did see print. It was about this time, in early 1941, that she left commerce and obtained work as secretary to Professor Macdonald Holmes, head of the Geography Department at the University of Sydney. Professor Holmes was acquainted with her family. He had been one of the first people in Australia to become interested in and concerned about the problems of soil erosion in New South Wales, and he was also one of the very first to try to do something about it. He had come to know the poet’s father well. There was much erosion on the slopes of their property, “Wallamumbi”, where the light granite soil eroded fast as soon as the protective cover of vegetation was felled to make way for pasture. Macdonald Holmes did much experimental work there, putting in contour drains to check further erosion and to try to reclaim some of the land. By the time the poet went to work for him as his secretary the war had drastically altered the situation at home. Her two brothers had joined the army, and her father was trying to keep the property
operating with the help of only one old stockman. She decided to go home until the war was over, and resigned from the University staff. While she waited for her father to call her home she decided to take a temporary job for a few weeks.

This decision to take a temporary job led her into a situation that would have delighted C. J. Dennis. It was as typical a piece of Gluggery as he ever imagined in his mythical land of Gosh. The job she took was with the typists' pool at the Sydney Town Hall. She was sent to work for that section of the Council that handled city building construction requirements and building laws. About this time the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbour, and to the great dismay of the three members of the staff of the section they were made the reference authority for methods of strengthening buildings against air raids! These three members of the staff (the Building Inspector, his secretary, and the temporary typist) had no information on the subject. Eventually they received some hastily prepared pamphlets written by someone who had once been in touch with the British A.R.P. organization. The section was renamed the Air Raids Precautions Section and it was supposed to answer questions asked by members of the public about what to do in case of air attack. Queues of people waited at the counter all day for answers to their specific problems, and the erstwhile temporary typist admits freely that what they got when they reached her was largely imagination and common sense, for she had no proper technical instruction or knowledge.

Eventually some sort of order took shape and the whole section, by this time numbering forty people, was housed in a disused railway tunnel off Wynyard Station. It was this tunnel that received the wonderful title of "City Control Centre, Air Raid Precautions", but at first it was a gesture rather than anything effective. The whole tunnel was beehived into tiny three-ply partitioned cells containing a switchboard and a few camp stretchers. The lights burned continually and the staff worked around the clock, three hours on and three off. The girls on the staff used to meet their khaki-clad boy friends outside in the tunnel and Judith Wright says wryly that the activities on the stretchers would have given a sociologist enough material for a number of theses. She stayed for about eight weeks before her father called her home to the quiet countryside of her childhood after eight years' absence. The echoes of war from Europe, the wild border hills of Scotland, the slum suburbs of Sydney, the heartaches and coffee drinking and arguing into the night of her undergraduate
days, even the Gilbertian railway tunnel, all faded into the uncomplicated life she had known as a child. She was back at "Wallamumbi" and she stayed there for three years. Once more she lived the life of any woman on a station. She washed and milked, scrubbed floors, and went mustering. She cooked for the shearers, when there were any shearers. She kept the stud books and wrestled with the interminable wartime forms, pink and green and blue in triplicate and quadruplicate. It wasn't an easy life and one hears echoes of it in some of the poems that came later; not complaints but statements of the hard facts of country life:

Jock Hamilton thinks of the bally cow gone sick
and the cockatoos in the corn and the corn ready to pick
and the wires in the thirty-acre broken.  

You can hear them too in:

... the stiff-handed wood-cheeked women
got up from the benches round the walls
and took home their aching eyes and weary children.
Mrs McLarty with twenty cows to milk
before dawn, went with the music stinging
like sixty wasps under her best dress.

There is always work on a station, no matter what the season.
Judith began to write again, and this
time she says that the poems came closer to being what she wanted. She heard the stories of the land from the stockman, old Dan, the tales of the old days from the country:

full of old stories that still go walking in my sleep.

He sprang to life later in Brisbane when she remembered him:

Seventy years of stories he clutches round his bones.
Seventy summers are hived in him like old honey.

In 1943 Judith Wright went to Brisbane where she began working as a clerk with the University Commission. She worked in the Examinations section for nearly two years. At this time C. B. Christesen was publishing

5 Ibid.
6 "South of My Days", The Moving Image.
Meanjin Papers in Brisbane, and Judith helped with the production of the magazine. In 1947 she joined the University permanent staff as a statistician. Planning was then under way for the new University that now stands at St. Lucia and the Vice-Chancellor, J. D. Story, needed statistics from the records to help him plan methodically. All day she used an adding machine and a typewriter, and in the evenings she worked at her poetry. By now she had stopped destroying everything she wrote, and her long disciplined apprenticeship was drawing to a close.

It was at this time that she first met the man who was later to be her husband, Jack McKinney. His
background, like her own, was a country one, but he was already working on a study of the history of Western thought, which in many respects complemented her own interests. His influence on her writing was great, though this is not the place to evaluate it. In a sense, they worked in a partnership of thought and life from this time until his death in 1966.

Judith was at last writing poems that said something of what she wanted them to say. The first breakthrough had been as far back as 1941 when she wrote “The Company of Lovers”, later included in her first book of poems, The Moving Image, which was published in 1946 by Christesen in Melbourne (whence he and Meanjin had moved) and was distributed by Georgian House. Although some of the poems in this book had been published before in various journals both in Australia and England, now as a collection their impact on the poetic world in Australia was immediate and exciting.

The poetry scene in Australia in 1946 was exciting enough for anyone who was interested. There had not been such a flowering in Australian poetry since the bush balladists in the nineties produced their stirring if somewhat naive poems of the bush and its people. The audience for their poems was largely limited to their own countrymen, and the ballads still retain their charm for many Australians. A. B. Paterson remains our best-selling poet in this country. There are not many names that stand out in the years between the 1890’s and the 1940’s. Hugh McCrae, Frank Wilmot and Vance Palmer, R. D. FitzGerald and Kenneth Slessor, are perhaps the names that come to mind. In the early forties a new vision of their country caught a number of young people, and suddenly poetry began to come from strange names: John Blight, Val Vallis, Rosemary Dobson, Nan McDonald, David Campbell, Rex Ingamells, Nancy Cato, Nancy Keesing, Colin Thiele, John Manifold, Max Harris, Ian Mudie, Roland Robinson, A. D. Hope, and James McAuley. It was a thrilling time to be alive for anyone who loved poetry. Douglas Stewart had come from New Zealand and had become the poetry editor of the Sydney Bulletin, and loved his adopted country so much that he produced poetry like that in Sonnets to the Unknown Soldier and The Dosser in Springtime; Peter Hopegood wrote many of his strange ballads that were eventually collected in a book called Circus at World’s End. The poetic scene was alive and vibrant, every issue of a little magazine was an adventure. The poets remembered the people and the people read the poets.
There were a number of reasons for this renaissance in poetry. One was that two young men in South Australia had begun a movement they called "Jindyworobak" in the late thirties. Mudie and Ingamells were nationalist in the best sense of the word; they had a vision of Australian poetry which should be instantly recognizable as coming from Australia and nowhere else. They wanted to get away from the more formal approach of those who were writing and to develop a style in which the content would be of international standard but the poetry itself, the form and imagery, would be unmistakably of the Southern continent. Unfortunately many of their followers took the idea to extremes and the result was that the Jindyworobaks were often laughed at for their pains, and their aboriginal incomprehensibility. But the central idea was valid, and when the war came with its consequent heightening of national identity it was the Jindyworobak vision that often dominated poetry, though its more extreme forms of imagery and content were not necessarily retained. The intense nationalism expressed by the Jindyworobaks, notably Mudie, Ingamells, and Robinson, fitted well with the patriotism generated by the war. One might say that it was the dream of the group that in the end was their most important contribution to Australian letters. Poets came to regard their country as being more than merely a place where they lived.

