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BACKWARDS, FORWARDS AND IN-BETWEEN:
NOSTALGIC LANDSCAPES, PHOTOGRAPHY,
IDENTITY AND THE RETURN JOURNEY ‘HOME’

MAKSYMILIAN KWIAKTOWSKI

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Introduction

For Poles living in Australia, removed as they are from their physical ‘homeland’, Poland and Polish landscapes—the landscapes of their youth, or myth and legend—continue to exist, continue to influence thought, dreams, maybe even action, even though outside the windows of their homes stretch not birch groves, rustic villages, ancient buildings and monuments or even massive modernist housing estates, but eucalypts, a blazing sun and relentless red-roofed suburbia. These landscapes continue to exist, albeit in the mind and home only. They are conjured up in conversation, in the viewing of films or TV shows in which familiar but now distant Polish landscapes make an appearance, in glancing at photo albums or books or paintings or prints scattered throughout the house, or by visiting (or seeing in books or on TV) corners of Australia with scenery even slightly reminiscent of that encountered ‘back home’. The land that is Poland may be far far away in kilometres, miles or travel time, but that is not the way Poles living in Australia see it. For them, their (often disparate) versions of Poland are as immediate as their thoughts, families, photos, or only as far away as the bookshelf or television set.

Of course, the Polish community of Australia is, in reminiscing about ‘home’ landscapes, hardly alone. Immigrant communities and immigrants worldwide retain a similar, special relationship with the ‘homeland’ long after emigration. Yet, few studies have concentrated on the roles played by the country of origin and memories of it in the life or the imagination of the immigrant; instead, the focus in much past research has been in the lives immigrant groups lead, the identities they possess and the adjustments they make or face, in the countries and cities in which they had settled. But, as this study will demonstrate, people don’t simply forget where they came from, they don’t just think about the land in which they currently reside. The landscapes (not to mention people, histories, myths, etc.) they left behind remain, for them, important. Similarly, it must be remembered that once migrants settle in a new land many do not just stay there. Once finances and time allow, many travel to the territories and families they or their families once upon a time left behind. Travelling ‘home’ may be
particularly important for those who were never 'home' to start with, or who were too young to remember much, or anything at all, of the places they left behind.

This travelling 'to and from' is influenced by, and in turn influences, the nostalgic, imagined 'home' country and its landscapes, as well as questions of identity. And, at least in this day and age, crucial to the whole process is 'the image'. Images, whether gleaned from the TV or cinema screen, from photographs, paintings or books, possess the power to influence, possibly even determine, the manner in which we view a place. For example, we may identify or associate New York, Amazonia, Mongolia, or for that matter Poland, with particular landscapes or images not necessarily because we were once there to see them with our own eyes, but because of the myriad of, often generalised or stereotypical, images of these places with which we have been bombarded via a variety of different media throughout our lives. But our relationship with 'the image', it should be remembered, is not just that of a consumer with the product being consumed. Simultaneously, we are also image producers. Some draw, paint or sculpt, while most of those with ready access to photographic equipment take photos (and even those that do not are still able to readily and regularly produce images through their imagination). Note for instance the phenomenon of 'Holiday Snapping'. Even those individuals that do not ordinarily take photos in their everyday lives feel obliged to take many photographs when travelling to distant or exotic places or simply doing things they do not ordinarily do. The resulting images have the potential to influence not only those that view them and the way in which they see the people and places portrayed, but also ourselves and the way we see the world that is shown. Yet this somewhat ubiquitous feature of contemporary life has, along with most 'popular' photography and 'everyday' art, been more or less ignored by research. Painting, including landscape painting, and photography by professional, often historical, artists are both well established fields of study, but of 'popular' photography, and of 'everyday' imagery and its roles, there is rarely ever any mention. By focusing on the role of images in the construction or propagation of conceptions of the landscape or sense of place, and by using 'popular' photography as a research tool, this study seeks to remedy this situation.

It is the intention of this thesis to demonstrate how the homeland and its landscapes continue to influence the lives of individuals of Polish background living in Australia, with a particular focus on a little talked about segment of the Polish population: those who migrated to Australia (with their parents) as children or teenagers in the 1980s. Such groups are sometimes referred to as the '1.5 generation', to provide a point of difference from the first (overseas born, migrated mainly as adults) and second (locally born to migrant parents) generations; more often, however, they are treated as either
the first or second generation, despite clear differences from both groups. Of special interest are the trips back to Poland embarked on by members of this generation, the photos taken on such trips, and the effects the trips had on questions of identity, belonging and nostalgia for homeland. The thesis will also employ the use of photography as a key component of the research methodology, with a particular focus on landscape. In doing this, it will be attempting to contribute to several different gaps in the academic literature, including in the areas of migration studies, transnationalism, identity and belonging, landscape and nostalgia, and photography, in the process bringing together various disparate, hitherto far-flung areas of inquiry.

This thesis exclusively focuses on a specific, relatively cohesive group such as the 'Solidarity children' generation of migrants for a number of reasons. Firstly, it had never been done before—either in the Australian or international contexts. In studies which looked at Polish émigré communities generally, or Solidarity wave immigrants specifically, the Solidarity children generation was all but ignored, subsumed by more visible older migrants. Further, studies of second and, in particular, 'in-between' (or '1.5') generations of immigrants are in themselves rare. In-between generations represent good case studies because, perhaps more so than other groups, those who migrated as children truly are torn between two worlds, and two identities. They remember at least something of the homeland from before migration, know the language, and should they make the return journey home they can (theoretically) get by. But at the same time they are firmly grounded in the receiving society, where they spent much of their school years. While it is generally assumed that young immigrants assimilate rapidly, many also continue to engage in significant transnational links with the homeland, most notably through return visits home—as this study will show. These visits, as will be demonstrated, can have a profound effect on their lives, and as such should be considered crucial in understanding young immigrants, and also the second generation.

Lastly (but by no means least importantly) I examine the Solidarity Children group because I too am a member. As such, I have lived and can relate to, through personal experience and the experiences of family and friends, the things written about here. In fact that is how I (unashamedly) stumbled upon this topic. I thought deep and hard about my own feelings and experiences, and those of my peers. I went back to Poland for the first time at the age of nineteen and returned a changed man. I saw the importance of return visits back to Poland to others in my community, the way these experiences of return seemed to mirror each other, but also the ways in which they differed.
The lives of immigrants and immigrant communities are highly complex. However, in focusing as they do on ethnic or national groups as coherent, concrete entities, and in dealing chiefly with the lives such groups lead in a receiving society, most studies appear to ignore at least some elements of this. Certainly, the situation has not been helped by the past predominance of quantitative research, which had the effect of relegating rich biographies and vivid everyday experiences to little more than numbers, graphs, tables and oversimplified generalisations. At least until recently, the literature also downplayed the rarely one-directional, often transnational nature of migration; while studies concentrating on immigrant communities in ‘host’ countries abound, those that deal with the trips back ‘home’ often made by immigrants are comparatively rare, despite their relevance to the individuals (and communities) involved. Similarly inconspicuous is research on the prevalence and role, among immigrants, nostalgia for and memories of the ‘homeland’.

