THE CONCEPT OF LANDSCAPE:
MEANINGS AND APPROACHES

*Landscape like culture is elusive and difficult to describe in a phrase...*

Yi-Fu Tuan

Landscape is a unique social product, produced by the comparison of diverse, complex and singular, socio-economic and cultural factors. It is about setting of human existence and development. The relationship between man and landscape is intimately connected at different levels. According to Carl Ritter:

> The earth and its inhabitants stand in the closest reciprocal relation and one cannot be truly presented in all its relationship without the other.... Land affects the inhabitants and the inhabitants the land.¹

Its interpretation and importance largely depends on the attitude of an individual towards a particular landscape at different times. These attitudes can be positive, negative, ambivalent or a mixture of all the three. Thereby the meaning and interpretation of landscape depends on the viewpoint the individual is applying in its interpretation of landscape.

The present chapter will focus on three issues—the meaning of 'landscape', approaches to the study of landscape and 'landscape' as understood in Australia.

THE MEANINGS OF LANDSCAPE

According to the dictionary, landscape refers to the features of an area as seen in ‘broad view’. It also means a layout with attractive ‘natural’ looking features. Literally, it means a “scene within the range of an observer’s vision.”\(^2\) The word ‘landscape’ as well as its concept is believed to be of European origin.

The word is believed to have its roots in the German word landschaft, which had multiple meanings. The first meaning meant appearance of a restricted piece of land as perceived by the individual. The second meaning refers to a ‘region’ and in another context it meant a small administrative unit. Thereby within the German context, the meaning of landschaft varied according to usage and place. Similarly, the Dutch equivalent is landschap, which meant a sheaf. It also “signified a unit of human occupation, indeed a jurisdiction, as much as anything that might be a pleasing object of depiction.”\(^3\) It also meant a patch of cultivated ground.

Around the sixteenth century, landscape acquired an aesthetic meaning. Introduced by the Dutch landscape painters, naturalistic landscape painting first emerged in 1620, in Haarlem. These painters uncritically and uninterpretively created ‘transcription’ of the land in which they lived. Their choice of landscape subjects, their dramatisation and manipulation and their ‘naturalisation’ appealed to the unique conjunction of political, economic and religious circumstances in a country


\(^3\) S. Schama, Landscape and Memory (London: Harper Collins, 1995), p.10
convulsed by change, the stresses giving new meaning to ordinary and recognisable landscape features." Their landscape paintings played a significant role in bringing people of different origins, classes, and 'disruptive' cultural differences altogether. They were able to achieve a "unified and expansive effect of space which led the eye into the vast reaches of nature and furnished one of the most powerful emotional pleasures which this type of painting offers."5

According to Adams, "These paintings offered a communal identity on several levels, legitimising their themes through naturalising and historicizing them, offering security where none in fact was to be had."6 Later the term was used to describe a painting, "which is primarily concerned with the depiction of natural scenery, although men, animals and architecture may be present in a subordinate manner."7 According to Barell, it describes a "pictorial representation of countryside, either as the subject itself of a picture or as a by work in a portrait, the background of scenery behind the main subject."8 With the passage of time, it included in its meaning, both the countryside represented in the picture and "a piece of countryside considered as a visual

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4 Richard Muir, Approaches to Landscape (Houndsmills: Macmillan Press, 1990), p.175
7 Joseph C. Sloane, n.5, p.292
phenomenon.”9 This shift added a new dimension to the meaning of landscape.

The term was introduced in England as landscape by the Germanic settlers of the Dark Ages. Initially, landscape meant, "a piece of land occupied by a particular group or controlled by a particular lord."10 It also meant a portion of "territory that the eye could comprehend in a single view."11 Gradually during political crises, landscape analogies were drawn to determine the social attitude of a particular class. The development of landscape in England had a strong political undertone.

By the eighteenth century, England’s political scene was shared by the Whigs and Tories, whose difference in ideology was not confined to the political arena; it also affected their outlook towards landscape. As most of the members and supporters of Whigs were landowners, their concept of landscape was guided by economic progress and religious tolerance. On the other hand, Tories were traditional, conservative, had affiliation with the High Church and were not involved in 'economics'. Their supporters were from the local gentry and rural squires.

With the rise in wealth and power, the Whigs brought tremendous changes on the English landscape. The change marked the construction of huge Whig mansions, which was guided by the desire, to be 'seen'. These mansions were often built

9 Ibid.
11 S. Schama, n.3, p.5
away from the humdrum of life. According to Everett, "In the Whig idea of the arrangement of landscape, it is often difficult to distinguish ideas of taste from the assertive expression of private property and control of territory... characterised by a standard formula of artificial water, clumps and belts of trees, could be stretched over a landscape as far as funds and property would allow." 12

Eviction and re-location was a common phenomenon during this period. As Bermingham stated, "Throughout the eighteenth century, landscape gardens grew more extensive. Not only did they absorb village commons within their boundaries, but occasionally whole villages that stood in the way of a prospect or an improvement were destroyed and rebuilt elsewhere." 13 On the other hand, the Tories views about landscape differed from that of the Whigs; to them it was more to do with tradition, continuity, obligation and sensibility. To them "those who abandoned the landscape to the market were also abandoning the order of civil society to fragmentation." 14 Interpretation of landscape throughout the eighteenth century was more political than 'aesthetic'.

By the nineteenth century, control over land came under the hands of a small minority group. "English landscape embodied the tenure hegemony of the landed elite. It was shaped by their aesthetic preference, their economic interest, and their leisure

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14 N. Everett, n.12, p.7
pursuits. With gradual change in the policy of landownership, landscape began to be shaped and constructed for social and aesthetic purpose in England. The main highlight of this period was the gardens. It was a sign of social status and this attitude was also seen in the early days of the colony in Australia. This point will be further discussed in detail in the fourth chapter.