Another reason for the upsurge of poetry at this time was the war itself. It seems true to say that if someone faces extinction voluntarily for the sake of an ideal, an abstraction, some dream close to the heart, then that person is moved to try to record his reasons for facing such extinction, so that future generations can read and understand. As in past times, this war had this effect. It touched off the impulse to leave a record of the emotions felt and endured, and the natural means of expression, oddly enough, was poetry. Perhaps when men want to express things which touch them deeply they find prose inadequate. This is a circumstance that can be easily verified by reference to the "In Memoriam" columns of any newspaper. It is not the standard achieved that is important but that the impulse should be toward poetry. With many people the writing of poetry was simply an impulse stimulated by the conflict between the nations, and it died when the conflict died; others continued to write.

A third reason for the growing interest in Australian writing was the short supply of books from British publishers, who were the traditional suppliers of the Australian market. The consequence of this was the crop of little
magazines that sprang up across the country. People bought them and read them and, what is more important, they discussed them: *Barjai* and *Meanjin Papers* in Brisbane, *Southerly* in Sydney, *Angry Penguins* and *Poetry* in Adelaide. In Sydney the *Bulletin* continued to publish much poetry under the firm hand of Douglas Stewart, who was and probably still is the most perceptive critic we have. Stewart was the guide and mentor of many who began their literary lives in that cradle of writers. Being a fine poet himself he was never needlessly cruel, though his pen could raise blisters when he felt that blisters were needed.

A series of poems began to appear from Queensland. "Judith Wright" was the signature on poems like "Bullocky", "The Company of Lovers", and in particular, "South of My Days", with its unforgettable picture of the verbose old man and the rich honey of the memories he stored within him. There were few who reached the standard she achieved with such apparent ease, and when *The Moving Image* was published in 1946 it was immediately apparent that this was a tremendous talent indeed. In his review in the *Bulletin* Stewart was enthusiastic: "... these [poems] promise anything; everything; the world", he said. She had much to say and she said it in simple economical phrases that could ring like trumpets or whisper as plaintively as the wind in she-oaks. A mature woman now, with the wonderful ability to share experience in apparently artless simple words; she achieved immediately what the Jindyworobaks had set out to do by other methods, the awareness of the country in its poetry. She took the country of the poets by storm.

Her subjects were the heart and temper of her land and people and she struck a chord that set many strings vibrating in sympathy. Some of the critics called her a "landscape" poet, whatever that may be. Certainly she wrote about the country of her childhood and maturity with a perceptive eye and a delicate hand. She used her gift as a rider controls a thoroughbred horse, gently compelling it to her will. People moved through the poems, lived in the taut lines. The remittance man, the brother and sisters, the bullocky, the little half-caste girl; they were people immediately recognizable and all of them part of the dream of the country.

7 *Bulletin*, 16 October 1946, p. 2.
They were people who breathed, they were not merely symbols, though at another level they were, for every word is a symbol. The landscape did spring immediately from the pages, but it was a landscape with people:

Only the grass stands up
to mark the dancing-ring; the apple-gums
posture and mime a past corroboree,. . .

and again:

. . . the parrots exploding in green and scarlet
shatter its glass for their shrill moment's flight.
From the houses on the hill the small smoke rises
in patterns of vague peace . . . .

"The Moving Image", the long poem from
which her first book takes its title, tells clearly how she had realized her task as a poet to be translator and guide for others, to transcribe the messages that came to her from her surroundings and experience so that people could read and understand.

. . . We are dwarfed by the dark.
We inherit a handful of dust and a fragment of stone.
Yet listen, the music grows around us, before us, behind,
there is sound in the silence; the dark is a tremor of light.
It is the corn rising when winter is done.
It is the madmen singing, the lovers, the blind; . . .

The madmen, the lovers, the blind, the singing, there it was. Out of the desolation of those postwar years came the hope of the green spring corn. They were years of hope, those immediate postwar years, when the young men left living turned from the dreadful dust and the bitterness of destruction to the hope of rebuilding a better and peaceful world. It was a time for young men to dream dreams, and here was a voice that said some of the things they felt but were unable to formulate. That is one of the poems in the book. Yet there were others much more personal, each speaking directly to the reader. I remember the first time I read "Trapped Dingo", I did not so much grasp it as have it explode directly into my consciousness. There were many people who had lost hopes and friends and lovers in those bitter years, many who had almost lost themselves as well. Here, in "The Moving Image", was a new

8 "Bora Ring", The Moving Image.
9 "Waiting", ibid.
hope as well as a recognition of difficulty, an affirmation of that vision that kept mankind journeying steadfastly:

... the lovelier distance is ahead.
I would go farther with you, clock and star, 
though the earth break under my feet and storm 
snatch at my breath and night ride over me. 
I am the maker. I have made both time and fear, ... 

It is difficult to explain the impact of these poems on that generation. More than twenty years have gone by. A new generation has risen, under as many stresses perhaps, but they are different stresses. It can only be asserted here that to some people in 1946 the impact of this poetry was almost physical. It may be that, with the total of years increasing, certain channels to the spirit become choked by the multitude of things the mind must contain. The fact remains that to that generation these poets spoke in a manner that later ones achieved more rarely. Poetry is not to be understood by the examination of its mechanics, it must be recognized in part by the gooseflesh on the thighs, the prickling of the nape of the neck, the singing in the mind and spirit. Such was the effect of these poets on this generation, and Judith Wright, in her first book and later, spoke for many. She has a special place in their affections.

The lovelier distance was ahead for her poetry, but she was also active at this time on another project and she worked hard at its accomplishment. During her stay at home in the years 1941 to 1943 she had read her grandfather's diaries. He had been a prolific writer, and there were twenty-five volumes of them. She realized that the story of her family was in effect the story of pastoral settlement in large regions of Queensland and northern New South Wales. Her grandfather was representative of many others who struggled through the years of flood, drought, poor markets, and lack of medical care that marked the beginnings of rural settlement in the frontier country. She felt that the preservation of this history was of prime importance to a nation that would one day soon begin the search for its roots. She applied for a Commonwealth Literary Fund grant to help her complete the difficult task of resolving the essential from the occasional in the diaries. In 1947 the grant was made available and she visited the Dawson River country in Queensland to see at first hand the background against which most of the story was set. She then retired to Mt. Tamborine near Brisbane to write the book. It was a period of great output for her. She wrote much
poetry and many short stories. The stories and poems were published mainly in the *Bulletin*, though some of the poetry was published in England. She completed the pastoral history, *The Generations of Men*, and received a good report about it from the Commonwealth Literary Fund. She then sent it to at least three publishers, but the reaction of them all was the same: not enough people would be interested in the subject to warrant publication. It was entered in a literary competition run by a newspaper, but with no success. The manuscript was to lie unpublished for some years. About this time (1950), Judith Wright completed the first of her children's books but it also failed to find a publisher.

Her second book of poems had been published in 1949. *Woman to Man* met with a mixed reception from the critics. Most seemed to be rather annoyed as well as somewhat bewildered that the woman they had labelled as a "landscape" poet should begin to write poetry like that which is in the early part of this book. These poems seem to have embarrassed many or most male readers. One poet, asked what he thought, said, "Too many wombs in it". There was a facet of life which no male could experience. Suddenly here was a woman writing beautifully of the miracle of love and birth. R. D. FitzGerald once said, "Men are romantics, women are realists", and Judith Wright wrote of pregnancy and childbirth from the practical viewpoint of one who was to endure the discomfort and danger at first hand. To my knowledge no other woman poet had frankly approached the same subjects save Anne Ridler in England, and that in only one poem. If Christina Rossetti or Elizabeth Browning ever wrote such poetry their times and environment forbade its publication. Their background and upbringing were against the frankness and freedom of these poems.

Judith Wright has gone from book to book of poems irritating the more academic of her critics by never doing the thing expected. Each new book has raised the cry somewhere, "she is slipping away, she is losing her gift"! In her own words, she has refused to become a poet who makes a career of writing the same poem over and over with minor variations. She has always gone forward another step and the critics have been compelled to keep pace.