Traditionally, studies on migration have, when not dealing with the act of migration itself—push and pull factors included—focused on immigrants and the lives they lead, the ethnic communities they formed, the language and economic problems they faced, and the adjustments they made in the receiving societies over periods of years, decades or generations. This tradition has continued into the present era—see for example Min and Bezorgmehr (2000), Dunn (1998), and Grillo (2000), to name but a few. Min and Bezorgmehr (2000) write of ethnic ‘immigrant entrepreneurship and business patterns’ among Koreans and Iranians in Los Angeles, revealing that Koreans tend to own their own small businesses, particularly retail outlets, in minority neighbourhoods, while the less numerous, more educated Iranians are ‘concentrated in professional and white-collar businesses in white neighbourhoods’. Dunn (1998) tackles the perceived problem of ethnic concentration in Cabramatta, accounting for the growth of the Vietnamese community in that corner of south west Sydney, and arguing that the existence of ethnic ‘ghettos’ is not in itself negative and undesirable, as popular opinion all too often would have us believe. Grillo (2000), meanwhile, explores ‘plural cities’ through the ages, dividing multicultural cities into four historical/political/economic categories: the pre-industrial/patrimonial city; the colonial city; the modern-industrial-capitalist city; and the neoliberal-postmodern-global city. While the approaches taken by these authors are dramatically different from one another, they are nevertheless based on the same paradigm—the study of immigrants in the suburbs, cities and countries in which they had settled. The focus remains on what it is that migrants physically do in, or think about, the communities in which they now reside. Their relationship to the ‘home’ country (as opposed to
community members from the ‘home’ country), their nostalgia for the people and places left behind, are often essentially ignored. Also neglected is the fact that, for many, travel does not stop upon the destination being reached, instead often continuing indefinitely as in true transnational fashion the migrant journeys backwards and forwards, between ‘homes’ past and present. This thesis plans to take up both these themes.

Much past migration research has been quantitative in character. This was particularly the case prior to the mid 1980s when qualitative research methods were frowned upon by academia, though even in recent years quantitative studies are by no means rare (e.g. Iglicka 2001). The qualitative and cultural ‘revolutions’ in the social sciences have, in the last fifteen or so years, brought about an increased interest in the voices of the subjects studied and in the use of research methodologies such as subject interviews (Dunn 2000) and the ‘reading’ of works of literature (White 1995, Petric 1995), film (Jones 1995, Kwiatkowski 2000), even art. The shift from quantitative to qualitative based research methods has been accompanied by a shift in focus from questions of demography, assimilation and economics to subjects such as race and racism (Collins 2000), language (Chumak-Horbatsch 2000), gender (Afshar and Maynard 2000, Franks 2000), ‘belonging’ (Fortier 2000, Rapport and Dawson 1998, Salih 2002, Warikoo 2005, Connell 1995) and, especially in the last few years, transnationalism (Foner 1997, Vertovec 1999, Papastergiadis 2000), ‘placelessness’ (Baldassar 1999, Morton 2000) and identity (Skrbis 1999, Green 2000, Yon 2000, Rumbaut 2002, McAuliffe 2004). The latter themes have recently received much attention partly because they unearth trends said to be coterminous with what many define as the current, postmodern period, whereas past research and its quantitative and economic focus reflected the underlying ethos of the modern period: ‘progress’, homogeneity and assimilation. According to Grillo, what he categorised as the modern-industrial-capitalist ethnically plural city was one typified by successive waves of immigrants needed to oil the wheels of industry; these were to be assimilated, as what was required, or at least envisaged, was a largely homogeneous workforce. The neoliberal-postmodern-global city (and the postmodern period in general), by contrast, ‘celebrates diversity, fragmentation, a multiplicity of voices: it has, after all, less need of an assimilated labour force’ (Grillo 2000: 975). The postmodern city is in fact ‘many cities in one’, where ‘ethnic separatism exists along other forms of separatism’ (ibid.). In such an atmosphere there is only so much that statistics are capable of revealing; they are by no means able to tell the full story, and probably not the most interesting part of the story. Hence the increasing popularity of more qualitative, ‘biographical’ studies.
Halfacree and Boyle (1993) argue the case for a biographical approach in migration research, recognising that the stories individual migrants have to tell about their lives are just as insightful as statistics purporting to represent (i.e. generalise) an ethnic minority or local community, if not more so. This call for biographical-based research is repeated by White (1995), who points to some of the key themes such research uncovers:

| Migrants may live in a number of worlds, and move between them on a daily, annual or seasonal rhythm. Other changes resulting from migration include attempts to re-create elements of former lives (possibly accentuating significant icons of that existence into quasi-talismans of high symbolic or ritual significance); attempts to integrate or assimilate completely (which may be blocked by a number of mechanisms within 'host' society); or the creation of a new identity which is characterised by a feeling of independence from both the society of origin and the social structures of the destination. These changes in identity cannot be pinned down to a rigid linear continuum, for they represent the multiple and continually renegotiated outcomes of complex multifaceted phenomena operating both within individual biographies and for societies as a whole (White 1995: 3). |

This thesis plans to develop similar themes in relation to the Polish community in Australia, focusing on return journeys and analysing these in the context of the literature on transnationalism.

transnationalism

In migration studies transnationalism has been defined as 'the process by which migrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement' (Basch, Glick-Schiller and Blanc-Szanton 1994: 7). Although for some authors immigrant transnationalism refers primarily to very specific economic practices linking countries, such as 'ethnic' shops, import-export companies, investment in home countries, and other businesses run by so-called 'transnational entrepreneurs' (Portes, Guarnizo and Landolt 1999, Portes, Haller and Guarnizo 2002), in more common usage transnationalism also encompasses cultural links and practices, including travel and communication with social networks in the origin country (Glick-Schiller and Fouron 1998, Glick-Schiller 1999, Adamson 2002, Al-Ali and Koser 2002, Ehrkamp 2005). A distinction has also been made between what Itzigsohn et al 1999 have termed narrow and broad transnationalism. Whereas 'narrow transnationalism refers to institutionalised and continuous participation in transnational activities and organisations', broad transnationalism includes more sporadic and/or casual 'participation in transnational linkages' (Itzigsohn and Saucedo 2002: 770).
Only in the 1990s did there emerge a more pertinent focus on transnationalism in academic discussions of migration and its effect on identity. Scholars such as Ang (1994), Thomas (1999), Wise (2000), Pastergiadis (2000) and Akhtar (1999) talked about the influence of continuing links with the diaspora and homeland, including among second or even third generation immigrants. Such research touched on the role of the return journey to the homeland, but generally did not focus on it, with Baldassar's (1999, 2001) work being an important exception; return was seen as but one aspect of contemporary migrant life and of an often fragmented, unstable identity. Most such studies were also located within the context of strong local co-ethnic communities with which identity was (variously) bound (e.g. Armbruster 2002; Ehrkamp 2005; Levitt 2001; Zhou 2001; Airriess 2002; Hardwick 2002) though admittedly this local involvement was lesser where younger or second or third generation migrants were singled out (Portes and Rumbaut 2001, 2005; Rumbaut 2002; Portes, Fernandez-Kelly and Haller 2005; Zhou and Xiong 2005; Waldinger and Perlmann 1998).

Recent years have seen numerous empirical studies on diasporic transnationalism: these studies demonstrate that transnationalism among immigrants is far from universal, and where it exists it is far from uniform. Manifestations of transnationalism seem to vary greatly from one community to another, and as such could not—or should not—be generalised across communities. Similarly, the integration/assimilation paths of immigrants in host societies are not homogenous, when comparing different ethnic immigrant groups (or even subsets of these). Several scholars have termed this departure from standardisable, pan-migrant patterns of post-migration community and transnational involvement segmented assimilation (Alba and Nee 1997, Portes, Fernandez-Kelly and Haller 2005, Zhou and Xiong 2005).

Some ethnic/immigrant groups appear to display significant transnational links, frequently travelling to the homeland and/or consuming media from the homeland, remitting money to family back home, investing money in homeland economies and even sometimes planning (sometimes realistically, often vaguely) to return upon retirement. Other groups, or even individuals in that same group, display more assimilationist/integrationist tendencies, with fierce commitment to the host country (often also networks of their co-ethnics in that country), while their physical links with the homeland are very limited indeed. Recent Russian and Ukrainian Jewish immigrants to the United States are an example of such a group (Morawska 2004).

However, the relationship between transnationalism and localism (in its assimilative or enclave/co-ethnic network forms) is not a dichotomous one. The two of course co-exist, in various combinations, with these combinations varying from one group to
another, but also within a group, based on such variables as socio-economic status, time since migration and local language ability. Morawska (2004) has attempted to quantify immigrant groups based on the degrees of transnational, assimilative or co-ethnic enclave behaviours or preferences group members display. In Morawska's model commitment to transnationalism does not necessarily preclude assimilative tendencies—the two can co-exist. Groups can be typified by various degrees of transnationalism and, simultaneously, high degrees of commitment to local co-ethnic networks, and/or commitment to the broader (non co-ethnic) host society. An often quoted example of such a group is middle class Indian migrants to the United States, United Kingdom, Australia and Canada (Toila-Kelly 2004b, Voigt-Graf 2005).

Morawska's research looked at several immigrant groups in the United States; Polish immigrants are categorised as being typified by what Morawska calls the 'home-focused' stream of ethnic-path adaptation, and private-sphere regular transnationalism; they share this category with Dominican immigrants. By contrast Indians are categorised as being characterised by upwards assimilation and regular public-sphere transnationalism, and Russian Jews by host-focused ethnic-path adaptation and minimal or entirely absent transnational involvement. Clearly, when it comes to transnational involvement or how immigrants adapt to life in the host country, there is significant variation between immigrant groups—and even subsets of these groups. What might be true for one group of migrants may not apply to all. This is one reason why in studying migration and transnationalism in detail it is often preferable to choose tight, relatively homogenous groups in selecting case studies.

Interestingly, other studies of Polish migrant communities roughly correspond to Morawska's descriptions—many point to a home-focused mentality, comparative lack of involvement in organised co-ethnic community life, but substantial transnational links with Poland, and identification with it, most evident through travels back 'home', and food and media consumption patterns (Erdmans 1995, Drzewicka and Nakayama 1998, Burrell 2003, Jancz 2000). Burrell (2003), in her examination of the Polish community of Leicester (UK), refers to the transnationalism of Poles in Leicester variously as small-scale, low-key, or banal transnationalism. For Burrell transnationalism is not only about physical flows and connections:

transnational connections do not have to be visible or tangible in order to exist. Memories and emotions can be the most powerful links to the homeland; the strongest transnational connections are sometimes those that are rarely acted out, voiced or expressed, but simply felt. (Burrell 2003: 333)
Burrell’s more flexible interpretation of the term is greatly at odds with the more narrow economic practices usage of Portes and others. However, although memory, nostalgia and other unquantifiable aspects of the migrant experience receive much attention in this thesis, from here onwards when the term transnational is used it will primarily apply to physical connections only.

**second generations**

Most studies on diasporic transnationalism—as with most studies on immigrant communities more broadly—focus primarily on the first generation, especially those who migrated as adults, and who in comparison with younger migrants or the second generation, experience greater difficulty integrating, and who for this reason are more visible and more readily identifiable as ‘migrants’ by others. This is especially true of quantitative studies, in part perhaps because it is more difficult to locate the children of immigrants in census data, or to recruit a sizeable sample containing such respondents. In addition, the experiences of the second generation may be thought of by some as less important than those of actual migrants; certainly, their experiences are less readily quantifiable, concerned as they are with questions of identity, belonging, and negotiating two simultaneously familiar (if at times contradictory) cultures.

But because project design, and knowing what questions to ask, might be difficult, this does not mean that such questions shouldn’t be asked. This has been recognised by a number of studies focusing on local-born children of immigrants, or those who migrated as children (sometimes also referred to as the second generation, or occasionally as generation 1.5). Most of these are qualitative in nature, but quantitative researchers (perhaps armed with a greater understanding of the issues thanks to qualitative research) are increasingly tackling the subject.

Among the most prominent quantitative examples of studies focusing on children of immigrants are those utilising the Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study (CILS) dataset (see Rumbaut and Portes 2001, Portes, Fernandez-Kelly and Haller 2005, Portes and Rumbaut 2005). This large project looked at the children of immigrants (including the 1.5 generation) who in the 1992 attended several schools in Miami and San Diego, with follow-up surveys in 1995-06 and 2001-03. A significant number of studies make use of this dataset, many focusing on questions of transnationalism and identity (Fuligni and Witkow 2004, Haller and Landolt 2005, Feliciano and Rumbaut 2005, Rumbaut 2002, 2005, Zhou and Xiong 2005). This research suggests that while children of immigrants (including those born abroad) adopt quickly to life in the United States, they do not abandon their ‘home’ cultures and identities—even if the mother tongue is seldom spoken and individual seems ‘Americanised’. Many are also shown to engage
in regular return trips to the home country (with varying levels of return depending on ethnic background, economic circumstance and political situation in the homeland). Ethnic identities are often used as badges of honour separating youth from the mainstream and fostering a sense of solidarity with others; sometimes these are used strategically with individuals alternating between one identity and another or preferring hyphenated identities, depending on the circumstance of the moment. In the United States this is somewhat problematized by race, with many being forced to adopt particular identities because of the visibility of their 'otherness'. A key theme to have emerged from the study, and other studies of the United States second generation, is what is referred to as 'downward assimilation', where because of racial appearance youth from the Caribbean or Africa are identified with, and in turn themselves begin to identity with African-American street culture and find it difficult to escape poverty and associated problems. Other research on second generation Americans—including qualitative work—reaches similar conclusions. In many ways the uniqueness of United States immigration—including the presence of large native-born racial minorities, the vast illegal immigrant population, and the fact that much migration since WWII has been of 'non-Whites'—makes translation of United States research into other contexts difficult. The situations may be quite different and non-comparable. But until such a time that quantitative studies focusing on the immigrant second generations of other countries get off the ground, there is little data available to inform us of the situation outside the United States. Qualitative research is all there is.

Examples of predominantly qualitative work in this area includes Zhou and Bankston (1998, 2001), Waldinger and Perlmann (1998), Levitt and Waters (2002), Kasinitz et al. (2002), Potter (2005), Warikoo (2005) and Wu (2005). Examples from outside the United States include Drozd and Ribarow (1993), Ang (1994), Baldassar (1999), Hennink, Diamond and Cooper (1999), Wise (2000), Butcher and Thomas (2001), Prieur 2002 and McAuliffe (2004). All studies depict a second or 1.5 generation characterised not so much by confusion when it came to identity and belonging (though there is some degree of this), but by negotiation and fluctuation, with young immigrants feeling equally at home in several cultures, and choosing which country they identify with more according to circumstance. To what extent these observations apply also to the 'Solidarity children' generation of Polish immigrants to Australia—especially in light of the 'toing and froing' represented by return trips to Poland—is a question this thesis proposes to answer.
backwards and forwards

As Connell (1995) points out, 'migration is rarely absolute, unambiguous and final' (p.277). Instead, 'migrants almost always return home, both temporarily and much less frequently on the assumption of permanence' (Connell 1995: 272). Despite this, popular discourse and academic literature alike tend to ignore the 'toing and froing'—and associated feelings of homesickness and of being torn between one's two homelands—that all too often are an integral part of the migration experience. An important exception to this has been the literature on transnationalism and cosmopolitanism (Skrbis 1999, Velayutham and Wise 2005, Ong 2000, Vertovec 2001), which has undergone marked growth in the last decade. Part of this bias seems to be the result of the popularly held belief that migration is a strictly one-way affair and that migrants do—or at least should—abandon all links with their former homelands as soon as they set foot in their new, adopted homeland. The existence of return migration, let alone temporary return trips 'home', are conveniently forgotten, irrespective of the frequency of both. For instance, according to Nancy Foner, 'between 1901 and 1920, for every 100 immigrants who entered the US, thirty-six left' while between 1971 and 1990 the figure was twenty-three out of every 100 (1997: 358). Even among Jews escaping the political repression and anti-Semitism of late 19th century Russia—a group that seemingly had little reason to journey backwards—perhaps as many as 15-20% of those who came to the US returned to Europe' (Foner 1997: 358; Sarna 1981). Shumsky concurs:

Although it is estimated that more than one-third of the migrants to the United States between 1870 and 1930 returned to their homelands (a return migration of more than 11 million people), it is widely believed (especially by Americans) that the United States was the final destination for most migrants and that, if given their choice, a substantial part of Europe's population would have chosen to live in America. Because of this belief, return migration from the United States is rarely acknowledged, much less studied (1995: 198).

That returning 'home', or for that matter reminiscing about it or travelling to it by leafing through photos or the pages of books, is of importance to the individual migrant quickly becomes apparent through even the most cursory review of the available literature on the subject. When only given the chance through interviews, or via such other avenues as fiction (see King et al 1995)—or memoirs—the accounts provided often dwell at length on the experience of travelling 'home', of missing 'home, and of the problems that being torn between two worlds often brings about—all elements of the migrant experience which statistics alone fail to reveal and more traditional studies and much popular discourse largely ignore (or are ignorant of). Thus Petric's (1995) essay on the emigrant experience in the literature of Slovenes in
the United States, Canada and Australia reveals what other, particularly quantitative, studies as well as popularly held beliefs about migration in both 'home' and receiving societies generally do not. Slovene émigré literature is characterised by homesickness, by movement to and fro, by being caught in 'between two worlds, between two homelands' (Petric 1995:169). The myth of the grateful, assimilative immigrant who abandons the old world for the new is shattered, as is the myth that 'back home' paints America as a utopian Eldorado and all migrants who reach its shores as successful and rich (Petric 1995: 163).

A number of interview-based studies also touch upon the theme of travelling 'back', or to and from—as do many personal accounts such as memoirs and autobiographies. One example is Peter Read's (1996) work on the 'meaning of lost places', a chapter in which deals specifically with migrants leaving behind former homelands, later either returning to visit what they quickly discover to be a changed place, or being too afraid to go back at all. Read notes the case of the return after 20 years of Dutch-born Cornelius Vleekens to his hometown; for Vleekens the trip precipitated mixed emotions: 'I suddenly became aware that I am a stranger in Australia as well as my native Holland, that I am no longer able to wholly fit in anywhere (Read 1996: 40-1).

For those who migrated as children, or who were born in receiving countries to migrant parents, returning to one's ancestral 'home' is often filled with even greater ambiguity. Read also cites the example of Senia Peseta, who 'was born in Australia to Croatian parents' (Read 1996: 41), and who travelled 'back' to Croatia for the first time at age five. She and her parents loved the experience so much they actually considered staying there permanently. Ten years later, the family went back to Croatia again. This time, returning to Australia was for Peseta 'the most awful day of my life', whilst also noting that her father 'did not mind leaving it [Croatia] as much as she, a native-born Australian' (Read 1996: 42). Later, on subsequent visits after the age of 18, she increasingly found herself viewing her parents' village as parochial, realising 'that more of the intellectual and social life which made her was back in Australia' (1996: 43). Although Peseta's loyalties continued to be divided between her two countries, and she briefly even considered living in Croatia for a prolonged period of time, perhaps teaching English, she found herself having less and less in common with her Croatian family—which, she eventually began to realise, didn't really view her as a true Croat and resented her perceived wealth, success, and 'foreignness' (this particularly being the case during and in the aftermath of the Croatian war).

Another of Read's case studies was Andrew Riemer, who along with his parents left Budapest during World War II. Although he did not remember much from his
childhood days in Budapest, family history and stories made sure ‘that at one level Budapest was a city more intimately known than Sydney’ (Read 1996: 49). Returning to Budapest was for Riemer, as for most migrants undertaking such a homecoming trip, an important and emotional experience, promptly teaching him that ‘he belonged emotionally neither in Budapest, that city of terrible memory, nor in Sydney, the familiar place which he called home’ (op cit.: 50). Torn, dislocated identities such as these appear to be shared by many others who have embarked on a return trip ‘home’.

Loretta Baldassar is one of the few researchers who have delved deeper into the phenomenon of journeying back to a migrant’s ‘home’ country, doing so by writing about her own experiences as well as those of the subjects she studied. In ‘The Road Home’ (1999) and Visits Home: Migration Experiences between Italy and Australia (2001) Baldassar writes about her first identity-changing trip back to her parent’s homeland, Italy, her subsequent trips, and the influence these had on her research. Following an account of travelling back to her father’s hometown at age 21, she writes:

it is liberating to be able to write about the experience—probably the single most important event in my fieldwork, yet one that does not readily find its way into my academic publications ... in that homecoming, I knew I was more than just me. I was my father’s daughter, my grandmother’s grandchild and my aunt’s niece. But I was also a migrant come home: in that capacity I was everyone’s daughter, granddaughter and niece—everyone who had a migrant family member that is, and, in my father’s village, everyone did (Baldassar 2001: 3).

The research Baldassar’s own trips spawned revolved around the trips back to Italy by Italians who migrated from the village of San Fior in northern Italy to Perth. As Baldassar argues, “going back” (home) is a secular pilgrimage of enormous importance for migrants, particularly for the first generation, for whom the return is to their place of birth. The journey “back” can also be a significant rite of passage for the so-called second generation ... Even if they never actually manage to “go back”, the lives of the migrants and their children are steeped in the myth of return’ (Baldassar 2001: 3-4). But far from it being an uncomplicated experience,

competing and contrasting migration discourses meet awkwardly during the return visit. The visit can be joyful and rejuvenating ... At the same time, however, the visit can be disorienting, disillusioning and disappointing. In Australia they are considered Italian ... and many invest a great deal of energy maintaining an ethnic identity defined as such. In Italy they are considered to be Australiani and are more or less unable to return to their former identity (Baldassar 1999: 47).
In verbalising the multiple or divided identities many migrants and migrants' children face upon trips to their or their parents' original homelands through passages such as this, Baldassar captures what is essentially a crucial but regularly ignored element of the migration experience incredibly well. This thesis proposes to expand on some of Baldassar's ideas and observations, using the case study of Polish migration, and focusing on a specific age group: young adults who migrated to Australia as children or teenagers in the 1980s. Further, it will do so by adopting an approach not attempted before, concentrating on visual aspects of the experience, drawing a link between the trips 'back home', landscape ('real-life', nostalgic and imagined) and the respondents' own photography.

**landscape**

Much has been written about landscape. However, most studies that touch upon the subject do so by concentrating on landscape in a historical context, looking at such elements as literature (Barnes and Duncan 1992), landscape painting (Daniels 1993, Jackson 1997), national or ethnic identity (Agyeman 1990, Daniels 1993, Kinsman 1995, Olwig 1993, Unwin 1999, Ely 2002, Armstrong 2004), politics (Bender 1993, Mitchell 1994, Morphy 1993, Zukin 1991), gender, social and economic history (Cosgrove 1984, Mitchell 2000: 92-119), or combinations of some or all of the above. Alternatively, studies attempt to read or deconstruct it, often along the lines of poststructuralism and cultural theory (see Duncan and Duncan 1988, Dunn 1995, Unwin 1999), or psychology and landscape aesthetics (Bourassa 1991, Hull 1995, Sinha 1995). Even studies that tie the landscape to national or ethnic identity do so by looking to the past, at for example notable writers and artists and their work (eg. Schama 1995).

By comparison, research which delves into contemporary attitudes to landscape is less common (even 'readings' of particular landscape are usually devoid of their social contexts, essentially ignoring the way in which they are read or interpreted by anyone other than a study's author, supposedly the landscape's sole—or at least only officially sanctioned—'reader'). This is even more the case when it comes to the relationships migrants have to landscape—both the landscapes they or their parents left behind, or the adopted landscapes of their new home. Given anecdotal evidence (eg. Read 1996, Pawloska and Harrison 1999, Toila-Kelly 2002, 2004a, Armstrong 2004, Kwiatkowski 2004) hinting at the importance of the 'home' landscape and images and nostalgic memories of it to frequently homesick immigrants, the present paucity in the literature on the subject is puzzling to say the least. It is therefore one of the intentions of this study to help correct this.
Simon Schama (1995) is among the few scholars to draw a link between landscape, nostalgia and memory. Contrary to many other studies dealing with the theme of landscape, Schama focuses not so much on the real, physical landscape and the meanings or social or economic history they encompass or represent, but on the landscape as it exists in people’s minds—in their thoughts and memories, particularly if the landscapes of their (or their ancestors’) youth had been unceremoniously taken away or drastically changed through population movements, war, technology, or the mere passage of time. Schama for instance speaks of the wild Lithuanian landscape and the importance it still holds for the collective Polish nation of which it was once a part—and, in a way, remains so in the popular national imagination. Schama’s analysis remains, however, largely historical and based on past works of art and literature that particular landscapes inspired, and the landscape imagery these works in turn gave rise to in various nations’ collective consciousnesses.

Morley and Robins (1993) write of the importance of images of ‘home(land)’ in European culture. While their study deals with notions of heimat/homeland for Europeans living in Europe—in, essentially, their homes, their respective homelands—for those physically removed from their homeland its importance may be as significant, if not actually magnified, due to its distance. Often, studies that do not overtly deal with questions of landscape but which allow migrants’ own voices and feelings to be aired attest to that, as in the work of Read (1996). The accounts of a number of the migrant subjects he features prominently include allusions to and images of landscapes: the landscapes of their ‘home’ countries, before they left them behind; the landscapes of their new homes, into which they often try to read their former homeland’s familiar landscapes; and the landscapes they return to on return journeys ‘home’ and the emotions and memories these conjure up. Read documents the journey of Arnold Zable from Australia to northeast Poland, the land his family called home prior to World War II: ‘in search of the meaning of the fragments, Zable caught the train from Warsaw to Bialystok. He felt the past expressed in those physical sites, so familiar yet so strange, closing in on him more tightly than it ever could do in Australia’ (Read 1996: 48). Irena Petrovna migrated from St. Petersburg to Canberra to join her daughter in 1993. Quite unlike her daughter, who ‘has nightmares of raids by secret police or last-minute border apprehension, Irena Petrovna dreams of the gracious avenues of her city, her friends, holidays on the Black Sea coast, and the forests of Estonia, “places you will never forget …even when I close my eyes, awake, I can see it’ (Read 1996: 33).

Elsewhere, nostalgia for the Polish landscape is strong, even among those who had never seen it with their own eyes. Although Anna Kijak was born in Australia, both
her 'Polishness' and Poland are very important for her, even though she has never been in Poland and admits knowing the country only through secondary sources, which alone have contributed to the image of Poland implanted in her mind. Of these, photos appear to be of particular significance: 'My vision of what I think Poland is like is brought to life through photos and stories of others. Within my mind are painted vivid pictures of green grass covering sloping mountains, encrusted with glistening crystal snow on the summit' (Kijak 1999: 111). Kijak's association of the landscape of Poland with picturesque mountain scenery is, of course, exaggerated and idealised, gleaned from postcards, calendars and tourist shots of highland landscapes which, considering that Poland is an overwhelmingly flat or undulating lowland country, are the exception rather than the rule. Nevertheless, for her this distorted or imagined image of Poland is Poland. Kijak's words underline not only the importance of landscape imagery in thinking about even never-visited 'homelands', but also demonstrate the often vital links between visual material such as photography and the way in which one remembers—or imagines—one's ancestral homeland. As such, they point to another facet of the migration experience that this thesis plans to explore: photography.

Photography

Considering its prominence and importance in everyday life, photography has received relatively little attention within geography and most other academic disciplines. Exceptions include art history and art theory, which have focused on the subject within an historical or overly theoretical framework, predominantly dealing with the development of photography from its inception onward, the theory behind 'the image and the process of capturing it (Barthes 1981, Sontag 1978), and/or the work of particular artist-photographers (or in some cases photo-journalists). More recently, as a subject photography has received increased interest due to the rising influence of cultural studies (Spyer 2001), though much such work remains heavily laden in poststructuralist theory, more or less divorced from the real world, ordinary people, communities, and the photos they produce, consume, cherish.

Despite the 'qualitative revolution' in geography—and the social sciences more generally—photography as both research tool and subject remains under-utilised, at least when compared to similar cultural media such as, for example, literature. Part of this is due to the existence of a general bias against visual images, perhaps stemming from the privilege traditionally accorded to the written word, as well as the difficulties inherent, in a discipline reliant on words, in making sense of visual images. Another point worth mentioning is the slant in what visual-centred social science research that
does occur toward auturcistic, ‘artistic’ discourse—whether photography, painting or film, or rather its visual component—as opposed to more ‘popular’ (termed ‘lowbrow’ by some) images produced not by professional or widely known and praised imagemakers/capturers but ordinary people in their everyday lives. But this kind of elite (or ‘highbrow’) art is not necessarily particularly representational or influential compared to the total sum of all the images out there, being produced and consumed by, and influencing, the world at large. The popularly produced and consumed images sometimes referred to as ‘snap photography’ (including family, holiday and ‘happy’ snaps, all somewhat pejorative terms that originally served to point to such photos’ common status and supposed lack of artistic merit) represent precisely the kind of popular imagery which has been overlooked by academia in favour of images that make it into books, periodicals, brochures and exhibitions (e.g. Blaikie 2001, Dilley 1986, Kinsman 1995, Lutz and Collins 1993, Marsh 1985, Robins 1996). Nevertheless, a small number of studies (Chalfen 1998, Hirsch 1997, Kenyon 1993, Sanders 1980, Slater 1995) have begun to take notice of this ubiquitous phenomenon, though most are in the areas of art theory and cultural studies, analyses of a geographical (or even social science) nature being comparatively few in number, Markwell (2000) being among the few exceptions.

Markwell (2000) uses ‘photo-documentation and analysis’ as tools in researching the tourist experience, his focus being ‘not on commercially produced images, but on the photographs taken by the people who are the particular object of study’ (Markwell 2000: 92). Markwell refers to this as self-employed or self-directed photography, and used it in both the tourism study, and in an analysis of space and place in the lives of gay men from the Newcastle (NSW) area (Markwell 1998), because ‘it gave some degree of power back to the subjects in the sense that they could use photography as a means of “telling their own stories” through the photographs they took’ (Markwell 2000: 92). Markwell’s exploration of photography in tourism involved a study of a three-week nature tour of Sabah and Sarawak in Malaysia, after the completion of which ‘each of the tour participants was asked to provide the author with their photographs so that analyses could be undertaken’ (2000: 93). The tour participants did not know that the photographs they took would be studied. These photos were catalogued and subsequently used in interviews ‘as a form of stimuli to encourage participants to discuss aspects of their experience’ (2000: 94). Although Markwell’s approach has not gone unchallenged—Kearnes (2000) has compiled an extensive Foucauldian critique of what he sees as Markwell’s Cartesianism, evident through the conflation of vision and articulation and the assumption ‘that it is possible to translate visual experience into text’ which Kearnes (2000: 332) says underlies Markwell’s work—it remains promising (and groundbreaking) enough to warrant further
investigation. Through the use of a modified version of Markwell’s technique to study
the experience of migrants travelling ‘back home’, this thesis proposes to do just that,
examining the potential of respondent photography in social research focusing on the
migrant experience.

Despite the recent call by a number of geographers for the greater use of ‘visual
methodologies’ such as photography within the discipline (Rose 1996, 2001; Schwartz
and Ryan 2002), mirrored by similar pleas in anthropology and sociology (Banks 1998,
photography has very rarely been used to explore the theme of migration, let alone of
migrants’ travels ‘home’ or their backwards and forwards movement between multiple
homelands. This is disappointing considering the number of photos commonly taken
on such trips, and their importance to the individuals whose trips the photos
documents (as well as the individuals’ family and friends, whose image of the ‘home’
country as it is now may be shaped by such photos). One of the few books to touch on
the issue is *Images of Home* by Alexakis and Janiszewski (1995). A photo essay, it
comprises of photos (accompanied by brief biographies) of Greek-Australians in both
Australia and Greece, which they are either in the process of visiting or where they
have moved after time (sometimes a whole life) spent in Australia. While not an
academic study, and the photographs are all by one of its authors—a professional
photographer—as opposed to its migrant subjects, it nevertheless hints at the themes
this thesis seeks to explore, demonstrating their universality.

In making use of not just photography, but ‘snap photography’ as a tool of
geographical inquiry, this thesis serves to both tell a story using the most appropriate
available methods, and fill what has been identified as a significant gap in the
literature. The intention here is not to rely purely on photographs and their analysis,
but to use these to complement interviews. The idea is to use photos taken by migrants
on trips back home—or photos from before emigration—as visual stimuli in
interviews, asking interview subjects what each of the photos contain, when, where
and why it was taken, what emotions and memories looking at it now conjures up, and
so on. More generally, it was hoped that the photos would permit the subject to better
tell her or his story, at first as it is documented in photos (and hence as it was revealed
to those family members and friends who saw the photos), and subsequently in a more
in-depth manner. Recognising that often what is left out of photos is just as important
as what is left in (Hirsch 1997: 119; Spyer 191), attempting to make the
unphotographed, the unseen or invisible visible will be another of the chief
methodological concerns of this study. The methodological application of photography
in social research, and its implications, will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter.

Through its focus on those Polish-born Australians who came to Australia as children or teenagers in the 1980s, this study plans to concentrate on questions of identity, of feeling Polish, Australian, both or neither, and on the subjects' feelings about Poland and Australia, and the 'homeland landscapes' left behind. Explored within this context will be the subjects' return journey or journeys back to Poland, the feelings and images the first such trip conjured up, and comparing this first 'homecoming' trip to any subsequent trip, should these have occurred. Another crucial component of the thesis will be its visual slant, with the use of visual material such as photos as stimuli in interviews. Of particular interest will be photos taken by the subjects on trips back to Poland and the ways in which these images illustrate and become an important part of the experience, influencing the trip as well as the way it (and Poland itself) is remembered and relayed to others.

As has so far been demonstrated, many of the themes this thesis proposes to cover have not received significant attention. In migration studies, few researchers have tackled the question of return journeys to 'home' countries and the feelings these arouse—or questions or identity ambiguity they may raise. Research that deals with landscape, nostalgic or imagined landscapes—presently physically distant landscapes and the ways in which they are recalled or imagined—is similarly rare. In work on photography, the kind of migration issues raised here are essentially ignored; at the same time, popular photography and its arguably significant potential as a research tool is bypassed in favour of photography's more prestigious forms. The kind of project envisaged here, a combination of all abovementioned elements—the use of snap photography and other popular imagery in studying the way in which migrants relate to their 'homeland' landscapes while visiting the 'home' country or travelling backwards and forwards between two homes—has never been attempted before. Answering the call Rose (2001) made for more 'visual methodologies' within the discipline of geography, this thesis will attempt to take Baldassar's (2001) ideas and observations further by adding to them a stronger visual dimension by way of analysis of the study's subjects' photos and their use as visual stimuli in interviews. The result will be something of a mix of Baldassar (2001), Markwell (2000), Read (1996) and Schama's (1995) various approaches—but applied to a very specific demographic within Sydney's Polish community.

By focusing on the experiences of, and images created and consumed by, those Poles who left Poland for Australia in the 1980s, this thesis hopes to explore questions
surrounding identity, especially its seismically shifting and tenuous nature; the effects of in effect being caught in between, and travelling to and from two very different identities and cultures; and the oft-talked about but little understood phenomenon of homesickness and the images it spawns and/or is influenced or precipitated by. Explored within these parameters will be the possible effects of age of migration on a subject's feelings about Poland and their experiences on return journeys there (as well as other attenuating factors which may account for differences in different subjects respective positions); changes in experiences in and experiences of Poland on the second and third trip 'back' as compared to the first; and the way in which the creation and collection of images on trips back are used to (selectively) remember the trip, and Poland, resulting in a simultaneous escape from both contemporary Australian and Polish realities for a romanticised visual alternative. An analysis of all these issues, while providing substantial insight into a particular facet of the lives of a specific segment of Sydney's Polish community, has also wider implications. In a world as increasingly transnational as our own, with many millions calling more than one homeland home, and almost as many engaged in frequent or even constant travel between multiple homelands, issues such as negotiating identity, and nostalgically recalling, and often rediscovering 'home', are truly universal. One doesn't have to be a migrant to relate—only to have a past.

While it was the role of the present chapter to introduce the research topic and review the theoretical framework into which it fits, Chapter Two will detail the thesis methodology, focusing on positionality, sample selection, interview method, and, in particular, the photographic component of the research. Chapter Three will provide contextual information on the study group. Beginning with the history of migration from Poland to Australia, the chapter will then provide a summary of the social characteristics of the present-day Polish community of Sydney, before introducing the study group.

Chapter Four will start the focus on the research participants' return journeys back to the homeland and the profound effect these have on returnees' identity. Two important aspects of the return experience—personal photography, and landscape—will be elaborated on in Chapter Five. In Chapter Six post-travel life in Australia, and the effect of subsequent return trips, will be explored, as will notions of transnational linkages, self-identity, belonging and perceptions of 'home'—and where this home might really be. The thesis will conclude with Chapter Seven, which will link the case study back to the literature and reiterate the contribution of the present research, including its novel methodological approach, to migration studies and, more broadly, to understanding the complexity of migration experiences.
Methodology, positionality and photography

Before moving on to the main body of this research it is necessary to provide detailed background information into project design and its methodological approaches, as well as the context within which this study is located, that is the history and characteristics of Polish emigration, including migration to Australia. The latter is accomplished in the following chapter, while it is the intention of this chapter to elaborate on the thesis methodology, focusing in particular on its less orthodox aspects—the visual analysis of photographs and ‘photo-elicitation’—and posing also questions of positionality.