With its influence in landscape painting and landscaping, the concept of landscape acquired a more flexible meaning. Mitchell explains:

*Before all these secondary representation... landscape is itself a physical and multi-sensory medium (earth, stone, vegetation, water, sky, sound and silence, light and darkness, etc.) in which cultural meaning and values are encoded, whether they are put there by the physical transformation of place in landscape gardening and architecture, or found in a place formed, as we say, 'by nature'. Landscape is a medium in the fullest sense of the world. It is a material 'means'... like language or paint, embedded in a tradition of cultural signification and communication, a body of symbolic forms capable of being invoked and reshaped to express meaning and values.*

The change of meaning from *landschaft, landschap* to *landscape* presents the ambiguity of meanings that the word holds. Its change in meaning also signifies its multi-layered

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conceptualisation, which went beyond ‘natural scenery’ and kept changing with time. Gradually landscape acquired a general meaning, which went beyond the ‘spatial confinement’, and obtained a meaning similar to ‘terrain’. According to Linton:

Terrain is a combination of ‘land’ meaning a defined space, a space with boundaries, though not necessarily one with fences or walls, and ‘scape’, denoting essentially shape, except it once meant a composition of similar objects, as when we speak of a fellowship or membership.17

He further states that:

Taken apart in this manner ‘landscape’ appears to be an easily understood word: a collection of lands.... If ‘housescape’ meant the organization of the personnel of a house, if ‘township’ eventually came to mean an administrative unit, then ‘landscape’ could well have meant something like an organization...At all events it is clear ...that a thousand years ago the word had nothing to do with scenery or the depiction of scenery.18

Thereby it means a portion of land, which the eye can comprehend at a single view including all the objects it contains. According to Jackson:

18 Ibid., p.68
‘Landscape’ and the word ‘country’... both indicate a tract of land, which can be seen at a glance and which can be defined as a unit or territory, often the territory of a small rural community...both denoted the territory of poor and illiterate peasant population.19

He further states that:

Landscape is a unity of people and environment, which opposes in its reality the false dichotomy of man and nature.... Landscape is to be judged as a place for living and working in terms of those who actually do live and work there. All landscapes are symbolic, they express ‘a persistent desire to make the earth over in the image of some heaven’, and they undergo change because they are expression of society, itself making history through time.”20

He stresses that landscape should not be regarded just as a 'scenery' that is meant only for viewing, but also as a setting where people lived and struggled to earn their living. As Tuan stated:

Landscape referred primarily to the work-a-day world, to an estate or domain...Limited to the functional or utilitarian perspective, the concept of ‘landscape’ is redundant since the more precise terms of estate and region already exist. Limited to the aesthetic perspective, landscape is again redundant since the word 'scenery' offers greater clarity...in

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19 S. Schama, n.3, p.5

addition to other terms and it’s being used to recognize a special ordering of reality for which a special word is used.\textsuperscript{21}

He further points out that:

Landscape from a naive viewpoint is a sector of reality ‘out there’. It is made up of fields and buildings. Yet it is not a bounded entity as a tree or a building is. Nor does landscape mean simply a functional or legal unit such as a farm or a township... Landscape is... a construct of the mind and of feeling.\textsuperscript{22}

Underlying the meanings above, landscape basically meant a material or tangible portion of a ‘natural’ and ‘cultural’ environment. According to Croones:

Landscape is in truth nothing less than the complex, interrelated, and unified material product of the geographical environment, a seamless totality in which the immemorial processes of nature and the much more recent activities of mankind interpenetrate.\textsuperscript{23}

He emphasises the human relationship with its physical environment and the operational life within a particular ‘milieu’. Thus landscape is anchored in human life and it is not something to look at, but to ‘live in’, and the change it undergoes is a reflection of the changes within the society one lives in. Every landscape with

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., p.90

\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., p.89

\textsuperscript{23} P. Coones, “One Landscape or many?”, \textit{Landscape History}, no. 7, 1985, p.5
its unique, distinctive and complex components adds to the change in the meaning of landscape, as is evident in the case of say England, Germany and Holland.

Therefore the most important role that landscape plays in the social process is in supporting a set of ideas, values, unquestioned assumptions about the way a society is or should be organised. According to Cosgrave:

"Landscape denotes the external world mediated through subjective human experience in a way that neither region nor area immediately suggest. Landscape is not merely the world we see; it is a construction, a composition of that world. Landscape is a way of seeing the world."24

For example in India, landscape interpretation is not confined to aesthetic contentment, but also has a religious significance. Both the views are essential and run parallel, as they represent the duality in the landscape. For example, a tree represents life and continuity. Water on the other hand, symbolises purity and fertility. Similarly, the mountain represents the cosmic link between earth and heaven. These interpretations of landscape, incorporating the flora and fauna along with the vast pantheon of Hindu gods, acquire an essence of divinity, which represents the close association with nature.

The interpretation lays emphasis on the various religious and philosophical beliefs, which link the idea, that wisdom and peace

24 D. Cosgrave, Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape (London: Croom Helm, 1984), pp.13-14
can be found in viewing of mountains and rivers. It forms the vitality of nature and is connected with the spirit world. Similarly in Australia, the Aboriginal people, follows the same philosophy and strongly believe and abide by the rules laid down by 'Nature'. They do not exploit it for economical or materialistic gains. Therefore the concept of landscape is:

"... rooted in ideology and represents the way in which certain classes of people have signified themselves and their world through their imagined relationship with nature, and through which they have underlined and communicated their own social role and that of others with respect to external nature."²⁵

Thus landscape is not just a 'book', but also a 'text' that can be read and interpreted in a variety of ways, keeping the physical and 'humanistic' views in mind. As stated above, landscape is in fact a way of composing and balancing the external world into a 'scene' of visual unity. According to Pringle:

"The simplest level landscape denotes simply a subjective 'way of seeing'. It is however also a social product, the result of the collective transformation of nature. From this dichotomy, landscape is invested with a dialectical tension. It is effectively a historically specific process one in which social groups experience, reflect upon and structure the world around them."²⁶

²⁵ Ibid., p.15

According to Walmsley and Lewis landscape means different things to different people, which symbolise different values depending on the interpretation:

...reflect the values and attitudes of the individual concerned. Thus a capitalist may interpret landscape in monetary terms, an artist in aesthetics terms, a scientist in ecological terms, and a social activist in terms of disorder and injustice...a receptionist may interpret a landscape in terms of the extent to which it gratifies a desire for pleasurable experiences.27

Thus all landscape is symbolic to the particular individual, who interprets it as it appears to him. For John Ruskin, landscape was a suitable subject for examining the 'deepest' moral and the artist 'truths', in a broader context, not confining it to form or style. To him, landscape depended on the "submission of men to the laws of nature, a close observation of the natural world and the application of the greatest skill and imagination in its representation."28 Thereby the present meaning of landscape means an expanse or scenery that can be seen in a single view or a painting depicting an expanse of natural scenery. It also means a genre of art dealing with the depiction of natural scenery.

Park and Coppack stated:


28 S. Daniels and D. Cosgrave (ed.), The Iconography of Landscape (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988)
All landscapes are more than an ensemble of physical and human components, and in turn, are more than aesthetic objects to be observed and appreciated. Respective cultures transcribe their endeavour into the land's record... Landscapes have a deeper significance, identity, and character, not easily quantified by traditional positivistic methods. This is because every landscape and artefact is associated with cherished attitudes, values, and images, making them evocative, idiosyncratic, and reflective of changing social values."²⁹

All these meanings show the close association that man has with nature and how both are interdependent. The only difference is in its interpretation and use. The multi-layered meaning thereby broadened the approaches for evaluating landscape, which has evolved with time.

**DIVERSE APPROACHES FOR INTERPRETING LANDSCAPE**

As mentioned above, the concept of landscape means different things to different people and regions. Broadly there are two approaches to evaluate and interpret landscape. These two approaches are further divided into various categories. As its meaning states landscape was/is a part of geography. The first is the geomorphology interpretation of landscape with mathematical accuracy. It is part of physical geography and the interpretation of

²⁹ D. C. Park and P. M. Copping, “The Role of Rural Settlement and Vernacular Landscape in Conceiving Sense of Place in the City’s Countryside”, *Geografiska Annaler*, 76b, 1994, pp.162-3
landscape was/is based on mathematical calculation. It described landscape objectively. As Rose states, “Such pleasure in and awe of landscape is often celebrated by geographers, but with hesitation, even treated with suspicion. Pleasure in the landscape was often seen as a threat to the scientific gaze, and it was often argued that geographers should not allow himself to be seduced by what were described as the ‘sirens’ of terrae incognita.”

However, with time a change was formulated within geography, which interpreted and analysed landscape beyond the scientific gaze. It was part of cultural geography. Herodotus the father of ethnography propounded that all history must be treated geographically and all geography must be treated historically. He interpreted landscape in an aesthetical manner and differed from the geomorphological approach. He analysed landscape in an inter-disciplinary manner and referred to history, geography, archaeology and botany so as to have a holistic interpretation and understanding of landscape.

The second approach to interpreting and analysing landscape is through humanities, particularly through history and art. Landscape forms a part of cultural geography and its mediums of interpretation and analysis are rooted in humanities, which interprets landscape in a ‘painterly’ way, which created a ‘picturesque’ view of the landscape. As mentioned above, landscape is a way of ‘seeing’ it and how it is represented—painting, poetry, music, film, landscaping and the like—determine the meaning of landscape in different time and genre. This

30 Richard Muir, n.4, p.xv
31 Sudeepta Adhikari, n.1, p.33
approach shifted the focus from considering landscape as a ‘sensation’ to the object that ‘produces’ that sensation.

This incorporation has broadened the study of landscape. Its reformulated approach, where subjective and artistic resonances were incorporated, has given a new dimension to landscape analysis. As is evident from its meaning, landscape cannot be separated from physical geography nor can it be analysed totally from the artistic angle; irrespective of the genre. It has to strike a balance between the two approaches, to attain a holistic interpretation of landscape. Coones describes it as follows:

Since landscape is an expression of the links between people and their environment, and of the operation of societies within particular milieus, the study of the cultural landscape separately from the physical geography is highly artificial... the traditional Russian conception of a broadly based subject involving not just rocks and landforms, but embracing soils, vegetation, hydrology and climate has facilitated the creation of an integrated vision of geographical environment in which society and nature interacts at every turn.\(^\text{32}\)

Most of the approaches have stressed on the individual’s relation with nature; which is influenced by its social, political, and cultural views. Thereby, the interpretation of landscape is extremely individualistic in nature. No two interpretations, of the same landscape will be similar. While analysing and interpreting a landscape, one cannot confine one’s view or approach; it has to

\(^{32}\) P. Coones, n.23, pp.5-6
be evaluated according to the individual's 'perceived' merits, which include culture, aesthetics and politics.

The nature of landscape changes only when different individuals coming from different regions and cultures interpret it. As mentioned earlier, the first question, which comes to our mind when we see a landscape is why we like a particular landscape and what makes us like it? The answer to this question has led to the formation of innumerable theories, which basically revolve around aesthetics, culture and symbolism and keep varying from society to society. The first factor is that the evaluation of landscape is a highly individualistic action. According to Laurie:

**From the observer:** The inherent physiological, emotional, and psychological makeup of the observer; the relationship between the observer and society; the relationship between the observer and the object(s).

**From the object:** The intrinsic formal qualities of individuals object(s) whether natural or man-made (that is, shape, proportion, colour, and the like); the aesthetics relationship between these individual objects (that is, their shaping, scale, composition, and so on); the relationship of an object or group of objects to a setting.  

Thereby the interpretation of landscape depends on the observer. Its evaluation is individualistic and reflects strongly the society that one represents. While analysing landscape, one has to

keep in mind both the above factors, as they form the basis of evaluating any landscape. For evaluation of landscape is an individualistic affair and no two interpretations of the same landscape will be identical. It depends on the observer's views about culture, aesthetics etc., related as they are to place. Therefore what is beautiful to one may not be so for another.

Different cultures have different 'tastes' and their interpretation of a landscape is often guided by the source culture. For example, early European visitors to Australia produced two 'artistic' responses, the romantic, and the neo-classical. The romantic response depicted Australia as the Garden of Eden, with the 'noble savage' inhabiting it. This interpretation was predominant during the first thirty years, especially by the artists, who used the Indigenous people as a counterpoint to what they saw as a corrupt western world.

According to Glover, these 'native scenes' were for the English buyers—for their demand of exotica and the romantic. There were two different images, which the observer was comparing simultaneously—the 'real' image and the 'perceived' image. The real image is composed of rock, soil, vegetation and water; it is home to many 'living' things and has an 'objective past and present'. On the other hand, 'perceived' landscape consists of "sensed and remembered accounts and hypotheses about the real landscape. It is a selective impression of what the real landscape is like. The impression might be close to reality or it might contain some important misconceptions."  

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34 Richard Muir, n.4, p.115
Therefore when the painter paints or the poet writes, one should keep in mind the two different images, which consciously or unconsciously affect the individual's interpretation of landscape. According to Wright, "The unknown stimulates the imagination to conjure up mental images of what to look for within it and the more there is found, the more the imagination suggests to further research."\textsuperscript{35} For example, since its discovery Australia invoked an image of an unknown land, whose setting was strange and threatening. For the Aborigines it was a hospitable landscape. These two images about Australian landscape have continued to evoke images, which are different at different levels.

According to Dewey, "Beauty resides neither intrinsically in beautiful objects nor in the eyes of the beholder, but that it is to be discovered in the relationship between the individual and his environment, in short...experience." And Appleton states:

\ldots experience being a two-way contact between the viewer and that which he experiences, any distinction between perception and expression is meaningless, since they are both part of one relationship; that since there is an infinite range of environmental conditions, so aesthetics experience can adopt innumerable forms and that all experience presupposes certain mechanisms of a biological kind by which the relationship between man and environment is maintained.\textsuperscript{36}

\textsuperscript{35} J. K. Wright, "Terrae Incognitae: The Place of Imagination in Geography", \textit{Annals of the Association of American Geographers}, no.37, 1947, p.4

\textsuperscript{36} J. Appleton \textit{The Experience of Landscape}, (Chichester: John Wiley, 1996), p.62
In his habitat theory, Appleton goes on to say:

Aesthetic satisfaction experienced in the contemplation of landscape, stems from the spontaneous perception of landscape features, which in their shapes, colours, spatial arrangement and other visible attributes, act as sign-stimuli indicative of environmental conditions favourable to survival, whether they really are favourable or not.  

He further states:

The relationship between the human observer and the perceived environment is basically the same as the relationship of a creature to its habitat. It asserts further that the satisfaction which we derive from the contemplation of this environment, and which we call 'aesthetic' arose from a spontaneous reaction to that environment as a habitat, that is to say as a place which affords the opportunity for achieving our simple biological needs. When we attain a sufficient control over our environment to render the mechanism by which we make this spontaneous appraisal of it no longer essential to the achievement of these biological needs, the mechanisms do not immediately die out in the species, but continue to be transmitted from one generation to another and may, if needed, be called upon again to discharge their primitive function.

37 Ibid., p.62

38 J. Appleton, n.36, p.63
The theory postulates that aesthetic pleasure in landscape derives from the observers experiencing an environment favourable to the satisfaction of his biological needs. As pointed out by Walmsley and Lewis, three elements should be kept in mind while assessing the landscape from the aesthetics view. They are “Unity (Do the components of the landscape cohere into a single harmonious unit?) Vividness (Does the landscape have features that make it distinct and striking?) and Variety (Does the landscape have enough variety to engage human interest without so much complexity as to make it chaotic?).”

These views are determined by the culture that one comes from. Culture forms an important part of landscape interpretation. As such landscape should not be seen only as an object, but as a process by which social and subjective identities are formed. While forming these identities, the factors, which influence the interpretation, are many. As stated by Herskovits, “Culture is the man-made part of human environment.” The present research will confine its analysis on culture from the components of belief, perception, values, and behaviour of different communities in their adjusting to an environment and its response to the landscape.

Cultural factors to a large extent condition the perception of a landscape. It also influences the ‘intellectual’ development of an individual to a considerable level. According to Tuan, “Landscape as perceived by one person is not the same as that perceived by another, for each individual has in his/her mind his/her own culture

and personality filters which select and distant the incoming information."\textsuperscript{40}

As mentioned earlier, with the development of cultural geography, a tradition of \textit{Landschaftgeographie}, which emerged in Germany towards the end of the nineteenth century, emphasised that human culture and the physical environment, could transform a particular landscape into cultural landscape. Otto Schluter regarded landscape "in which the visible natural and human constituents formed a distinct association; he gave priority to the description of landscape and the cataloguing of its contents."\textsuperscript{41} Schluter distinguished \textit{Ulandschaft}, which refers to landscape that existed before major changes were introduced through activities of man and \textit{Kulturlandschaft} that meant a landscape created by human culture. These two approaches designate the close proximity between man and its landscape and how it is interconnected with the individuals' culture. It is a widely accepted tenet in cultural geography that landscape constitutes a culturally produced expression of social order.

Cosgrave states that although landscape 'is a way of seeing' it has to be kept in mind that it has its own history. "A history that can be understood only as part of a wider history of economy and society; that has its own assumptions and consequences whose origins and implication extend well beyond the use and perception

\textsuperscript{40} F. Y. Tuan, "Thought and Landscape" in D. W. Meining (ed.), \textit{The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscape} (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), pp.89-102

\textsuperscript{41} Ibid., p.24
of land; that has its own techniques of expression, but techniques it
shares with other areas of cultural practice."\textsuperscript{42}

Cosgrave identified three ways in which cultural geographical, more specifically cultural landscape should be analysed. Firstly, culture has to be constantly reproduced by actions, mostly in mundane day-to-day activities. Culture always retains the potential of being brought to the level of conscious reflection and communication, so culture is at once determined by and determinative of human consciousness and humane practices. Secondly, in terms of culture and nature, he asserted that any human intervention in nature involves its transformation to culture. Thirdly, in terms of culture and power, he argued that the study of culture is closely connected with the study of power. Therefore, culture in relation to landscape emphasises the role of power, transformation of nature and communication.

On the other hand, Carl Sauer focused on the identification and study of cultural landscape, which was created through the process of interaction between a cultural group and the natural landscape. This interaction with the landscape "could take place over a long period of time, during which the culture of the group concerned would evolve, while ultimately the introduction of a new culture from outside would cause a rejuvenation of the cultural landscape, with a new cultural landscape being superimposed upon the remnants of the older."\textsuperscript{43} Sauer emphasised on the cultural context, in which human cultures have adapted to their environments and also modified and transformed the natural

\textsuperscript{42} F. Y. Tuan, n.20, p.1

\textsuperscript{43} Richard Muir, n.4, pp.315-50
landscape to cultural landscape. According to Sauer, one cannot form an idea of landscape:

... except in terms of its time relation as well as of its space relation: It is a continuous process of development or of dissolution and replacement...historical geography may be considered as the series of changes, which the cultural landscape has undergone and therefore involves the reconstruction of past cultural landscape.\(^{44}\)

The difference in cultures, thereby, affects landscape perception and influences its interpretation. For example Americans generally prefer wilderness over culturally modified scenery, but in Philadelphia the preference is more for manmade landscape—parks with lawns and trees and the like. On the other hand the English, in general, prefer rustic scenery, which is 'picturesque' and reflects their past. But in Hertfordshire, preference is given to farmland and woodland with 'long views' across unspoilt countryside. In both the cases, interpretation is largely based on individual experience and concept of landscape; it is also individual community collective way of observation and interpretation of landscape. To a large extent, interpretation of landscape is influenced by time, place, and social norms.

As Lewis says, "Different cultures possess different tastes in cultural landscape; to understand the roots of taste is to

understand much of culture itself." These perceptions determine how a particular landscape is interpreted in a different culture. Some of these perceptions are modified to accord new information, about a place; while some of them are stubbornly retained, which helps to undermine the stereotype image till the point “arrives where it becomes refutable and the image of the place concerned must be comprehensively redesigned to accommodate the new facts.”

Thereby along with people and culture, landscape also evolves. For example, in eighteenth-century England, the beach was often regarded as a dangerous place, which lay “at the margin of two worlds.” By the early nineteenth century, excursions to seaside locations had become fashionable, and gradually the beach was interpreted as a place for ‘healthy stimulation and excitement’. Subsequently, the beach turns to a mysterious place for contemplation:

A venue for the earnest exploration of geology, sea shells, fossils and evolution; a symbolic borderland between different elements and cultures or betwixt life and death; and finally, with the establishment of ... holidays with pay in the middle third of the twentieth century, a crowded, overpopulated place of tacky resorts and raucous fun.

46 Richard Muir, n.4, p.129
47 Ibid., p.129
As Lowenthal stated, "The tide of taste affected not just the popular mountains, ruins, lakes and waterfalls, but also whether these mountains were more admirable from a distance or close at hand, in motion or in repose, from ground level or at a height, with unaided eye or through binoculars, alone or in company." He further added:

Approved landscape stances have ranged from aesthetic detachment to emotional involvement, moral reflection, scientific enquiry, physical exertion, and risk taking. Favoured landscape types also reflect new forms of recreation and ease of access to remote spots.

The rudest landscape for some may be the most beautiful for others. For example, around the eighteenth century, travellers favoured undulating country where the complete humanisation of the natural world had endowed the landscape with many of the virtues conventionally associated with a garden. It favoured trimmed, varied, orderly countryside in which farms were kept like gardens. This was the type of landscape that was prevalent in England and the perceived image, which the Europeans had when they landed in Australia. Such landscapes were praised for their variety and prosperous well-being, order and harmony, "recalling to the mind the poetic imagery of the pastoral eclogue which was the main literary tradition of the time."

49 Ibid., p.383
Therefore the perception of landscape is not only relevant and revealing, but also asserts the individuals changing perceptions to it. For example, during the discoveries of new land followed by its colonisation, the interpretation of landscape was guided by two cultures that were not only different, but at times opposite to each other. Australia like the "Orient was regarded as a corrupt, decadent and violent place which was peopled by savages under the leadership of tyrants; as visitors interpreted what they encountered in terms of such images, and as they projected their own fantasies on to the Orient, so an imagined geography was created." As Rose stated:

The 'sense of place' produced by Orientalism and through which Western visitors to that area interpreted what they saw, did not offer a sense of the Orient on its own terms, but rather established the Orient as an exotic place against which a European 'home' was defined...The meaning of (Christian) Europe thus depended on its image of an (Islamic) Orient against which it could identify itself.... 

Eurocentric interpretation is evident in the way landscape and a person from a colonial territory interprets landscape. What appeared beautiful to one may not be the same to the other. Thus landscape means different things to different people. It keeps evolving with time and its interpretation changes from place to place and varies from culture to culture. For the English, landscape

51 Richard Muir, n.4, p.225
always had a 'human element; for the Americans, landscape meant 'natural scenery'; for the Australians, landscape meant 'wearied, melancholic, and mysterious feelings'. According to Watson and O'Riordan, "In a new-found environment, it is not what people actually see there so much as what they want to see or think they see that influences their reaction."53

So, when the Europeans landed in Australia their interpretation of the landscape was guided by three facts—firstly, what they were running away from; secondly, what they were running towards and thirdly, what they actually saw, when they reached there. Similar was the case in North America where the settlers "were surprised by the violence of the landscape with its harsh extremes of climate.... They expected monotony from the sea, but not from the land."54 However with time, the monotony was replaced by immense stretches of fertile green land, which was far from being barren.

As stated above, landscape for the Dutch represented a painting, while for the English it meant a political expression. For example, among the most famous landscapes in America, is one of a village amid great elms and maples, its location marked by a slender steeple rising gracefully above a white wooden church, which faces a village green around which are arrayed large white clapboard houses, which like the church shows a simple elegance in form and trim. The symbolic significance of landscape is considerable. It acts as a link between past and present, along with the signs of stability, prosperity, cohesion, and intimacy.

53 Richard Muir, n.4, p.131

54 Ibid., p.132
As stated by Penning-Rowsell, "Landscape ... carries symbolic meanings that are not as wholly innocent as might at first be thought. Created landscape can be assertions of power—over nature or over neighbours—and our cognition of landscape is selective and sometimes deliberately distorted in the pursuit of our own interest."55 Along with 'culture and aesthetics', another important point is the symbolism of the landscape. He further states that:

Landscape may have an ideological function in mystifying rather than revealing: confusion by distortion or other emphasis, rather than providing simple and accessible patterns. Thus our ways of seeing and knowing (perception and cognition) are influenced by the social relations inherent in the landscape we view.56

According to Duncan and Duncan landscape is like a 'text' that can be read and interpreted in a variety of ways. It plays an important role in cultural landscape “for an ordered assemblage of objects, a text, it acts as a signifying system through which a social system is communicated, reproduced, experienced, and explored."57 For them:

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56 Ibid., p.115

One of the most important roles that landscape plays in the social process is ideological—supporting a set of ideas and values, unquestioned assumptions about the way a society is, or should be organized. If landscapes are texts which are read, interpreted according to an ingrained cultural framework of interpretation, if they are often read 'inattentively' at a practical or no discursive level, then they may be inculcating their readers with a set of notions about how the society is organized: and their readers may be largely unaware of this. If by being so tangible, so natural, so familiar, the landscape is unquestioned, then such concrete evidence about how society is organized can easily become seen as evidence of how it should, or must be organized.\footnote{J. Duncan and N. Duncan “(Re)reading the Landscape”, *Environment and Planning: Society and Space* (1988), p.123}

Therefore besides being a way of ‘painterly’ seeing a landscape and being a portion of the ‘natural and cultural environment’, landscape symbolises a lot of other things. As stated by Cosgrave, “All landscape are symbolic, although the link between the symbol and what it stands for (its reference) may appear tenuous.”\footnote{Cosgrave, n.24, p.125} He further states that landscape has a symbolic representation, “because all are products of the human appropriation and transformation of the environment. Symbolism is most easily read in the most highly designed landscape ... and through the representation of landscape painting, poetry and other arts. But it is there to be read in rural landscape and even in the most apparently unhumanised of natural environments.”\footnote{Ibid., p.126}
For example, the English countryside still remains the most important landscape in England. As Short states:

It holds pride of place. In England, the two meanings of countryside and nation, are collapsed into one another; the essence of England is popularly thought to be the green countryside—the enclosed fields, the secluded/excluded parkland of the country houses, and the small villages. The nineteenth-century may have lost economic power in the twentieth century but their symbolic power is still evident in this view, which is widely believed at home and increasingly marketed abroad. The countryside has become 'real' England, and the 'unchanging' England. It has become the land of retreat from an increasingly urban and overwhelmingly industrial society, the place to escape modernity.61

As stated by Meining, "Every mature nation has its symbolic landscape. They are part of the iconography of nationhood, part of the shared set of ideas and memories and feeling, which bind a people together."62 All these approaches depend on the individual observation, culture and how landscape is symbolised. Landscape reflects the 'nature and man' relationship, which affects all aspects of life. It cannot be ignored or overlooked, for it is and always has been a part of man's existence.


DIVERSITY OF THE AUSTRALIAN LANDSCAPE

Landscape always played a vital role in Australia. It is always present in the Australian consciousness. The Aboriginal people as well as the Europeans are deeply rooted in their landscape, which forms an integral part of their existence and culture. For both of them the landscape is not only about beauty or ugliness; nor is it about 'guardianship' or 'ownership'; it is about identity and survival. Thereby the meaning and interpretation of landscape in Australia is wide-ranging.

The past two hundred years, have witnessed a sea change in the interpretation and appreciation of 'natural' and 'built' landscape in Australia. Both the groups have interpreted Australian landscape variously and differently. They followed two opposite worldviews—the Aboriginal people believed in the concept where in 'people form an inherent part of nature'; and the Europeans believed in the concept where 'people are over nature'. These led to two distinct meanings and interpretations of landscape, which were not only poles apart, but also added confusion regarding the 'Australianess' of the landscape.

The Aboriginal people "make life rise up from the land, travel along it and go down into the soil again."63 Their philosophy laid emphasis on "spiritual over the material..."64 Their interpretation of landscape, like all other aspects of life, are sacred; it symbolised varied forms of its culture. They are an inherent part of nature, like


64 Ibid., p.31
the birds, trees, and animals. Similar to the Greeks, the Aboriginal people view “the universe as a harmonious unity” and people form a part of it. To the Greeks “nature was a stable, orderly, and smoothly operating system. Events moved in a systematic and cyclical fashion....”

According to the Aboriginal culture, landscape is a creation of their ancestors, who lived during the ‘Dreaming’. All forms of living beings are the spirits of their ancestors. As reflected in their oral culture, trees, animals, birds, mountains, creeks, springs, water-holes, are not merely interesting and beautiful scenic features. They are the creations of their ancestors.

The Aboriginal sees recorded in the surrounding landscape, the ancient story of the lives and deeds of the immortal beings he reveres; beings, who for a brief space may take on human shape once more; being, many of whom he has known in his own experience as his father, grandfather...The whole countryside is his living, age-old family tree....

Similar to the Oriental philosophy, “All things in nature are sacred and are not to be unduly exploited by people.” Life corresponds to Nature. “One cannot impose oneself on nature; rather, one must flow with it, be a part of it, understand its patterns, and adapt to natural events. This does not mean passivity or

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67 Irwin Altman and Martin Chemers, n.65, p.21
surrendering; it means understanding nature's flow and changes and working within its boundaries." It also emphasizes the belief that "people are not the centre of the natural universe that revolves around them, but that people are part of nature and must blend with it and be responsible for it." It also emphasizes the belief that "people are not the centre of the natural universe that revolves around them, but that people are part of nature and must blend with it and be responsible for it."69

According to the pygmies, "The forest is a father and a mother to us, and like a father or mother it gives us everything we need—food, clothing, shelter, warmth...and affection...."70 For example, the Pueblo Indians of America, like the Aboriginal people, lived in harmony with nature and their life forms an intrinsic part of the forest, just like the animals and plants. The Pueblo Indians considered "the sun to be their father and the earth to be their mother. Earth and the sun govern life and create an endless series of cycles...."71 As reflected in their mythology, "everything had its place in the scheme of things, and people, animals, and resources were part of the family of Mother Earth and Father Sun. People were part of nature, not above it or subjugated to it."72

Similarly, the Aboriginal people had different meanings for its different features. For example, a high mountain peak represents 'an ancestor who stood up to look around the surrounding country'. A line of large rocks overlooking a dry creek bed, represents the 'first mother and her sisters'. Sand hills and the valley between them represent 'the path travelled by the Ancestral

68 Ibid., p.21
69 Ibid.
70 Ibid., p.22
71 Ibid.
72 Ibid., p.23
Beings'. On the other hand, rivers and dry creeks-beds signify or mark 'the progress of and were formed by the travels of the Dreaming beings'. Lakes and dry clay pans, which dot the inland landscape, signify 'the different activities of the Dreaming ancestors'. Therefore, mountains, rocks, sand hills, rivers, etc., have different meanings. This links the Aboriginal people closely with the different landscapes around them. As Nancy Munn stated, "the relationship between the Ancestral Beings and the features of the country are the product of ancestral transformation."73

To the Aboriginal people, it is their 'Mother' and all plants and animals are their brothers and sisters. Their relationship with nature was similar to that between 'man and man'. "It was considered social and personal with reciprocal and expectable behaviour patterns." As reflected in the various meanings of landscape, the basic rule followed by the Aboriginal people was to preserve and care for Nature. One must not exploit it and only take what is required from it. They did not "accumulate goods to any great extent; they combined their hunting skills with the knowledge of animal behaviour and ecology."74

Therefore, when the Europeans came to Australia, and laid down their 'rules, boundaries and fences', the Aboriginal people were mystified by it. They failed to understand their culture of 'progress and materialism'. They could not understand the large-scale cutting of trees and killing of animals. It violated their principle of taking more from nature than required. "Theirs was an

74 Stephen Muecke and Adam Shoemaker, n.63, p.32
environment that was more like a provident parent than a source of produce, more a religious shrine than a physical space. So economic and ecological activities are accompanied by cultural work." 

According to the Europeans, uncontrolled nature and wilderness were interpreted as dangerous. They believed in the concept where 'people are above Nature'. Humans are not part of the natural world. They are superior to it and have the "right and even the responsibility to control, subjugate, and bend the environment in accordance with human needs." As stated in Genesis 1: 28, "The first commandment of God to man stated that mankind should increase, conquer the earth, and have dominion over all living things."

Thereby the Europeans, believed in 'conquering the wildness' for it symbolised their superiority over Nature, as well as fulfilled their religious obligations. As reflected in the early Judeo-Christian belief, "People who controlled and conquered nature in the forms of farms and cities, were desirable and that God would help them create such places." This concept paved the way for man to exploit the natural resources and to subdue nature without considering the after-effects of this reckless behaviour. According to Comte de Buffon:

> Man was commanded to conquer the earth and transform it.

> He thought that man changed the face of the earth in the

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75 Ibid., p.34
76 Ibid., p.18
77 Ibid., p.19
process of developing a civilisation. He conceived of man as an agent of change and man did possess free will to make the desired changes on the landscape.78

"Uncontrolled nature and wildernesses", was interpreted as dangerous. It symbolises fear. The forest was a personification of evil. It was home to the demons and monsters and was thus foreboding and dangerous. Thereby the wild terrain of Australia was converted to civilisation. The wildness of Australia was to be subdued and conquered. There was a constant struggle with nature, the object of which was to create a prosperous society.

Nature is there for our delight and use, to be adapted and improved and made fruitful; the belief that intervention in the working of Nature-by divine injunction in the seventeenth century, out of civic duty later- is part of what it is to be human.79

When the Europeans landed in Australia, they interpreted the landscape as harsh and barren. It was now their duty to subdue and conquer it. Their responsibility now was to reclaim nature and transform the landscape into the Garden of Eden. As Altman and Chemers stated:

Beauty was found not in untended nature, but in the transformation of nature into farms and cities, the unlocking

78 Sudeepta Adhikari, n.1, p.225
79 D.W. Meining, n.62, p.54
of nature's secrets, and the ability to change the course of nature on a dramatic scale.\textsuperscript{80}

Unlike the Aboriginal people, the Europeans believed in reclaiming nature and transforming the wilderness into productive land. To them, progress was most significantly and obviously linked with the pace of economic development. It was directly linked with the principle of how successfully one could exploit the land. They believed in creating a garden of their own, rather than being satisfied with nature's garden. The landscape was projected by pictorial codes, expressing both an affinity and estrangement with the colonised country. The interpretation and analysis of landscape was often guided by the way the European's cultural and material value, were projected onto the environment. Ryan states the following:

\begin{quote}
In the process of visually mapping landscapes, these expeditionary practices were simultaneously globalising a particular landscape vision. Indeed, the very idea of empire in part depended on an idea of landscape, as both controlled space and the means of representing such control, on a global scale.\textsuperscript{81}
\end{quote}

It stressed on the need to convert untended nature into farms and cities. Their acceptance and interpretation of the landscape was based on their needs and fulfilment of their requirements. Does this mean that the Aboriginals people who survived for more than

\textsuperscript{80} Stephen Muecke and Adam Shoemaker, n.63, p.20

\textsuperscript{81} J. R. Ryan, "Imperial Landscape, Photography, Geography and British Overseas Exploration, 1858-1872" in M. Bell, R. Bultin and M. Hefferanan, Geography and Imperialism (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), p.74
60,000 years were not ‘prosperous’? Therefore the landscape of Australia interpreted by Europeans made the barrenness and wilderness of Australian landscape an ambiguous concept to the world. It marked the beginning of the complex and multi-layered interpretation of landscape between the Aboriginal people and the Europeans.

The Europeans interpretation of landscape was instinctively linked with wealth and power. It symbolised their superiority over the Aboriginal people. What was beautiful to one was rude to the other. On the whole, it was not just difference of opinions, but also of attitude whose parameters kept changing. As the Aboriginal people’s interpretation of the landscape was regarded less civilised than the European, it thereby justified their interpretation of the landscape, which was guided by their colonial feeling of ‘superiority’. According to Malouf, “The landscape we most deeply belong to, that connects with our senses that glows in our consciousness, will always be the one we are born into.”

As mentioned earlier, for the Europeans, land was nothing more than an economic resource. They believed that as the Aboriginal people were not using the land properly, it ought to be transferred to the Europeans who could ‘improve’ the land and produce commodities for the benefit of Australia and therefore would lead Australia into a more prosperous and civilised life. The contrast of ideas and beliefs led to conflicts. As Malouf states:

*When the Europeans first came to the shores, one of the things they brought with them, as a kind of gift to the land*

\(^{82}\) Ibid., p.49
itself was something that could never have existed before: a vision of the continent in its true form as an island that was not just a way of seeing it, and seeing it whole, but of seeing how it fitted into the rest of the world."  

The Aboriginal people lived in awe of the environment; the Europeans on the other hand treated it as an 'adversary to be subdued.' When the Europeans, moved into areas that predominantly belonged to the Aboriginal people, they restricted the Aboriginal people's access to essential food, shelter, and sacred places. Their life was turned topsy-turvy. Their values and their social culture were uprooted. They were 'dispersed' from their lands and were reduced to 'hangers-on' of white settlements. As they had a different value system, which was not only opposite, but also multi-layered, the interpretation of the landscape was further complicated.

The value systems of both the communities were poles apart from one another. As reflected in the table below, the Aboriginal people as well as the Europeans had different sets of values. They were unable to strike a balance, which led to two different interpretations of the landscape. For the Aboriginal people, 'earth made man. Thereby, all aspects of human life—physical, social, economical, ethical and aesthetical are influenced by the environment. To the Europeans, the land was theirs to control. Both the groups are still to reach a negotiating point where the best of both the worlds can be amalgamated.

The following table reflects the different value systems of the two communities and will help in the understanding of the dichotomy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Values concerning</th>
<th>Europeans</th>
<th>Aborigines</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Possessions</td>
<td>Acquisitive, Accrue</td>
<td>Share, Use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>Exploit</td>
<td>Adapt to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land</td>
<td>Own, Secular</td>
<td>Related to, Sacred</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Linear, Historical</td>
<td>Cyclic, Mythical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovation</td>
<td>Commanded</td>
<td>Condemned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changes</td>
<td>Approved, Desired</td>
<td>Disapproved, Status quo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reality</td>
<td>Material</td>
<td>Spiritual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orientation</td>
<td>Future</td>
<td>Past</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction</td>
<td>Competition</td>
<td>Co-operation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rights and obligations</td>
<td>Individual rights</td>
<td>Kin obligation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship</td>
<td>Limited</td>
<td>Extensive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic Unit</td>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Society</td>
<td>Diverse</td>
<td>Unified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Status</td>
<td>Stratified</td>
<td>Egalitarian</td>
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</tbody>
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Both the Aboriginal people and the Europeans were unable to connect to each other's cultures. The Europeans believed that the Aboriginal people would be in a better position if they abandoned their customs and embraced those of the Europeans. The Aboriginal people on the other hand failed to link themselves
with technology and economic progress. Their views regarding land were poles apart. The Aboriginal people lived in awe of the environment; the Europeans on the other hand treated it as an 'adversary to be subdued.' As stated by Blache, "Nature set limits and offered possibilities for human settlements, but the way man reacts or adjusts to these given conditions depends on his own traditional way of living."84