For all this, none of her later books has roused the same outcry as did *Woman to Man*. Poetry is not a simple thing, a pretty thing only to amuse and edify. The best poems achieve what the best poets intend, to encompass some part of human experience, and much human experience
is not pretty. It is easy to become sentimental about a baby, but the baby is born with pain and blood. Men like to put this thought behind them. There is a guilt in the dark corners of the mind, maybe. Women are always aware of it, it is part of them and they can never quite forget it. In this book of poems a woman who was able to match the thought and words to the fact had spoken for all women in a memorable series of poems. No wonder the critics were uneasy.

"We know all about it," they said. "It's old news. Why make a fuss about something that has been going on in the world since Father Adam?" But a new dimension was added to poetry written in English with the poems in this book about new life coming. Some of these poems had been published in England, and their impact had been felt in the world beyond the limited Australian audience. Her international reputation was enhanced. She had broken new ground. The only other woman who might have written as well about these matters, perhaps, was the American, Emily Dickinson, that strange shy woman who kept her poems in a box with old accounts and scraps of paper, to be found after her death. She had the delicacy, the power, and the courage, but she never married and kept herself rigorously in her tiny enclosed world of house and garden. In her circumstances, her time and place, she could never have written:

This is no child with a child's face;
this has no name to name it by:
yet you and I have known it well.
This is our hunter and our chase,
the third who lay in our embrace.\(^{10}\)

or this:

I wither and you break from me;
yet though you dance in living light
I am the earth, I am the root,
I am the stem that fed the fruit,
the link that joins you to the night.\(^{11}\)

The poetry in *Woman to Man* broke new ground for her and indeed for everybody. There was some poetry that stemmed from the themes in the first book, but there had been a development of these themes: poems such as "Camphor Laurel", "The Builders", "The Bull", "The Bushfire". The poems are more populated, though some of the people are ghosts. The landscape is inhabited, and is very

\(^{10}\) "Woman to Man", *Woman to Man*.
\(^{11}\) "Woman to Child", *ibid*. 

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often within as well as outside the figures. In this book is the beginning of a new dimension of the country for her, the tropical vine scrub of coastal Queensland. If you have not seen it and walked in it it is very difficult to imagine. Even where graded paths give the walker free access and easy slopes it is disquieting. People entering it normally react in one of two ways, they shout as if to keep up their spirits or hush as though in a cathedral. One critic refused to credit her description of such jungle until he was shown photographs of the tangle of thorny vines and enormous trees.

We found our way up to the source, where stand the fern-trees locked in endless age under the smothering vine and the trees' night.

"The Ancestors" in The Gateway
The poems by Judith Wright that are most frequently anthologized come mainly from the first two books of poems. This may well be because on her own admission she was more concerned with musical language than she was later to become. She has said that later she became more interested in the ideas than in the words, which now seemed to be a kind of window dressing for the idea. Her own thoughts about this will be dealt with below. In the meantime she had built her reputation to the point where she was approached by the Oxford University Press to edit their new edition of *A Book of Australian Verse*\(^{12}\) which, along with a companion volume of New Zealand verse, was intended to replace the earlier single volume of Australasian verse edited by Walter Murdoch. Oxford University Press were pleased with her selection and asked if she had anything in manuscript ready for publication. She produced the two books, *The Generations of Men* and the children's book, *Kings of the Dingoes*.\(^{13}\) Both were promptly accepted and both sold extremely well, especially the history, which has gone into a number of editions.

The history was well received by the reading public as well as by the critics. One of its facets that possibly has not received as much attention as it deserves from students of such things is the clear picture it gives of the lives and conditions of life of women of the level of society about which she was writing. Read in conjunction with such books as *The Letters of Rachel Henning* and Mary Gilmore's *Old Days, Old Ways* it does help to give a clearer picture of the place of women in society at the time. This is most important, for most of the writing about the period was about men and the doings of men. A comparison of conditions described in three such books from such differing viewpoints might be of tremendous value.

Judith's next book of poems to be published was *The Gateway*, and it is interesting to compare some of the poems with those from the earlier books: "The Flame-Tree" with "Flame-tree in a Quarry" of the second book, for instance. In the Quarry poem the tree that sprang from the shell of a hill like a shout of affirmation of life remained a tree, though metamorphosed in one sense into

... the song made flesh
though the singer dies—\(^{14}\)

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14 "Flame-tree in a Quarry", *Woman to Man*. 
In the *Gateway* poem the poet has gone further:

How to live, I said, as the flame-tree lives?
—to know what the flame-tree knows; to be
prodigal of my life as that wild tree
and wear my passion so?

so that

What the earth takes of her, it will restore.
These are the thanks of lovers who share one mind.\(^{15}\)

This is the offering of the tree prodigal of its beauty, the poet
willing to spend herself becoming one with earth that holds
them both, poet and tree, with love; earth and poet and tree all
being parts of a larger creation, each as great as the other and
each with its own part to play in the drama. There are many
trees in Judith Wright's poetry. Speaking of one such, T. J.
Kelly says:

The tree image is not allowed to stand independently as a symbol
(like Yeats's "great-rooted blossomer") but is repeatedly linked in a
confusing way with the human I of the mother; or—to try it another
way—full realization—visualization with feeling—of the metaphorical
is balked by insistence on the literal.

He then goes on to add:

These strictures on a poem that treats a profound and difficult theme
with delicacy and grace must seem ungracious; but they pay the poet
the compliment of comparing her with Yeats, and, implicitly, with
Marvell.\(^{16}\)

The poem he is discussing is the one called "Woman to Child"
from the second book.

We have not come to the end of trees, however. There is a tree that appears in her fourth book,
*The Two Fires*, which is indeed a symbol that stands as in-
dependently as Yeats's "great-rooted blossomer", and we
shall examine it further when considering the poetry of that
book.

The poems in the third book, *The Gate-
way*, while still having the emotional appeal of the earlier ones,
go further into what might best be described as an eager
intellectual enquiry, combined at times with a lightness of

\(^{15}\) "The Flame-Tree", *The Gateway* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1953).

heart that is a joy to share. In the book is a poem called simply “Legend”, and I have read some learned expositions as to “what the poet meant”. The poet once told me that what she was writing about in this instance was the impatience and energetic joy of youth. “Ah, but your story means more, despite your intention”, says the commentator. “After all, if some young men can sit down on an afternoon of poetic hilarity and invention to compose some poems to gammon another serious body of young men, and come up with stuff that had some true poetic emotion in it, though obscure and intentionally indefinite, who is the poet to say what he has or has not achieved? Words are dangerous things to use. They do not always contain only their intended meaning.”

This is certainly what happened in this poem, “Legend”. What was written as a tribute to the joy and ebullience of youth became, for one reader at least, the poet setting out in search of his poem. It is a poem to be read aloud. I know no other poem in Australian writing that brings the same sharp lift of mingled emotion in the listener as this does when a sensitive reader reaches the lines:

He ran like a hare,
he climbed like a fox;
he caught it in his hands, the colours and the cold—

“Words are dangerous things to use. They do not always contain only their intended meaning.” Of course they can go beyond their literal meaning. They can convey more than the actual printed letters or spoken syllables. This is a secret of poetry. One cannot understand the magic of a poem merely by a mechanical examination of the words and their arrangement. To read a loved poem is to share a close contact with another human heart and mind, and this is something of a miracle. The old Greeks said that Apollo gave the bard a golden net to throw over his hearers. Study the words of a poem too literally and often the magic slips through the meshes in the analytic process.

Three people were once discussing one of Judith Wright's poems. They were talking about a phrase from “Bullocky”, one of the poems from The Moving Image:

... the steepled cone of night...

One said, “I saw a painting once, by Tom Roberts I think, of a bushman camped for the night among tall trees. The light from his fire made a cone-shaped flare. The exact observation of the artist is borne out by that of the poet.” The second said,
"To me it has simply meant the circle of the horizon, as you see it in the western plains country, with the whole coming to a point at the zenith overhead." The third said, "I have always thought of those astronomical diagrams of the solar system one sees in science books. All the planets wear a dunce's cap of shadow on the side away from the sun." The whole conversation reminds one of Sandburg's story of the blind men encountering the elephant for the first time: "An elephant is like a piece of rope." "An elephant is like the wall of a barn." "An elephant is like the trunk of a tree." It depends where you feel it.