This thesis is structured around what at first glance may be considered a rather unusual methodology, a combination of the well-tested social research technique of the long or in-depth interview, and the far less prominent—and, I would argue, underutilised—method of visual analysis of project participants’ photographs, as well as their use in interviews as prompts which act to supplement interviewees’ verbal accounts. The chapter begins by introducing the study group, outlining and justifying sample size and selection used in the study. Next, it considers questions of positionality, arguing the benefits, and inevitability, of ‘inserting myself into the picture’—that is to say of including personal experiences where these are relevant, instead of insisting on the traditional total elimination of the ‘I’, the researcher’s ego, and its replacement with the supposedly detached ‘outsider’ observer (an impossibility if ever there was one). This is followed by a description of one of the project’s chief data-gathering tools, the interview process. Finally, the chapter moves on to photography, pondering the potential of this medium and its use in social research, and describing the precise manner in which respondent photography will be incorporated in the research methodology.

study group

The core of this research is based around members of a significantly sized subset of the Polish-born community of metropolitan Sydney: those of the Solidarity-wave migrants from Poland to Australia who were children at the time of migration in the 1980s. More
information about this group, including the circumstances which led to their and their parents’ migration, is forthcoming in the following chapter. The group, from which all study participants were recruited, and of which I too am a member, will henceforth be generally referred to as the ‘Solidarity children’ generation. For the purposes of this study this generation is, somewhat loosely, defined as those individuals who, along with their Polish-born parents, migrated to Australia in the period 1980-89, while under the age of 18. In 2004 members of this generation were aged approximately between 16 and 35, although this thesis only considered those aged over 18 when interviewing began in 2002. Using 2001 census data the Solidarity Children generation can be estimated to number about 1,500 in the greater Sydney metropolitan region. Though the vast bulk of this group were born in Poland, the fact that some were born in ‘third countries’ whilst en route between Poland and Australia (many Solidarity migrants fled via Austria, Italy or Germany, where they spent many months or even years) suggests that a birthplace outside Poland should not exclude anyone from being considered a member of the generation in question. The participants of this study include one female born in Austria, shortly after her family’s ‘escape’ there from Poland, and another actually born in Australia not long after her family’s arrival. She was included because in all other respects bar birthplace she appeared to be a Solidarity Children generation member; further, the fact that she was one of three sisters, the first born in Poland, the second in Austria and the third in Australia, meant that along with her sisters her case represented a good opportunity to gauge the influence of the birthplace/age at migration variable on experience and identity. Apart from these two exceptions all other respondents were born in Poland.

This study is confined to the Sydney metropolitan area. It is with this region and its Polish-Australian inhabitants and their networks that I am most familiar, hence I did not seek to expand its scope further afield. However, the study does not exclude people who no longer reside in Sydney, at the time of interview, as long as they lived there for an extended period of time at some stage in the past. In practice, three project participants fell into this category: two lived in Sydney from migration until they moved elsewhere in 2001 (one to Canberra, the other Bangkok). The third lived in Sydney after moving there from Adelaide in 1998, before moving to Darwin in 2002. All other informants lived in Sydney for the entire period 2001-04, the duration of this research; of these, only one individual had not resided exclusively in Sydney between migration and the present, having spent one year back in Poland when his parents ‘re-migrated’, and three years at Newcastle while studying there.

Throughout this thesis, respondents names were replaced with pseudonyms to protect privacy.
This research is predominantly qualitative in nature, its aim being to provide detailed insight into the experiences of selected members of a particular group of migrants. The study does not therefore purport to provide an authoritative and representative account of the entire Solidarity Children generation, with a sizeable and tightly controlled sample and a preoccupation with statistics and representativeness. Such work has in migration studies been attempted myriad times before (e.g. Portes, Haller and Guarnizo 2002, Golash-Boza 2005). Generally, the bigger the sample and the more quantitative the approach, the more predictable and stylised are the study’s results. Such results are interesting and important—they provide the big picture and the facts and figures decisionmakers demand—but alone they are insufficient as they marginalise ‘real-life’ experience. Neither do surveys or short interviews necessarily pick these things up, nor for that matter detaching, or pretending to detach, the researcher from the research. As McCracken (1988: 11-12) argues, and as I seek to demonstrate here, sometimes it takes an insider, intimately familiar with the issues at hand through personal experiences and a lifetime of observation and networking, to uncover what others may miss, and to tackle the issue in ways others may not consider.

Fads come and go and it would appear that the fluctuating popularity of qualitative and quantitative research is no exception. In the social sciences, including geography, qualitative methodologies were rarely questioned prior to the 1960s. Their popularity only began to wane in the 1960s and 1970s as positivism and Marxism were in the ascendency in academe. The social sciences became more ‘scientific’, like the physical sciences, and social scientists turned to more rigorous scientific methods. Quantitative research was all the rage, while qualitative approaches were pushed to the sidelines, or at least toward the humanities. But the pendulum eventually swung the other way, it being realised that census and economic data and grand modernist theories of everything could rarely tell the full story. The resurgence of qualitative methods from the mid 1980s onwards was closely linked to the appearance of cultural studies and the various ‘posts’—postcolonialism, postmodernism and poststructuralism—with their collective apathy, if not antipathy, to ‘big picture’ meta-theories, methods which purported to be scientific, and what they claimed was the myth of the detached, objective observer. Within this paradigm reading ‘texts’, narratives and power relations has become de rigueur, while in social research it is the semi-structured interview that has become a ‘staple’ (Crang 2002: 649). The situation has even led Crang (2002) to ask whether, after a prolonged period in the wilderness, qualitative methods have in fact become the new orthodoxy. Some commentators even go as far as
to suggest that the current popularity of qualitative approaches robs disciplines such as
geography of ‘quantitatively competent social scientists in significant numbers’ (Marshall 2001). But criticisms like this seem to miss the point. For one thing they seem
to forget that quantitative methods continue to dominate many areas of social research;
concrete facts and figures are after all what decisionmakers still demand. Such
critiques also assume that qualitative research is the faddish intruder usurping the
timeless, foolproof rigour of quantitative method. In fact both approaches are equally
legitimate. Qualitative research is no more a fad than its quantitative counterpart, and
there is always room—and need—for one and the other in the social science
disciplines. After such a preponderance of quantitative work, with its characteristic
appearance of objectivity, impersonality and ‘scientific’ basis, it was perhaps essential
that scholars pursue other methods, especially ones capable of acquiring the kind of
knowledge that cannot easily be picked up by traditional quantitative methodologies.

**sample size and selection**

This thesis examines a sample of eighteen individuals, all members of the Solidarity
Children generation subgroup of Polish migrants to Australia. As already argued,
though this is a relatively small number, this thesis does not seek or pretend to provide
an authoritatively representative picture of the Solidarity Children generation.
Obviously, statistically speaking, it would be unwise to ascribe the conclusions drawn
to the entire group in question given the small sample. But this is not about the
generation as a whole. The goal instead is to examine the lives, opinions, and also
images of select members of this group—a rather different undertaking. I will therefore
avoid making quantitative claims that just because a certain percentage of the sample
falls into category x, or has experienced y or identifies as z, this automatically means
that the same proportion of the group as a whole must adhere to these variables.
Clearly, it would be disingenuous to extrapolate such figures to a wider population.
Nevertheless, what is obtained is an idea of how those individuals studied,
representatives of but by no means representative of a larger group, are affected by
and react to migration and such elements of the migration experience as travelling
back ‘home’, travel photography, identity, nostalgia for the ‘homelandscape’, and so
on.