The whole confusion lies in the destruction of a society, which was totally different from the Europeans. The Aboriginal people were a semi-nomadic people. Their society was based on 'egalitarianism'. It was largely non-competitive, and the social organisation was based on sharing food and possession. They gathered food and created object-weapons, vessels, paintings, etc. Unlike the Europeans, they worked only when necessary, not in order to get ahead. There was no single Aboriginal 'nation', or language, or religion. Instead there were hundreds of 'tribes', of languages and sacred legends. Unlike the Europeans, the world of the Aboriginal people was not 'global' or 'national', but was 'overwhelmingly local'.

They put great energy into their religious ceremonies. Most tribes believed the world was made not by single God, but by a number of their 'ancestral creation-spirits during the primal creation.' They believed in reincarnation. To the Europeans, the holy places of the Aboriginal people were not to be taken seriously as 'they were not man-made, but it seems, mere swathes of the nature'; To the Aboriginal people, the holy places of the whites seemed trivial because their shrines were 'merely man-made'. For

84 Irwin Altman and Martin Chemers, n.67, p.226
a long time the Aboriginal people failed to understand the "story of the stable."85

To the Aboriginal people, the land was their 'spirit country'. They had an earthbound philosophy. "The earth gave life to a man; gave him food, language and intelligence; and the earth took him back when he died. A man's 'own country', even an empty stretch of spinifex, was itself a sacred icon that must remained unscarred. The Aboriginals were people who trod lightly over the earth; and they took from the earth and the less they took from the earth, the less they had to give in return...."86 Similar to the Pygmies, the Aboriginal people also believed that, "to wound the earth is to wound yourself, and if others wound the earth, they are wounding you. The land should be left untouched...."87

With the advent of the Europeans in Australia, 'power counted and not philosophy.' Any plant that offended the Europeans apparition of landscape was destroyed. They emphasised on material gain. They accepted the landscape once they were able to unlock nature’s secret. Unlike the Aboriginal people, the tree was nothing more than wood, which was to be chopped and used. It is a product, which is there to be used. According to Watson "Perception is not a peripheral matter... it is basic to how men use the world."88

The land, which appeared ‘dry and barren’ was now an economic paradise. To the Aboriginal people it symbolised their

86 Ibid., p.11
87 Ibid.
88 Richard Muir, n.4, p.117
culture and heritage, and hardly had any material concept attached to it. To the Europeans landscape was viewed purely from the economic and political slant. Each had their own justification to the interpretation it had for the landscape, which has been changed by both the groups at different levels. It has been modified with the demands of time. For “the physical environment provided a range of possibilities which man turned to his use according to his needs, wishes and the capacities, in creating his habitat...through his occupation and imprint on the land, man created distinctive countries, be they states or minor unit areas.”

These conflicting views about the landscape bring to light how physical landscape had/has an impact on different Australians. The way one perceives and feels about ones environment results in the drastic alteration of the physical landscape, guided by ones cultural views and the genre de vie i.e., the inherited traits that the individual in a community learns. As stated by Blache, “The same environment has different meanings for people with different genre de vie...it is the basic factor in determining which of the various possibilities offered by nature,” a particular group will choose.

In Australia the landscape changed drastically only after the European occupation, who gave more emphasis to ‘material culture’. For the Europeans, nature was just there to be defiled and exhausted. As Malouf pointed out:

**The landscape the first settlers came upon was... a work of land management that native Australians had been**

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89 Irwin Altman and Martin Chemers, n.65, pp.226-227
90 Ibid., p.227
practicing for thousands of years. They had over that time created their own vision of a useful landscape, a product of culture,... that have changed the very form of the continent's vegetation; not by importing new and more competitive species as Europeans did, but accidentally, and once again through their use of fire.91

However, the Aboriginal people choose a different view. They exploited it more carefully; their exploitation was within the parameters laid down by nature. Thus they managed to strike a balance with nature, unlike the Europeans. As Rosemary van den Berg stated, "Aboriginal culture is a unique culture and the uniqueness comes out...in their art and cultural expression. It can also be seen in their expertise and knowledge of their country."92

Therefore, the meaning of landscape means different to different people. As mentioned earlier, landscape interpretation is individualistic, and no two interpretations will be the same, in the Australian context, 'individualistic' is further sub-divided. These differences are strongly influenced by the individual's culture and how he would like to symbolise the landscape. Malouf states:

A land can bear any number of cultures, laid one above the other, or set side by side. It can be inscribed and written upon many times... in any place where humans have made

91 David Malouf, n.83, p.47

their home, the landscape will be a made one. Landscape-making is in our bones.93

Today, the Aboriginal people's 'Dreamtime' landscape exists more in time than in space. For the Europeans, landscape interpretation has changed, but is yet to integrate itself. There is still a sense of confusion and turmoil, with regards to accepting and interpreting the landscape. As Sareen says,

The real conflict...was between transplanted British culture and a newborn distinctive national ethos that emerged from the experiences of the landscape, the elements of Nature. With time these differences grew more marked and as the English superiority galled the natives, resentment set in which was primarily defensive but grew to be aggressive and counterattacked with a depreciation of everything English.94

This has complicated the interpretation of landscape, which keeps changing not only with time, but also with social, political, economical, and cultural demands by both the groups. The Aboriginal people as well as the Europeans had to re-locate themselves in the new landscape, which has been re-defined by both the groups.

These two opposite interpretations of landscape has become a bone of contention in Australia today. As reflected in the poetry

93 Ibid., p.51

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written by the Aboriginal people and the Europeans, these two interpretations of landscape is the meeting place as well as the point of division between both the groups. The change in the landscape has affected both the groups, which have reached a point where the 'difference' demands oneness. The need is to maintain harmony and not hostility in its interpretation of the landscape. One cannot overlook the fact that landscape has influenced and affects both the Aboriginal people and the Europeans deeply. This symbiotic relationship with the landscape forms a part of their identity as Australians.