... the steepled cone of night...

Five simple words, and for one man at least the earth itself is left behind. Indeed they do not only contain their literal meaning. This is their power, when they are used in the order that seems so inevitably right once genius has placed them so for the first time. The poet is as much the inventor as the man who made the first axe or the first wheel, though he has nothing more to work with than the words of his native tongue, rubbed smooth by the usage of centuries.

The poems contained in *The Gateway* were different from those in the previous books. Certainly there was more difficulty involved and less time for the writing of them. Judith Wright's daughter Meredith had been born in 1950 and a small child in any house means work and more work. A child in a life can also mean a sharpening of the perception, an awareness of issues not considered before, a fresh evaluation of old ideas. Out of the circumstance came poems like "Dark Gift", "Two Songs for the World's End", "Fire at Murdering Hut"; and "Train Journey", with its haunting echoes of "The Trains" of *The Moving Image*, but not of the tamed landscape, the "white acres of our orchards", rather of the wilder country, the land under the cold moon as seen by the traveller, the wilder trees becoming in one sense a prayer for the power of poetry:

Clench down your strength, box-tree and ironbark.
Break with your violent root the virgin rock.
Draw from the flying dark its breath of dew
till the unliving come to life in you.

Be over the blind rock a skin of sense,
under the barren height a slender dance....
There was a new imagery in the poetry now, a haunting awareness of the tangled dark fertility of the rain forest country contrasting with the "clean, lean, hungry country" of The Moving Image poems, imagery perhaps best illustrated in the poem "The Lost Man":

... the bewildering midsummer of darkness
lit with ancient fern,
laced with poison and thorn

through which the traveller must stumble, to an end that is linked always for me with the final poem in the book, the one from which it takes its name, "The Gateway". Here is the first exposition in Judith Wright's poetry of a belief that has been more apparent in her later poems, an acknowledgment of eastern philosophic ideas about death and the implications of death. Here is the slipping of the raindrop into the pool of non-self, the abjuration of self to find the true Self, where for a timeless time it will again understand that it is the apparent reality of the world that is the real illusion.

And the bright smoke
out of the pit of chaos
is the flowing and furious world.

And the mind's nightmare
is the world's sweet wellspring
(the traveller said).

Science has told us how our senses mislead us. Solid as rock, we say. Science says that solid rock is merely a series of infinitely tiny electrical charges held in certain patterns. We can break some of the arrangements, releasing forces too tremendous to measure save in figures so large as to be meaningless. The physical world as apprehended through the senses is an illusion. We have learned to measure certain laws and aspects of it against others, but what of reality? What is reality? We have not so far demonstrated as great an interest in the energy of the spirit as we have in material things. What is a poet but an interpreter of the energy of the spirit? Until science has discovered something of the laws of the spirit, should it not cease to look askance at poets, who at least seek an understanding and a solution to the problems of the spirit?

Judith Wright has said:

*What occupies him* [the poet] *most is not the question, "Why did it happen?" nor "How did it happen?", but rather, "What does it mean to me that it happened?"*
This is far too subjective and interpretive a question for the fact-finding outlook of today, and no method of tabulation can be produced that will help in finding the answer. Only the mind and the imagination that "looks before and after" can deal with facts on this level.\(^\text{17}\)

It was the work of the physical scientists, the liberation of the power of the atom, that had much to do with the forging of the poems of her fourth book, *The Two Fires*. Indeed, it was this power that was one of the fires of the title. The poet said:

I am not afraid of the crow that sharpens his beak for his day.
But, legions of the living dead, your death has pulled me awry,
you withered by unseasonable winter, torn by the wind’s lash;
for I am one of your kind and when you die I die.\(^\text{18}\)

She also said:

In the beginning was the fire;
Out of the death of fire, rock and the waters;
and out of water and rock, the single spark, the divine truth.\(^\text{19}\)

Hence the two fires, the spark of life and love that continues life; and the terrible fire of destruction that may fall upon the whole world:

And the world, that flower that housed the bridegroom and the bride,
burns on the breast of night.
The world’s denied.

These poems were written in the sad years of the Korean war. Within them rings something of the sense of doom overhanging the world and overshadowing the spirit of mankind. There was, and still is, the possibility that what life, the holy fire, had been building through countless centuries might be abruptly razed by men. They deny the world, these men who contemplate its destruction and have in their hands the means to accomplish that destruction. Their dangerous potential grows as more and more nations achieve that awful power. Against that darkness these poems were written. Some critics claimed after their publication that her power was failing. It was not the poetry: the luminosity that pervaded some of the earlier poems was being replaced by something stronger, a strength of protest against the coming on of the great dark.

\(^{17}\) *Australian Poets: Judith Wright*. Selection and Introduction by the Author (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1963), p. vii.

\(^{18}\) "West Wind", *The Two Fires* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1955).

\(^{19}\) "The Two Fires", *ibid.*
Compare "The Precipice" with "Nigger's Leap: New England" of the first book. "Nigger's Leap" is a lament for the destruction of the native people by forces they did not understand and against which they were powerless. "The Precipice" is a poem about a white woman making the same desperate gesture as the aborigine of the other poem (for "all men are one man at last"), and for the same reasons. Not only does she destroy herself but she takes her children with her, the final negation. But in "The Precipice" the air of inevitability that haunts the other poem is lacking. There is no sorrowful acquiescence here. We must hold on against the currents of despair, says the poet. We must

... hold our weathercock minds from turning into its downward gale, towards destruction.

Fight against the torrent of despair and desperation, says the poet. Pray that the dark be not inevitable. Many of the poems in *The Two Fires* sound an ominous note: "Two Generations", "The Harp and the King", "Searchlight Practice", even "Request to a Year". These poems are a development from "Two Songs for the World's End" of *The Gateway*, but with a fine bravery added.

There are poems to fill the heart with delight, of course: "The Man Beneath the Tree", "Nameless Flower", and "The Cup". The dark people still walk from the pages in poems like "At Cooloolah". There is gentle humour in "... and Mr Ferritt", and we have all met him. There is joy and fulfilment in "For a Birthday" and "In Praise of Marriages". But there is a dark thread that runs through the fabric of the book.

Trees are in the poems still. There is a wattle tree flowering:

Root, limb, and leaf unfold
out of the seed, and these rejoice
till the tree dreams it has a voice
to join four truths in one great word of gold.20

In this book too is the tree that is for me the ultimate tree in Australian poetry, reaching in my mind above Douglas Stewart's "Jacaranda". The poem is "Gum-trees Stripping", and it contains the tree I would set against Yeats's "great-rooted blossomer":

20 "The Wattle-tree", *ibid.*
Say the need's born within the tree, 
and waits a trigger set for light;
say sap is tidal like the sea, 
and rises with the solstice-heat—
but wisdom shells the words away 
to watch this fountain slowed in air 
where sun joins earth—to watch the place 
at which these silent rituals are.

See the tree stripping its bark; examine it 
with the cold eye of intellectual reason as a botanist might, 
and consider why. The periods of alternating light and darkness, the rising of the sap, the putting on of fresh copper foliage to turn green in its time and await the light of the following year. Wisdom rejects the reasonable conclusions, however, valid though they may be. Tree, that combination of the four elements of alchemy that spoke in "one great word of gold" in the wattle tree of the previously mentioned poem; tree becomes a place for the innate wisdom of the mind to observe what is no longer merely a botanical fact but has become a "silent ritual". Tree becomes a symbol for trees, that exist though the watcher is not there to observe. The poem continues:

Words are not meanings for a tree. 
So it is truer not to say, 
"These rags look like humility, 
or this year's wreck of last year's love, 
or wounds ripped by the summer's claw."

The tree has no meaning in human words 
once the mind accepts the tree as a symbol for trees and nothing more. From this viewpoint, words, similes and metaphors relating to a human idea of tree become meaningless to the intellect, though it is possible to draw many such from the fact of the tattered bark around the great column. It is truer not to say that the bark looks like the ragged robes of humility, the shell of dead love, the blind attack of time and age.

