



HUMANITIES RESEARCH CENTRE
in the RESEARCH SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES

VISITING FELLOWS WORK-IN-PROGRESS SEMINAR SERIES

***'Lives we love do not know': Reading Intimacy in the
Work of Judith Wright***

DR ANN VICKERY

Centre for Women's Studies & Gender Research, Monash University
HRC Visiting Fellow

**Tuesday, 6 March, 2007
at 4.00pm**

Theatrette, Old Canberra House, ANU

Following the roundtable conversation (Meredith McKinney, Patricia Clarke, and Veronica Brady) on Judith Wright being held at the National Library on 4 March 2007, this paper considers intimacy in Wright's distinction between knowing and feeling. It investigates the nuanced variations, oppositions, and overlaps between the researcher's desire for intimacy with her subject, the fan's desire for intimacy, and Wright's own discussions of intimacy in her correspondence, memoirs, poetry, and archival material. While scholars, friends, and fans of Wright's work often read it through an autobiographical and biographical lens, Wright herself continued to explore the desire for and illusion of a real 'I'. Instead, as she suggests there are only half lives, multiple lives, and the unspeakable life. I will discuss Wright and Jack McKinney's focus on biography, how it offered McKinney an alternative to the 'dehumanising' effects of philosophy and the difficulties Wright encountered in experimenting with its boundaries as a genre. Beyond the published letters between Wright and McKinney, and the recent *With Love & Fury: Selected Letters of Judith Wright* (2006), I will also be referring in particular to unpublished correspondence with Wright during the 1970s.

Dr Ann Vickery is a Monash Fellow in the Centre for Women's Studies & Gender Research at Monash University. She is currently working on two large projects, the first investigating the careers and reputations of post-war Australian women poets and the second examining the relationship between women writers and artists of the New York School. Both studies rethink the relationship between 'text' and 'life' as well as analyse the sociopoetics of authorship. Ann is the author of *Leaving Lines of Gender: A Feminist Genealogy of Language Writing* (Wesleyan UP, 2000) and 'Stressing the Modern: Cultural Politics in Australian Women's Poetry' (Salt, UK, forthcoming 2007). She has published widely in the area of Australian poetry and innovative women's writing and was editor-in-chief of HOW2 (www.how2journal.com) between 2001 and 2002.

For more information or to be added to our mailing list contact the Research School of Humanities
T: 6125 4812; E: judy.buchanan@anu.edu.au; W: <http://www.anu.edu.au/hrc>

ANU COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES