

# Early Works

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## LOVE & FURY

Judith Wright & 'Nugget' Coombs

**Delivery Materials (publicity)**

**Synopsis (one page)**

**Synopsis EPG (224 characters)**

**Background notes**

**(including program makers' personal statement)**

**Biographies of 'talent'**

**and documentary participants**

**Bibliographic references**

**Credits**

**Stills (separate) jpg. 300 dpi x 25**

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## LOVE & FURY: Judith Wright & 'Nugget' Coombs

### SYNOPSIS

*LOVE & FURY* concerns the life and works of two remarkable Australians, Judith Wright and H.C. 'Nugget' Coombs. Their clandestine relationship over 25 years has been one of the best-kept secrets in Australian literary and political public life. The story of their meeting, their love and their shared passions provides unique insights into the dreams and disappointments of a generation.

Judith Wright, among Australia's foremost literary figures, poet, essayist, activist, dedicated herself to writing and fighting for a more humane Australia. Her passion was the land and the first Australians. She was often furious about what she saw as the betrayal of both. Her creative enterprise as a poet engaged deeply with very contemporary concerns of philosophy and language. H. C. 'Nugget' Coombs (1906 1997) and Judith Wright (1915 2000) are without doubt two of Australia's most admired figures. Nugget Coombs, the policy intellectual, 'sage', advisor to governments at the highest level from Curtin to Whitlam and beyond, devoted the last decades of his life to the most rigorous commitment to Indigenous Australia.

They each had enormous ambitions for Australian culture and society; their meeting in the early 1970s – Nugget was 66 and Judith 57 – was at a time of great optimism that must have mirrored for both of them, the early post war when shared ambitions for a new kind of Australia seemed achievable. This is a story of two people whose love, work and knowledge have much to tell us still.



## **LOVE & FURY: Judith Wright & 'Nugget' Coombs**

### **SYNOPSIS EPG (224 characters)**

The clandestine relationship between Judith Wright and H. C. 'Nugget' Coombs has been one of the best-kept secrets in Australian public life; their passions, activism and insights remain striking, relevant and inspirational.





## LOVE & FURY: Judith Wright & ‘Nugget’ Coombs

Background notes

(including program makers’ personal statement)



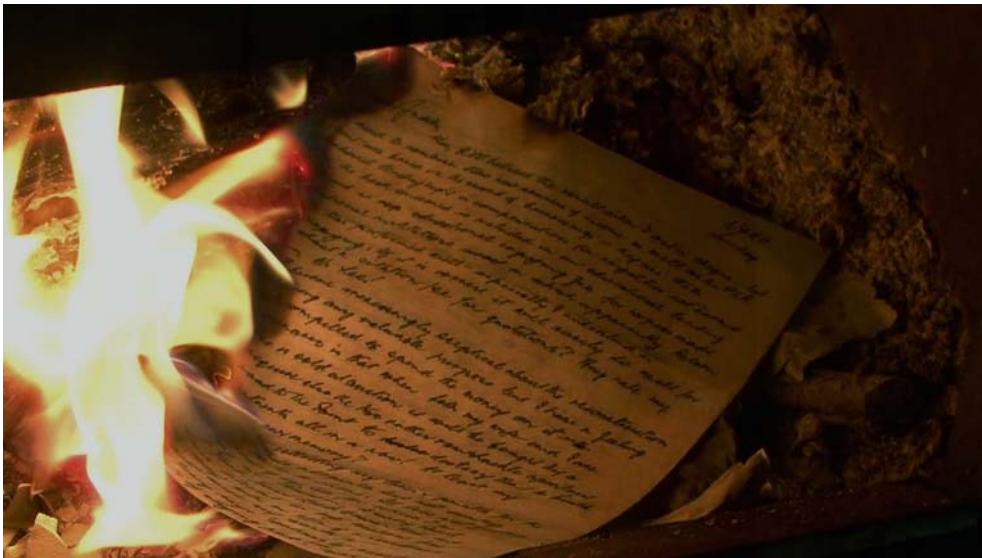
In May 2011 Film Victoria and ABC TV Arts provided matched financial support for the development of a proposal and treatment for a half-hour television film on Wright and Coombs for the ABC Arts portal and broadcast on *Artscape*. It has taken much longer than these two years to realize the project; it really began in early 2009 when *The Monthly* published Fiona Capp’s delightful essay ‘In the Garden’ (The Monthly June 2009) when, intrigued by the story, I approached Fiona for her blessing to pursue the idea as a television film, and then approached the ABC. Then I learnt about Nonie Sharp’s essays for *Meanjin*, and with researcher, co-writer Penny Chai, started researching and developing the project in earnest.