If it is possible to be wise 
here, wisdom lies outside the word 
in the earlier answer of the eyes.

It is better to apprehend the totality of tree through the immediate vision than to build complex imagery around the aspects of tree, or it becomes other than the simple thing it is.
Wisdom can see the red, the rose,
the stained and sculptured curve of grey,
the charcoal scars of fire, and see
around that living tower of tree
the hermit tatters of old bark
split down and strip to end the season;
and can be quiet and not look
for reasons past the edge of reason.
The intuitive wisdom of the mind rather than the enquiring curiosity of intellect can best accept the totality of tree. The last two lines point the poem. It is better to accept the tree on its own terms than search more deeply and load it with aspects it does not contain.

It should not be the duty of a commentator to explain to a poet's audience what the poet is saying. Any poet who needs an interpreter is failing in his duty as a poet. It is the poet's task to make plain; the only legitimate reason for the use of abstract concepts in writing should be that the thing contained in the words cannot be expressed exactly in any other way. The poet's task is made more difficult by the very tools of his trade, the use-worn words with which he works. T. S. Eliot, speaking of this difficulty, says that each new poem is:

... a raid on the inarticulate
With shabby equipment always deteriorating
In the general mess of imprecision of feeling,
Undisciplined squads of emotion . . . .

and, later in the same poem:

For us, there is only the trying. The rest is not our business.21

Judith Wright captured the tree in a net of simple, imprecise words. As with the tree, so with the poem. By all means study it with the intellect as the botanist studies the tree, if that is the way you see things. But read it as a poem and you may find communication on a deeper level, "the red, the rose, the stained and sculptured curve of grey" and the "living tower of tree" will rise in your mind for ever. This is the gift a poet brings to men. The rest is not his business.

Now that we have examined this particular poem at some length it may be of interest to record what Judith Wright had to say about the writing of it. It came first from the sight of the gum-trees stripping. The poem was successful, I think, because I had an idea which that particular sight of the trees started into life. That's an example of a poem you can write pretty well straight through, because you have had the idea beforehand but you haven't seen how to put it. This thing expressed it straight out. But quite often I am struggling with a feeling or idea that doesn't come right at all. I can't find what is called the "objective co-relative", and I throw all those

poems away as far as possible. I keep some of them because they
seem to have a value of their own apart from whether I have
succeeded in doing what I wanted to do or not. All of them give
me more trouble than they should. You have to be able to en-
ccompass the whole of man in some way or another to write a
successful poem. Unless I can get both the idea and the concrete
thing that expresses it I can never write a poem that satisfies me.
I can write a poem, perhaps, and some people seem to like the
ones that don't seem to me to be successful and miss out on the
ones that seem to me to be successful. I have always had this
difficulty in reconciling what I think with what I see. I'm always
struggling with problems of language, for instance. Language
seems to me to be the most important thing about man. Quite
obviously it is. Without language we wouldn't be here. Language
is the creative element in man, I'd say, and poets work in this
material that is almost impossible to work in because every word
you use is a poem in itself. I always have this language versus
world problem, trying to get the poem objective enough without
getting too intellectual about it. This I think is why some people
think some of the poems are too philosophical. They are not
philosophical. Far from it. They are just my desperate attempts to
reconcile idea and feeling. I started off by being called a "nature
poet", a silly classification because after all you are a person, not
a piece of nature. Anything I have ever written has had its human
meaning even if it started from the natural. The meaning of any
poem I write, I think, is immediate and not purely descriptive. I
could never write what they call purely "nature" poetry, in fact I
doubt if anyone ever does. I can never find a poem that, on exam-
ination, does not turn out to be much more relevant to man than
to nature. Not even John Clare. The older you grow, I suppose,
the less you are capable of getting that immediate feeling that
you can get when you are young. You seem more inclined to take
refuge in the mind. This is my struggle, trying to get out of the
conventional idea back to the thing. Back to the immediate inter-
action of mind and object without putting the emphasis too much
on the one or the other. The same thing happens to language, of
course. It gets more and more abstract, less and less immediate
the further away from its source that it comes. You might say
that the aborigines' language was practically in the thing.

Speaking about the writing of the poems
contained in The Two Fires, Judith Wright has said: The atom
bomb was really under my skin. Not because it was a bomb, but
because it was an atom bomb. It seemed to me to be a dreadful
thing that you should set to work to use actual force instead of
material to demolish your fellow man. We were starting from
here and going back to wreck our own history.
Despite the shadow of apprehension and anger cast across the pages by the fire of destruction, the book has its fire of affirmation of life and love, the second of the two fires: poems like "The Man Beneath the Tree", with its wry last stanza, and the "Flying-fox", the animal caught in the wires, seeing the world upside down. 

"... and Mr Ferritt" shows man, too, caught in his own particular wires and seeing his world upside down:

The radio serial
whines in the kitchen,
cought in a box,
and cannot get out.

Poor radio serial, and indeed, poor Mr. Ferritt who is caught in a box and cannot get out until his body, too, gets caught in a box. The air of the book never becomes melancholy. One ends a reading of it with the hope that we shall overcome the fire that would thrust us all into darkness. We are left with a sense of trust in the affirmation of the beauty and meaning of the love that brought the tree and the whole world into being.

Judith Wright has said that one of the things that makes it extremely difficult to write poetry in Australia is that you cannot both submit yourself to the untouched landscape and dominate it. The usual reaction we have in this country is "What can I get out of it that will make me money?", not "What do I feel about it?" She said further, this has always been the attitude, and I don't know that it isn't more so than it ever was. I don't know that we are getting over it. No doubt she had in mind the past exploitation of some of the best features of Australia by those who wanted only to make a quick profit and then a getaway to a social scene that was more congenial to the European mind and emotion. The timber torn from the hillsides so that they eroded into the rivers, the merciless destruction of the native peoples, the overstocking that ate out enormous tracts of grazing land, the rape of the very soil itself by the thoughtless tearing out of its minerals and the consequent destruction of the landscape as it had existed; all these things done in the name of progress have tended in her opinion to keep us from becoming native Australians in the true sense of the word, have kept us from that sense of identification with our land that will enable us to speak easily and naturally as poets in our own country. For this and other reasons she has been actively engaged in an
attempt to halt some of the worst of the current despoiling of the land. For some years she was President of the Wildlife Preservation Society, for whose formation she was largely responsible; and editor of its magazine *Wildlife*.

With her daughter Meredith at Mt. Tamborine.
These are points to have in mind when reading all her poetry, but particularly the fifth book, *Birds*, published in 1962. The book is dedicated to her daughter, Meredith, and through this dedication, to all children. Few Australian poets have written successful verse for children; Judith Wright not only did so but succeeded in writing it at such a level of interest that it could be read by adults with equal understanding and sympathy. The poems are all about birds; birds as separate and different as the peacock, black-shouldered kite, and the blue wren; and there is no sentimental feeling toward any. The birds are in the poems as they are in the mind of the poet. There is blood on the butcher-bird’s beak, no mercy in the elegant wagtail, horror and death in the wounded night-bird. There is fun in the conceit that the brush turkey has a lesson for poets, and an indescribably elusive charm in the poem about the dotterel, the remote one:

Water’s edge, land’s edge
and edge of the air—
the dotterel chooses
to live nowhere.

It runs, but not in fear;
and its thin high call
is like a far bugle
that troubles the soul.²²

Much of the poetry in this book troubles the soul of the reader. Birds are part of the heritage we have from our country, and much of this heritage is still being destroyed. It is right that the book should be dedicated to a child and to children, for they may yet grow to more wisdom than their forebears and do more to live with the land instead of merely exploiting it, and indeed must do so if their children are not to inherit as desert what was once a beautiful country.

