CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSION

In Australia, interpretation of landscape continues to haunt and shape the national identity. Different viewpoints of the landscape have led to two distinct interpretations, which have become a social predicament, a political dilemma and a cultural crisis. The time has come for Australia to reassess its attitude towards its interpretation of landscape.

Both the Aboriginal people and the Europeans have interpreted landscape from diverse angles, with divergent symbolisms. For the Aboriginal people it is about their 'spirit country' and 'sacred' landscape. To the Europeans it is about their 'triumph' in a new land. The predicament faced by both the groups was in interpreting and 'accepting' the landscape, which was strongly linked with their past, present and envisioning a future relation with the changing landscape.

In the last two hundred years, the landscapes—both real and perceived—have rapidly changed for the Aboriginal people as well as the Europeans. In other words, for both the Aboriginal and the Europeans, it was not only about 'accepting' and identifying with the landscape, but about associating and compromising with each other's social, political, economic and culture requirements. The question of 'accepting' the landscape with all its changing perceptions and interpretations is yet to have its common parameters of judgment among the Aboriginal people and the Europeans. The need of the hour is to remove the veil of dust from
the musty records, and to reinterpret Australian landscape without any prejudice.

The different landscapes, some man-made and some natural, have different connotations depending on the social, political, economic and cultural requirements. As reflected in landscape poetry written by Aboriginal and European poets, one gets two different interpretations of the Australian landscape. Both the groups lay emphasis on the correct and 'authentic' interpretation of the landscape, as it is strongly linked with their survival and identity as Australians. The question is, which interpretation should be considered, an authentic interpretation of the landscape?

As reflected in poetry, one gets a clear view of the vicissitudes in its 'accepting' the landscape. Through poetry, one gets to see the 'barren and empty' landscape turn into 'rich, affluent, vibrant, colorful' landscape of Australia. The change in the interpretation of the landscape also brings to light the pain, suffering, frustration, heartburn, and anger that both the Aboriginal people and the Europeans have undergone. Poetry acted as the 'silver lining' in the dark clouds of uncertainty and confusion.

Both the groups strike a balance by trying to evaluate the 'past' events that shaped both the Aboriginal people and European interpretation of landscape. Through poetry they have managed to bring an optimistic note with regards to a homogenous interpretation of the landscape for a better future. Through their interpretation of landscape both the groups were able to express their anguish and suffering.
The Aboriginal people had to adjust to settler repression and reconcile with the disappearance of their culture. In the last two hundred years, their connection with the land enabled them to sustain the atrocities committed by the Europeans. Their interpretation of landscape brought a broader perspective about their past, their present status and future hopes and aspirations, with regards to their existence and identity. Their interpretation conveyed a sense of achievement, with dignity and pride in the Australian consciousness.

The Europeans interpretation of the landscape presented their struggle to adjust in the new landscape, which was imposed on them. They had to 'tame' and 'domesticate' the landscape, in order to accept and respond to the landscape 'inwardly. Their acceptance and interpretation of the landscape had significant social, political, economical and cultural significance. In the last 200 years, the Europeans were able to 'localise' the landscape by infusing the 'Euro-Australians consciousness i.e., the need for a local, which influenced the Europeans view about the landscape. As Sareen stated: 

The nativisation process used a multi-pronged strategy—first, by the process of resistance, more so denunciation of the 'other' represented by England and all that it symbolised: authority, discipline, superiority, conformity, organised religion; and, secondly, by a positive affirmation of all that is indigenous to the land, that is, its particularities of landscape, its realities; and, lastly by creating/innovating symbols of Australia and an Australian ethos which would fill the need in the people to assert a distinctive
identity from that in the home countries where they had been transported..."\(^1\)

It also reflects the importance that landscape holds in the Australian consciousness. It points out to the ways in which landscape played an essential role in moulding the identity of Australia. As Meining stated, "Every mature nation has its symbolic landscape. They are a part of the iconography of nationhood, part of the shared set of ideas and memories and feelings which bind a people together."\(^2\) Both the Aboriginal people and the Europeans adjusted to the harsh, indifferent, cruel and at the same time, gentle, compassionate and forgiving landscape.

The process of understanding, accepting and interpreting the landscape has started. Both the Aboriginal people and the Europeans are aware of the need to have a homogenous interpretation of the landscape, for this is the requirement and demand of Australia, to be a truly 'unique' country. With the world entering a new, previously unimaginable realm of development, there is a growing need to maintain and defend the basic markers that give meaning and structure to identity. As Mike Irvine states, "if we had our time again, we would do it differently."\(^3\)


\(^2\) D. W. Meining (ed.), *The Interpretation Of Ordinary Landscape* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979) p.164

\(^3\) Michael Parfit, “Australia: A Harsh Awakening” in *National Geographic*, no.1, July 2000, p.16
The need of the hour is to integrate the "Euro-Australian and Aboriginal Australian consciousness" in order to resolve the conflict, beginning from the way landscape is viewed, by the Aboriginal people and the Europeans; to the question of which one should be considered the 'authentic' interpretation of Australian landscape.