The then Head of ABC TV Arts, Amanda Duthie, saw the potential of the story for television and provided a ‘letter of interest’ that allowed Film Victoria to match development financing the ABC had offered.



Research and development of the project has involved an incredibly rewarding journey with many hours in research libraries and media archives. The sound and vision on file in archives, with both ‘Nugget’ Coombs and Judith Wright, is extensive. There are several biographies of each of them, oral history interviews and a dense critical bibliography accumulated around each of these remarkably influential figures. Both Wright and Coombs have written a number of books, including works of autobiography and memoir. Really both Judith Wright and ‘Nugget’ Coombs deserve a substantial film documenting their life and times. In this film we have been able to do little more than scratch the surface, and gesture toward the contribution and importance of these two committed Australians. Producing the film, as always, had its challenges. Production investment was approved in June 2012. During the second half of 2012 we set about implementing the treatment that had been developed some time before.

We found enormous support for the project, and all those we sought to interview responded very warmly to an opportunity to talk about their encounters with our protagonists. Another exciting opportunity during the production was meeting Paul English and Helen Morse, who kindly agreed to read from some of the letters between Wright and Coombs that formed the spine of our narrative. Ramona Koval joined the project as narrator; the film benefits from her warmth and familiarity with the material. Ramona conducted the last broadcast interview with Judith Wright for *Books and Ideas* in 1999.



Later, we had the opportunity to work with two gorgeous young Melbourne jazz singers Hetty Kate and ‘Olympia (Olivier Bartley) who performed our ‘theme song’ ‘You go to my head’ in musical arrangements designed and produced by our composer Brett Aplin. By the end of 2012 we had a 58-minute rough cut, twice the length required for a single ‘*Artscape*’. The first weeks of 2013 were dedicated to the sometimes-painful task of discarding precious stories and ideas and trimming important historical material to within an inch of their lives to bring the project to a coherent 28 minutes.

We hope you like it.

John Hughes, February 2013



## LOVE & FURY: Judith Wright & ‘Nugget’ Coombs

### Biographies of ‘talent’ and documentary participants

Our narrator **Ramona Koval** is a writer, journalist, broadcaster and editor. Her latest book is *By the Book: A reader’s guide to life* (2012). Her latest media venture is *The Monthly Book hosted by Ramona Koval @TheMonthly*.

As a broadcaster she presented major literary programs on ABC Radio National *The Book Show* from 2006 to 2011, *Books and Writing* from 1995 to 2005 and before that the current affairs programs *-Drive on RN* from 1993-1994, and *The Ramona Koval Program* on ABC 774 in Victoria from 1988-1992. Her programs were broadcast nationally on Radio National, internationally through Radio Australia, and podcast on the internet.

She has written reviews, features and columns for newspapers including *The Age* and *The Weekend Australian*, writing on issues of the day. She has made documentary features for radio, which have been broadcast both by the ABC and the BBC. Transcripts of her interviews have appeared in international newspapers, magazines and on the internet, and she has been a guest interviewer at International literary festivals in Edinburgh, Montreal, Berlin, Cheltenham and all over Australia.

She is the author of a novel, *Samovar*, of collections of interviews, most recently *Speaking Volumes* of a Jewish cook book, *Jewish Cooking, Jewish Cooks* and she has edited *The Best Australian Essays 2011* and *The Best*

*Australian Essays 2012*. She has worked as an academic at RMIT University and the University of Melbourne, and before that as a microbiologist and geneticist.

She was Staff Elected Director of the ABC Board (2002–2006), and has been a judge of the Walkley Awards for Journalism, and the Victorian Premier's Literary Awards. She has served on the board of the Australian Book Review and is a member of the International Advisory Board of the Blue Metropolis Literary Festival in Montreal, Canada. In 2001 she held a Goethe Institute Fellowship in Berlin and was a writer-in-residence at The Australia Centre, Berlin.

**Helen Morse and Paul English** read from the Wright-Coombs correspondence and other writings.



### **Helen Morse**

Helen's work in over ninety stage productions embraces a wide range of classics and contemporary plays including *The Year of Magical Thinking* (BSSTC), *The Aunt's Story*, *A Little Night Music*, *Arcadia*, *Frozen*, *The Crucible*, *The Tempest* and *Europe* (MTC), *Good Works* (Playbox) and *Death & The Maiden* (STC). She premiered Alma de Gröen's *The Rivers of China* and *The*



*Woman in the Window* (MTC), Robyn Archer's *Architektin* (STCSA) and Tim Winton's *Signs of Life* (BSSTC). Poetry readings include *Love & Devotion-Persia & Beyond* (SLV); *Air & Angels* with lutenist Rosemary Hodgson; *A Kind of Radiant Darkness* (Gordon Kerry/ANAM); the poems of Sylvia Plath and Emily Dickinson and recordings of Judith Wright's verse for ABC's *Poetica*. At Fortyfivedownstairs Helen played opposite Paul English in *Ivanov* and in February created, with Paul and violist Isabel Morse, a program of poetry and music *The Power of Love*. Her film work includes *Iris/Out of Time*, *Syllable to Sound* and *The Eye of the Storm*. In March 2013 she tours Kage's acclaimed production *Sundowner*.



### **Paul English**

In February Paul co-devised and performed, with Helen Morse and her sister Isabel, a program of poetry and music *The Power of Love* at Fortyfivedownstairs, where he has also played the title role in Chekhov's *Ivanov* and Satin in *The Lower Depths* (both directed by Ariette Taylor). He has recorded poetry and drama for ABC radio and many audio books (*Mao's Last Dancer* won him an AudioFile Earphones Award in 2004). His work with the major companies includes *Arcadia*, STC; *Cabaret* and *Closer*, STCSA; *King Lear*, Bell; *Ninety*, Black Swan; *Good Works*, *Rapture* (Helpmann Award nomination) Playbox; over 25 shows for MTC among them *All My*

*Sons, Measure for Measure, Shark Fin Soup, Europe* and just recently Barry Oakley's *Music*. He has premiered works by Daniel Keene, Joanna Murray-Smith, Michael Gurr and Patricia Cornelius. His TV credits include *Phoenix, MDA, SeaChange, Curtin, City Homicide* and *Howzat!* In May Paul will start work on *The Crucible* for MTC.

### **Documentary participants (order of appearance)**



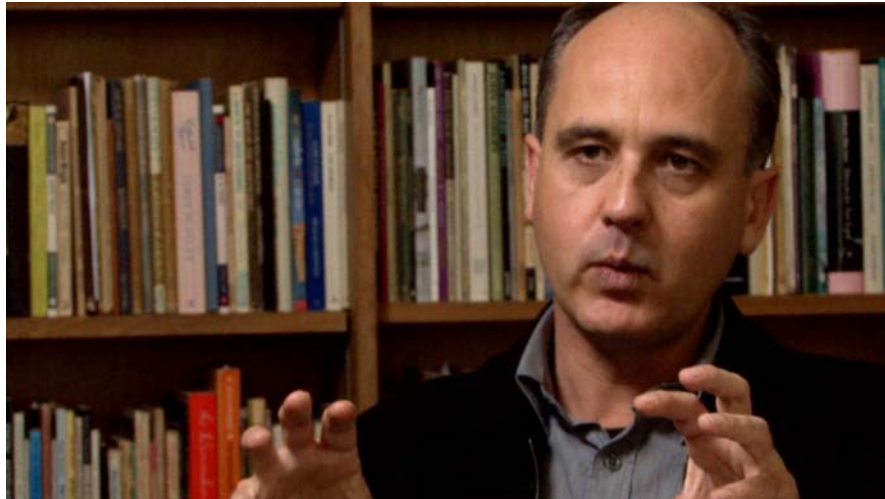
**Meredith McKinney**, daughter of Judith Wright McKinney and Jack McKinney. She has a Ph.D. in Asian Studies, is a literary translator and writer, and is currently a lecturer and tutor in Japanese and Asian Literature at the Australian National University. She is working on Japanese translations of her mother's poetry. She has also co-edited two collections of her mother's letters. The first, *The Equal Heart and Mind*, is comprised of letters between Wright and Meredith McKinney's father, Jack McKinney. The second book of letters, *With Love and Fury*, focuses primarily on Wright's letters to friends, relatives and literary colleagues, including Barbara Blackman, John Blight and Rosemary Dobson. The books were both co-edited with literary historian Patricia Clarke.



**Fiona Capp** trained as a journalist, has a PhD in English and has worked as a freelance writer and university tutor in English, journalism and novel writing. When she was in year 12, Fiona met Judith Wright, and that meeting was the start of nearly twenty years of correspondence. Fiona is an avid reader and analyst of Wright's work, and cites various poems by Wright as the inspiration for her own novels. She is the internationally published author of three works of non-fiction including *That Oceanic Feeling*, a memoir about her love for the sea and surfing, which won the Australians Studying Abroad Travel Writing Prize and the Nita B Kibble Literary Award for women writers, plus three novels - *Night Surfing*, *Last of the Sane Days* and *Musk & Byrne*. Her most recent book *My Blood's Country* is part memoir, part journey through the landscapes that inspired Australian poet Judith Wright. She lives in Melbourne with her partner and son.