Judith Wright has said: *The trouble with our relationship to Australia is that we still don’t live here. I was brought up in it, you might say, and have succeeded in absorbing it, to some extent, but there’s a tremendous amount still outside, a tremendous amount that will never now find a voice. I remember that Mary Gilmore said, apropos of “I Saw the Beauty Go”, how she remembered landscapes from her childhood that now nobody would recognize. You have only got to read Major Mitchell’s journals, anything like that. There is so much that is gone already, and so much that we’re busily tearing down, just because we’re*

scared of it, I think. All we want to do is get the money out as quickly as possible, and then, if necessary, as the fellow remarked the other day, sell the lot to the Japanese and move back to the south of France or somewhere. This is an attitude that I do find, even now. We could move out perfectly easily, we still haven’t swallowed the place. It hasn’t even succeeded in swallowing us. This is sad. This, I think, is part of my problem. I am a fifth generation Australian on one side and fourth generation on the other, but I’m still, in a sense, a European. The development of thought that has gone on in Europe is exactly the thing that influences us out here all the time. We don’t make our own thought. We just share, from outside, in a development of thought that has been going on over there for a long time. We’ve really got no indigenous anything. We’ve got no philosophers, we’ve developed no school of philosophy, we have no religion except what has been brought in from outside. We have no religion at all, really. We are totally unlike any of the countries that our forebears came from in that respect, we have been stripped naked. Even if you have been brought up, as I was, in the country, nevertheless the country can only have a certain amount of effect on you. What you live, what you think, the things and ideas that you have and among which you live, are at least as important as the natural background, and probably far more so once you get past a certain stage. They are entirely different from the natural background, really, and there is a constant conflict between what Australia actually is and what we are. This is, I think, one of the main problems for any Australian poet, trying to be both indigenous and a living, thinking person.

Every poet has his own vision of poetry, what it means, and is, and should be. Few poets achieve their desire when they write the poem down. They know what it was in the mind, in the conception, but very often what goes onto the page is not at all the vision that led to the attempt. Though Judith Wright may lament the unsung passing of the Australia that was, there is no doubt that she is remarkably successful in giving us her view of the Australia that is, whether we agree with what she says or not. She has the power of conveying vision and meaning. Her published poetry since Birds has been far less concerned with actual landscape and things, more concerned with people and relationships. Perhaps this is what she means when she speaks of "taking refuge in the mind". It is not that the mind rejects the country, the landscape. She has written much about the writing of verse, about the gift of song, the dubious gift of vision that can be torment to the poet. She never
rejects it, she is humbly grateful for it and begs that it be not taken from her. From "The Forest" in *Five Senses*, the poem "Moth":

and so turned back my pen to prayer
that might be language for a moth:
"O overcome me, Power and Truth;
transmute my ignorance, burn it bare;
so that against your flame, not I
but all that is not You, may die."

From "The Forest", the title poem:

Now that its vines and flowers
are named and known,
like long-fulfilled desires
those first strange joys are gone.

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.

From *The Other Half*, the poem "Prayer":

And you, who speak in me when I speak well,
withdraw not your grace, leave me not dry and cold.
I have praised you in the pain of love, I would praise you still
in the slowing of the blood, the time when I grow old.

She remains true to the dream and belief and hope expressed in one verse of the poem "The Moving Image" from the book of that name. One senses in it the patient years of writing, the endless poems destroyed because the words did not match the vision; the search for the right way. There is the joy in eventual accomplishment, in maturity, in the knowledge that the future may bring even more understanding of the strange spiritual journey a poet must take in the joyful pain of his song making. How far she has succeeded in her search must be left to the individual reader to decide, for poetry is essentially a communication between two people only, the poet and the reader or hearer, the poet speaking from his doomed cell to the reader in his, communicating the vision direct from consciousness to consciousness by means of

those poor stumbling words that can convey “love's whole eternity”:

And yet, the lovelier distance is ahead.
I would go farther with you, clock and star,
though the earth break under my feet and storm
snatch at my breath and night ride over me.
I am the maker. I have made both time and fear,
knowing that to yield to either is to be dead.
All that is real is to live, to desire, to be,
till I say to the child I was, “It is this; it is here.
In the doomed cell I have found love's whole eternity.”

I started getting interested in the history of Australian poetry itself, because it seemed to me that the history of Australian poetry is just about the history of Australia. If you can understand that then you can understand Australia. All this snobbishness about our origins and our provincial nineteenth century poets is simply silly. I mean, that was us.

Thus Judith Wright, talking about the motives that began her writing of the series of studies that were later published as Preoccupations in Australian Poetry in 1965. Readers of this interesting and important book should bear this in mind, as well as her statement in the Author’s Note at the beginning of the book:

This book makes no pretension to being either historically or critically exhaustive in the field of Australian poetry . . . . I have tried here to concern myself less with textual or critical judgements than with certain attitudes and aspects in Australian writing.

The book itself is admirably written; the work that has gone into the research has been careful and exacting, and the exposition of the argument is both clear and, from her point of view, valid. Of course, it is from her viewpoint, and there are many who will not agree with her assessments of the importance to their people and the poetic achievements of some of the poets she considers. Whatever one's reaction, the book has the effect of sending the reader back to the poets themselves for further confirmation of one's own particular feelings in some matter or other, and this is a good thing in itself. We do not read our own poets enough, though this is not always our fault. There is no really good collection of Charles Harpur's poetry available, for instance, and Christopher Brennan's poetry was out of print for many years.

Opposite: The writing of a poem later published as “Clock and Heart” in The Other Half.
The trap of time appalled my heart.
For breathless as in noontide, chance
lurked hungry in a prove deep
I turned round just as a plane
in afternoon light and thought
saw a figure for a fleeting heart.
A陌生人 fierce and lonesome shade
clutched me in its darkness very
I fled as we bore to confess,
no eyes to behold my aging eyes;
The solitude was light, and no space
had locked us in its fingertips shade.

Travel the world to find the year,
there's no rest left for time
I was the only mirror; I sung
the ballad to some crooked sound.
The evident ray brightened above
that bit of the universe that set before
locked in the midst of human time
that long-repeated tyranny of tyrant.
I found in ordinary love
The serenade of poetry.
It is difficult to assess the poetry of any country unless it can be read in some sort of perspective in relation to its historical development. This is particularly true in Australia where there is a history of poetry only over the last hundred years, and where the background of the natural landscape is so different from that which formed the traditional thought of the immigrant. Judith Wright says:

*Before one's country can become an accepted background against which the poet's and novelist's imagination can move unhindered, it must first be observed, understood, described, and as it were absorbed. The writer must be at peace with his landscape before he can turn confidently to its human figures.*

But in Australian writing the landscape has, it almost seems, its own life, hostile to its human inhabitants; it forces its way into the foreground, it takes up an immense amount of room, or sometimes it is so firmly pushed away that its obvious absence haunts us as much as its presence could do.\(^{25}\)

So in *Preoccupations* she sets out to examine in some detail the reconciliation achieved by each of the poets studied with the Australian environment and also with the schools of poetic thought that have arisen in this country, those two schools once described by R. D. FitzGerald in a lecture as "Stockyard and Common-room". (A better description might be Action and Contemplation, the Yang and Yin of poetic outlook.) One school begins with the anonymous convict and bush balladists and comes down through Harpur and the *Bulletin* school, by way of Joseph Furphy and Miles Franklin in the novel, to the present day of Douglas Stewart, David Campbell, Colin Thiele, Eleanor Dark, and others. On the other side, beginning with Brennan (though she says *he was not influenced by his Australian predecessors, and he has had little influence, in his turn, on his successors here*), there is what she has called the literature of exile, which has reached its later peaks in the poetry of men like James McAuley and A. D. Hope and the novels of Patrick White and Martin Boyd.

