Judith Wright – Shifts, Turning Points, Influences, Themes

1940s  
World War II  
“Ern Malley” Hoax

1943  
Wright met Jack McKinney, began studying the psychology of unconscious forces attempting to yoke together modern poetry, ancient myths and the darker urges that shape society. Leads to a rather heavy and earnest tone in her poetry – dealing with wide ranging, thoughtful and passionate issues. Challenges “chauvinist, elitist, self-perpetuating, geriatric bureaucracy”. She has “courage, humility and general human decency”. A kind of obsessive anxiety and anger over issues. She has left a “model for a humane and committed concern for the future of the human race”.

1946  
The Company of Lovers  
South of My Days  
Breaking out of the rigidity, prejudices and conformity of her background.  
Grappling with the horrors of WWII – How could someone drop an atom bomb? How could someone kill 7/8 million Jews? Is there something wrong with humanity or wrong with the world?  
Poet’s awareness of time, death, and evil on a universal scale.  
Debate stifled at this time -> growing Cold War.  
Sense of guilt in Wright + growing awareness of the lack of truth in white settlement history.  
Entered into a struggle with the problem of “language and the forces of land utterly alien to it.” Needed to use the language of Australia to create the emotion. Then
able to work on reason together with emotion to present a different perspective of Australia and what it means to be Australian. Thus translate Australia into the consciousness and to converge indigenous and non-indigenous imagination or Dreaming.

1949  **Woman to Man**  
**Woman to Child**  
Distinctly female perspective  
Celebration of articulate female  
Celebration of womanhood  
Celebration of pregnancy

1963-66  **Age to Youth**  
**Double Image**  
**Eve to her Daughters**  
“The two threads of my life, the love of the land itself and the deep unease over the fate of its original people, were beginning to twine together, and the rest of my life would be influenced by that connection.” Wright.  
Beginning to look at the unconscious, the “self that night undrowns when I’m asleep”  
Beginning to address some of the issues of the day like the Vietnam War.  
Moved from the inward looking poet to “a rage against destructiveness and blind obedience.”

1966  Jack McKinney dies

1970-73  **Fire Sermon**  
**Some Words**  
Moves from Vietnam War to questions of society and the forces that are exerted on people.  
Increasingly pessimistic.
Examining the dehumanising conditioning of society – why do we treat each other so badly?  
Getting a bit disillusioned with poetry and wondering if hers’, like others’ poetry, made any difference on a social/political level.  
Turned to protest and began promoting the reading and writing of poetry in schools, working on conservation and publicising the plight of indigenous people.  

1976-85  **Tightropes**  
**The Dark Ones**  
**Smalltown Dance**  
Very concerned with social, political and environmental issues.