**Nonie Sharp** is currently an Honorary Research Fellow with the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, School of Social Sciences, Latrobe University, Melbourne. She was a close friend of Judith Wright over many years. They met in 1981 at the historic Indigenous land rights conference in Townsville, where planning for what became the ‘Mabo Case’ began. Noni’s ground-breaking anthropology in the Torres Strait, was published as *Stars of Tagai: the Torres Strait Islanders* (1993). Her book on the Mabo Case *No Ordinary Judgment* (1996) is a highly regarded, comprehensive ‘inside story’ of the case as it was argued through the Queensland Courts and the High Court of Australia.



**John Hawke** received his Ph.D. in English from the University of Sydney, where his thesis was awarded the Dame Leonie Kramer Prize in 1999. From 1997-2006 he taught literary theory within the Faculty of Creative Arts, University of Wollongong. Currently John is a Senior Lecturer, specializing in poetry, in the Department of English at Monash. His essay on Judith Wright's poetry 'The Moving Image: Judith Wright's Symbolist language' appears in *Southerly* 3 (2000) (pp. 160-178).



**Tim Rowse** is H. C. ‘Nugget’ Coombs’ biographer. His *Obligated to be difficult: Nugget Coombs’ legacy in Indigenous Affairs*, was published by Cambridge in 2000. Rowse dedicates the book to Judith Wright. His *Nugget Coombs: A reforming life*, Cambridge (2002) is a comprehensive chronicle and insightful analysis of Coombs’ career, thought and practice as a public servant and public intellectual. He has taught at Macquarie University, the Australian National University and Harvard University (where he held the Australian Studies chair in 2003-4), and he has held research appointments at the University of Sydney, the University of Melbourne, the University of Queensland and the ANU.

Since the early 1980s, his research has focused on the relationships between Indigenous and other Australians, in Central Australia (where he lived from 1989 to 1996) and in the national political sphere. Currently Tim is a Professorial Fellow in the School of Humanities and Communication Arts and in the Institute for Culture and Society, University of Western Sydney.



## LOVE & FURY: Judith Wright & 'Nugget' Coombs

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'Shining with Meaning: the poetry of Judith Wright', *Poetica*, June 23, 2012 ABC RN



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Ramona Koval

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Paul English & Helen Morse

**Writers**

Penelope Chai & John Hughes

**Director**

John Hughes

**Producers**

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**Editor**

Uri Mizrahi

**Music**

Brett Aplin

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Josh Waddell, Rob Woodward

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**Script Consultant**

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**Studio Facilities**

Music and Effects, Melbourne

**Sound Mix**

Emma Bortignon

**Colorist**

Andrew Cherry

**Mastering**

Chocolate Studios Melbourne

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Claire Barrett (ABC Archives) Melanie Coombs  
Tabitha Howard (ABC Arts), Jane Norris

Pauline Lee (International Casting)

Anne Delaney, Claire Jager, Sue Maslin (Screen Australia)

**Legals**

Shuan Miller Lawyers

**Archival sources**

'At Edge' Solrun Hoas, (1981) courtesy Meredith McKinney and Ronin  
Films (Craig McConnell, Andrew Pike)

Josh Waddell (Mt Tambourine), Marsha Stefan (leaving Uluru) Ioannis  
Ioannou (Amalthea Films), *Six Degrees Below the Horizon* (Kakadu) Joseph  
A. Carr (aka JoeTourist), Erica Brenci (Uluru) Andy Green Dennis Proctor  
(Barrier Reef) Paulo (Pasramos), David Rowley Josh Waddell (Farflung  
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Oral History Collection, National Library of Australia

Texts: Judith Wright, 'The Flame Tree' (1953) 'At Cooloolah' (1955) from *A  
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'Batman's treaty with the Aborigines at Merri Creek, 6th June 1835' (c.  
1888) John Wesley Burt (1839-1917)

'You go to my head' (Haven Gillespie, J. Fred Coots) courtesy Warner  
Chappell / Native Tongues Music Publishing performed by Olympia (Olivia  
Bartley) arranged and produced by Brett Aplin

'You go to my head' (Haven Gillespie, J. Fred Coots) courtesy Warner Chappell / Native Tongues Music Publishing, performed by Hetty Kate arranged and produced by Brett Aplin

'From little things big things grow' (Kev Carmody, Paul Kelly) courtesy Sony/ATV Music Publishing Australia performed by Olympia (Olivia Bartley) arranged and produced by Brett Aplin

The Australian Institute of Aboriginal  
and Torres Strait Islander Studies (Watts Collection)

Australian National University  
National Archives of Australia  
National Library of Australia  
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