Harpur is the first poet she takes for examination, and of him she says (p. 1): . . . *Harpur's claim to be regarded as the first poet of his country is better founded than has yet been allowed, and . . . he is also a better poet than many of those who followed him.*

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Judith Wright is particularly qualified to pass such a judgment on Harpur, for she is one of the few people who have made a study of his manuscripts in the Mitchell Library. This is immediately apparent from the footnotes of the chapter she devotes to him in this book. She quotes (p. 5) from Harpur’s own MS, a note in his handwriting that almost any Australian poet might echo: “During my whole manhood I have had to mingle daily amongst men . . . who have faith for nothing in God’s glorious universe that is not, in their own vile phrase, ‘money’s worth’. ” (Apropos of this Judith herself remarked: Being a materialistic, exploiting culture we are really anti-poetic. When someone rejoined, “Yes, but people pay lip service to poetry more than they did in Harpur’s day”, she said: Yes, but now it’s become a politician’s cliche.)

Charles Harpur, son of convict parents, the first poet of his native land. If this book does nothing else, and it does do far more in fact, it sends us back to make a fresh assessment of this long-neglected man, a man with a vision of what his country could become.

Harpur’s poems could not reach a popular audience in his time. Though he spoke for the Currency Lads, his diction was that of the educated Englishman. If the Currency Lads ever felt the need for poetry it was filled by the rough ballad of folklore, such poems as were written by the convict “Frank the Poet” (Francis McNamara), “The Convict’s Tour of Hell” and “A Convict’s Lament on the Death of Captain Logan”. The bards of the iron gang and the traditional ballads brought from “Home” provided the poetic fare of what might have been Harpur’s audience, and the merchants of the middle classes were too busy getting their “money’s worth” to be much concerned with poetic dreams about the country of their adoption. So Harpur died poor and disillusioned about his countrymen if not about his country. Let us hope that someone will rescue his verse and publish it so that we may have the easy access to it that is not possible at present.

Judith Wright’s final comment on the poetry of Henry Kendall (who was, in his own words, a follower of Harpur) is this (p. 44):

Kendall, in fact, is not, as his admirers tell us, the “first Australian poet”; looked at hard and honestly, he is scarcely to be called an interpreter of Australia at all. He is, however, something quite as important, the poet of his own desperate struggle and final self-mastery.
This comment is most important. Elsewhere she has remarked:

...one contemporary critic has praised a certain poet’s work as containing “no reference to wallabies”, while others regard wallaby-less poems as somehow not quite Australian; but the point about poems ought not to be whether they are or are not obviously aware of the existence of wallabies, but whether they are or are not poems.26

In the same essay she makes the point (p. 1):

There are at least two angles of view from which we can look at Australian poetry—roughly definable as, first Australian poetry, a special case in a special country, and second, poetry in Australia, a continuing human activity much the same here as elsewhere, limited by a few special conditions but comparable to, and interacting with, poetry everywhere.

This is as impartial a summing up of Kendall’s work as one can find, and it is an approach to be endorsed with regard to any poetry from any country. The second point of view is the one to be particularly commended, perhaps; we should compare Brennan with Robert Bridges, or Kenneth Slessor and FitzGerald with W. H. Auden, Louis MacNeice, and Wallace Stevens, rather than with each other. Of the poets she surveys so competently, her own taste seems to lie with the “contemplation” rather than the “action” school. The word “school” is unfortunate. Few Australian poets have ever shown a tendency to school in the way fish do, for instance. They have stubbornly followed their own individual paths toward their own particular vision and viewpoint, and this is in itself a virtue, whether the path turned out to be a dead-end street or a highway leading through the foothills of experiment and growing understanding to an eventual height of personal realization. As mentioned above, Pre-occupations has the effect of sending the reader back to the poets, and for this reason particularly it is a most important contribution to critical literature in Australia. One may agree or disagree with the writer, but one is stimulated by her. Here are some reviewers’ comments on the book when it was first published.

The insights of the opening chapter are followed by a plea for a wider recognition of Harpur’s achievement. This and the chapter on John

Shaw Neilson are perhaps Miss Wright's most successful essays in critical revaluation. She uncovers unsuspected depths in both poets, finding in Harpur a Wordsworthian stance that gives authority to his acceptance of the Australian scene, and in Neilson a visionary quality that has the stamp of maturity rather than of simplicity. In making us share her delight in the excellences of these poets Miss Wright shows herself to be a most persuasive critic.27

Certain writers simply do not emerge from this examination whole. Harpur is a case in point. Miss Wright has studied the Harpur material in the Mitchell Library, yet she presents him—as he has always been presented—as a nature poet with philosophical leanings. Yet, especially for her purpose, surely his political verse, however slight and ephemeral, is important. Its neglect permits her to claim for him both too much and too little.28

In Harpur she finds a tension between the reformist and the nationalist . . . . Preoccupations is a fine book, and it does indeed touch on all the main interests which have occupied our poets. The author's love of her native land comes through here as in her other work, and from her comments on the world-view of other poets we can deduce something of her own, which helps to illuminate her poetry in turn.29

"The author's love of her native land comes through here as in her other work", says Grahame Johnston. Her most recent publication in prose bears out this statement fully. The book is called The Nature of Love30 and it is a collection of her short stories published in late 1966. The stories themselves date from early in the 1950's, and all the stories in the book had been published previously (mainly in the Bulletin) except the two longer ones, "Eighty Acres" and "The Duck Farm". The stories are, almost without exception, studies of a particular kind of loving, of a particular person at an exceptional moment, a moment significant in that a decision one way or the other will have much consequence for the central figure involved. There are some things that become apparent in reading the stories as a collection that were not obvious when they were read as they appeared singly. First of all, there is only one story that has the city as a backdrop, and there the action takes place in a park in the city and involves a brolga. The rest of the stories have a natural setting of country, hillside or seashore or country town. Judith Wright once said:

28 Professor Leonie Kramer, Australian Book Review, IV, 9 (July, 1965), 159.
29 Grahame Johnston, Australian, 21 August 1965, p. 11.
I can't work in cities, at least, I can work but I find it very difficult and often the work is not good. Some critics have been waiting for me to produce something about the city, and when I wrote "Typists in the Phoenix Building" they said, "She has done it at last!" but the setting was incidental to the thing I was trying to say and that could have been said in another way anyhow. She feels more at home with a skyline of trees than she ever could with a landscape of buildings, and anyway her country has always been green and living rather than grey and arid.

31 The Other Half.
Another significant thing about the collection is the absence of humour in the stories. One does not expect a poet to be a clown, an entertainer; but life is not altogether as serious as the general climate of this book leaves one feeling. It is a feeling difficult to define, because each story is most sensitively written and the point is clear, but the cumulative effect of the book is rather damping to the spirits of the reader. The odd thing about this is that Judith Wright is not a solemn person. She has a fine sense of fun, and she can put it down on paper. Anyone who doubts this has only to turn to her first published book for children, *Kings of the Dingoes*, which has some delightfully funny passages. But these short stories, with their bravery, tremendous understanding of the quirks tormenting certain minds, lucid pictures of children's thoughts and impulses, deep love of the land and quick stir of sympathy for the people of the land (especially the aboriginal people) seem to lack any trace of humour. They are stories of contemplation rather than of action and in most cases they point the way to a deeper understanding of an aspect of man and land, or both together; but with no admission of the fact that in the midst of tragedy or even love itself, humour has a way of thrusting in. What makes this particular facet of the book more surprising is the very background of the stories. The bush has always had its humour. Born and brought up in the bush as Judith was when most of these stories were written, it does seem odd that no whisper of mirth lightens them. Of course the very nature of what the bushman considered funny could not creep into these tales without some incongruity, but the bush background is there, and makes the absence strangely noticeable.

As remarked already, her sense of fun shows up particularly well in *Kings of the Dingoes*. The story was written around 1950 and was published by Oxford University Press in 1958 after lying in the drawer of a desk for some years. It is the story of three dogs wandering through the bush in search of their masters. Two of them are house pets and have run away after being left at home while their owners went for a holiday. They are on their way to the seaside, for they refuse to be left out of their family's activities in such an arbitrary manner. The third dog, Jake, is a drover's dog who has become separated from his Boss, and is anxious to rejoin him because he knows that the Boss will be having trouble with the travelling mob without him there to help. Jake has the points that go to make up the best type of worker in the outback. He has no illusions of romanticism about his job, though
he wants no other. The other two dogs are William the Pomeranian, who is a senior dog and a thinker and planner, and Benbow, barely full grown and bubbling over with the enthusiasm and impulsiveness of youth. Benbow is much the sort of dog Henry Lawson describes in his story “The Loaded Dog”. When Benbow tells Jake how he envies him his free and roving life, the personality of the bush worker immediately becomes apparent in Jake’s answer (p. 37):

. . . it’s got its points, but it’s got its drawbacks too. How’d yer like it in rainy winter weather, with a westerly blowing the hair out of yer ears and the sleet freezing to yer nose, and the cattle all touchy and cranky with the cold and breaking in all directions, and as liable as not to put a horn in yer when you try to bring ‘em back? And what about a real ‘ot summer day in the middle of a drought, with the dust choking yer and the cattle milling round in it so yer can’t see if they’re coming or going, and you’d give yer collar for a good drink and an hour’s lay-off in the shade?

There is the authentic note, the voice of one who has followed cattle in both circumstances. Jake has the simple beliefs of the bush, the right of anyone to a “fair go”. When Dirty Dick, the king of the dingoes, has been trapped in a shed and the smaller bush creatures crowd round the door to jeer at him, it is Jake who intervenes (p. 86):

“No, yer don’t,” Jake told them; “it ain’t fair to kick a bloke when he’s down. Dick’s a decent enough feller, for a dingo, when all’s said and done, and I will say one thing for him, he’s a fighter, which is more than most dingoes are. He’s got enough to worry about in there, without you making it worse for him. So you let him alone.” And they came back, rather ashamed of themselves.

“Can’t blame them, I suppose,” Jake said tolerantly; “there’s no-one in the bush that likes a dingo.”

It is through the character of Jake that one hears Judith Wright, the bush girl, speaking most clearly. Her instinct for what the bush reaction to circumstances would be is unerring, because of her background. She does not falter once in her judgment of the typical response, she has it in herself to be recorded. Her own reactions would be far more complex, of course, but her drawing of the bush dog is impeccable in its faithfulness to the customs of his environment. It is true to say that Judith Wright swings from contemplation to action in her books for children. As is to be expected, her description of the background against which the story moves is sensitive and faultless in detail, and even the characters she gives to the animals in this fantastic bit of foolery run true to
what one might have expected from one’s own acquaintance with people in the bush. The cockatoos, the kookaburras, and especially the native cat and his wife speak much as one would anticipate. The whole effect is at once natural and delightful. It certainly is for children. She once said: . . . at this time I was writing a story for children. I am not very good at it, but I enjoy it. Children enjoy it, too. This particular book, the first she wrote, is the only one of her children’s books that contains poetry as well as prose, and the poems (or more properly, verses) are among the chief of its charms. “The Sheepstealers’ Chorus”, sung by the dingo pack at Dirty Dick’s party, is particularly rousing and should find its way into anthologies of children’s poetry some day. Another interesting thing about this particular poem is that it is the only poem of hers that has been published that is in the form of the traditional bush ballad. Needless to say, she makes a rousing success of it!

Judith Wright has written three other books for children: Range the Mountains High,32 The River and the Road,33 and The Day the Mountains Played.34 The third one mentioned deserves some examination because it is the retelling of an aboriginal myth, and the method used in writing it relates to what she had to say, quoted above, about the language of the native people:

. . . trying to get . . . back to the immediate interaction of mind and object without putting the emphasis too much on the one or the other. The same thing happens to language, of course. It gets more and more abstract, less and less immediate the further away from its source that it comes. You might say that the aborigines’ language was practically in the thing.

Whether or not she did it deliberately, she came very close in this short and simple story to achieving the “immediate interaction of mind and object”. Although the story is intended for children in the seven to ten year old age group and so had perforce to be simply written and expressed, and although the tale itself is simple as are most of the stories of the tribesmen, yet with this children’s story she achieved her admitted aim in her poetry. It is best read aloud, and to children, if it is to be judged, for no amount of silent perusal can show the effect that it has upon children. While the story itself exemplifies the belief of the aboriginal people that they were part of their country, and that while they lived in harmony

with their country it would protect them, it has the effect of involving children in that same strange country and making them also part of the story. Reading it silently to oneself does not give the effect of reading it aloud. Some of the sentences seem to stumble in print, but flow off the tongue. The poet's instinct for the word is apparent, the simple word that best conveys the meaning, without effort.

In all four of the books for children there is little decoration and no condescension. The stories are told simply and directly. She does not write as warmly as might be expected, perhaps; but the light that does shine from the pages is the glow of her involvement in the scenery and the country. Despite what she has to say about the difficulty for her in still being "in a sense, European", she achieves the translation of her landscape almost as successfully as the aborigines did. Perhaps the mountains spoke to her also, as they did to the boys in her book. If not, they have certainly spoken through her.

It will take four or five hundred years for us to become indigenes; and to write poetry, unless you are an indigene, is very difficult. I don't know how anybody does it.

The landscape lost its character. The aborigines lived with the landscape and every bit of it had meaning for them. We couldn't accept any of their meanings. This is what the Jindyworobaks were trying to get at but they were doing it the wrong way. They were trying to deny their own meaning and to get back to the aborigines' meaning, but you can't do this. You've got to live your own meaning into it. You have to be yourself and at the same time come to terms with something that you have robbed of its original meaning. This is an extremely difficult thing to do.

A good deal of its accepted meaning was ebbing from the European landscape about the same time as we got here. That's the point. The whole of European development came to a culmination round about the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and we were out here; cut off from what we already had there, and at the same time, over there, they were practically denying their own development.

Maybe the real virtue of the bush balladists, the one we have mainly denied, has been precisely their adaptation to their own way of living. We are not adapted to our way of living.

It is things we want, not the meaning of things.
So Judith Wright said, summing up a discussion. *It is things we want, not the meaning of things.* Poetry in Australia has, despite some excursions into blind alleys, gone on exploring the meaning of things for us, in the face of general apathy. Any publisher will confirm that although many people try to write poetry in this country few people buy books of poems when they are eventually published, except perhaps children who are compelled to study poetry in school. Of this, Judith Wright said:

*For this [anthology] is meant to be a popular selection. But then the poet asks himself uneasily, popular with whom? Who is the poet’s audience today? Very few people now read poetry for pleasure, but some, unfortunately, are forced to read it for the purpose of being examined in their appreciation of it. Poetry, like medicine, is not often taken for its pleasant taste; it is prescribed. This is enough to make it unpopular at the very outset.*

Possibly Australians will never become deeply interested in poetry. It may be because not enough of the poets succeed in interpreting for or inspiring their fellows. It may be that we are so spiritually obese that we prefer to doze in the sun despite the poets who shout or whisper in our ears. In Flecker’s words, the poets have forgotten the people and the people have forgotten the poets. Judith Wright has tried her utmost to reach her countrymen, to spark in them the same delight and meaning she has gained from her country. If she has failed it is not because of any lack of effort on her part. Has she failed? Children love her work, even in the schools where she is, so to speak, prescribed. People who never read poetry have heard of her, and this is no small achievement. If we had to field a Great Australian Poet to represent us in a World Olympics she would almost certainly be elected to wear the number one jersey even by people who, sad to say, have read little of her poetry. So much for the impact she has had on her people. So much for popular opinion, even if it be uninformed. But has she failed? Failed in what? Failed to convey the intimate voice and vision that belong to her? She would probably answer, in Eliot’s words, that that is not her business. Her business was to do the work as well as she could with the tools and material at her disposal. She has tried to do that, and the poetry must stand or fall by its merits.

35 *Australian Poets: Judith Wright*, p. v.
One hopes that she will continue to try to blaze the track for those who will follow, for those who have a dream of what this country and its people might in time become; that she will continue to evaluate the past for our appreciation and bring the light of her vision to help us in the complexities that divide our hearts and loyalties. Not that she would ever admit that she has attempted this. She would simply say that she was trying to write poetry.
bibliography

The Other Half. Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1966.