A smaller sample permits more in-depth analysis with, for instance, more detailed,
longer interviews that go far beyond the often more superficial questions—and
similarly succinct answers—in questionnaires or shorter interviews. The same can be
said of the study of photographs or other images: the greater the sample the more
grand the generalizations. And when images are reduced to numbers and categories,
as they are for instance in more quantitative analyses of photography (eg. Markwell 2000), it is possible to lose sight of many of the reasons behind using photographs in the first place. A photograph is after all popularly reckoned to be worth at least one thousand words, not the one or two it takes to assign it to a category. Furthermore, smaller sample size ensures that more time and space can be devoted to each individual. One person's narrative is far less likely to be submerged by that of other participants'. One of the chief motivating factors behind this thesis is to provide a mouthpiece for what are essentially rarely heard voices. Trying to include too many of these voices would result in a deafening cacophony that, while not necessarily marginalizing the group, drowns out the individual, prolonging his or her exile at the periphery.

In choosing project participants, striking a gender balance among interviewees was a priority. Other than that, obtaining a 'representative' sample was not a major concern in recruitment. Nevertheless, maintaining a healthy, diverse cross-section was deemed important, especially when it came to age at migration and, to a lesser extent, socio-economic background. The project began with the assumption that for child migrants age at migration appears to be a strongly influential factor in determining their level of assimilation into the receiving society, their identity, and knowledge of and affinity with the 'home' culture. Given this, it also has the potential to be a powerful determinant in the experience of returning 'home'. The age at migration of individuals interviewed here ranged from 0 to 16. Three individuals migrated prior to the age of four, another eight aged 4-7, four aged 8-11, and five over the age of 12. Respondents hailed from throughout greater Sydney; areas where respondents had lived since migration (taking into account in particular the areas where they 'grew up' and went to school) were diverse, ranging from the North Shore and eastern suburbs to the inner west and south west suburbs, the latter region being the most well represented—reflecting closely the significant concentrations of Solidarity wave migrants found in that part of the city.

Participant recruitment was through friendship and family networks. Being a member of the generation in question, having migrated to Australia in 1986 at the age of nine and growing up in the south west suburbs amongst the family and friendship networks that comprise the Solidarity migrant community, I was able to utilise these networks to find members of the Solidarity children generation and request their participation. Some of the respondents, a minority, were current or past friends and acquaintances of mine. Most of the remainder were the acquaintances or family members of the former. One individual was approached with the help of the Polish Historical Institute of Australia, of which he was a member. In general, reliance on
established networks avoided the need for recruitment through key community leaders or the various Polish community organizations. Being young and often more 'Australianised' than not, members of the Solidarity Children generation are peripheral members of the Polish community, with participation in community organizations and events notoriously rare. Though some people were approached in this manner, it was found that unless there was a concrete, motivating connection—a mutual acquaintance for instance—they declined participation.

**inserting myself into the picture**

This is a thesis that is motivated by my own experiences and observations, and therefore it is impossible to totally remove the 'T' from the text, and, so to speak, from the picture. Some critics may attack a study of one's own community, stemming in part from one's personal experiences, as anything but objective, or as taking the easy way out. Such critiques miss the point, however. From time to time, and especially in recent years, many commentators have pointed out that perhaps there is no such thing as objectivity in academic research. Everyone has their own little (or not so little) misconceptions. A lifetime of absorbing discourse, with all its tropes and stereotypes, stemming from one's own culture and surroundings clearly leaves its mark on everyone, even the most detached academic. Complete detachment from one's upbringing and (mis)conceptions is hardly possible.

For this reason I don't shy away from being motivated by my own past experiences—nor for including them, and myself, as part of this study. I am after all part of the community, and part of the generation, I am studying. My own experiences and observations should be just as valid as that of other research participants, and to exclude myself from the study would be to assume that somehow my viewpoints as a living and breathing member of the group studied have to be excluded from the text because I, as a supposedly objective observer, am supposed to be removed from such things. To write a thesis, many assume, one has to cease to exist as an 'T', cease to become a person with experiences and prejudices, which is of course impossible. Even if private opinions, experiences and all personal pronouns were excluded, preconceptions, one's past and memories cannot. Obviously something must have driven me to focus on this topic, to interview the people I interviewed and asked them the questions I asked. And if that should be the case it is better to be honest and include yourself as part of the research than try to create the illusion that you have comprehensively removed yourself from the picture. This does not mean that researchers should only study subjects close to them. What it does mean is that researchers should engage in a degree of reflexivity, and be aware of their positionality.
and the extent to which it can influence their work. Bias based on position and background is not in itself a problem so long as there is awareness of its presence and potential to distort.

**positionality**

Although numerous sources (e.g. McCracken 1988) emphasise—overtly or covertly—the risks inherent in research being too close, too familiar, to the researcher and her or his background, I suggest that the benefits outweigh dangers or drawbacks. McCracken writes that while the researcher’s ‘own culture can create as much blindness as insight’ (1988: 11) through what he terms ‘a lack of critical distance’ and ‘a large number of assumptions that can create a treacherous sense of familiarity’ (1988: 22), at the same time it ‘also has the advantage of giving the investigator an extraordinarily intimate acquaintance with the object of study’ (1998: 32). Referring specifically to one of the primary tools of qualitative data collection in the social sciences (and also in this project), the long interview, McCracken goes on to add that ‘it is precisely because the qualitative researchers are working in their own culture that they can make the long interview do such powerful work. It is by drawing on this understanding of how they themselves see and experience the world that they can supplement and interpret the data they generate in the long interview’ (1988: 11-2). However, McCracken then makes the claim that this can only be successfully accomplished by ‘manufacturing distance’. The argument here, by contrast, is that in the present academic climate, dominated as it is by notions of postmodernism, such a manufacture of distance—an essentially illusory endeavour at any rate—is not necessary.

Close proximity to one’s research, should not be considered a source of shame that must be hidden from sight, disguised behind impersonal terminology and method. Quite the contrary, in this position-sensitive era of competing discourse, power dynamics, relativity and identity politics, the proximate and personal tend to often be seen as advantageous. It is distance that now seems to raise questions, for instance accusations of stereotyping not unlike that levelled by Said against Occidental depictions of the Orient. Previously de-rigeur academic practices like hiding behind the smoke and mirrors of detachedness from research, and the idolisation of distance (or the illusion of distance), are increasingly recognised as being responsible for some of the ‘sins’ of modernist-era research. Perhaps chief among these is the equation of the white, western male gaze with scientific objectivity, despite its own inherent subjectivities. Adherence to this paradigm has at least in part led to the marginalisation of the experiences and opinions of women, ethnic minorities, non-heterosexuals and
the developing world (among others) by a largely homogeneous—and homogenising—academia (Robinson 1997: 453-6). Only when, within the last three decades or so, academic homogeneity decreased and white-male orthodoxies underwent serious challenge by groups able to provide and adopt alternative perspectives and methods, did these previously overlooked voices begin to be heard.

There is a place for outsider research too of course, and no doubt it will continue to dominate the academic world. Outsider research has certain advantages, but these should not be used to hide the disadvantages, and to delegitimise insider research and paint it as inherently flawed, as has often been the case. There is room for both approaches. More important is that the researcher approaches his or her position in relation to the subject matter with a healthy dose of reflexivity.

Though increasingly challenged, the myth of the superiority of detachedness and manufactured distance is still with us. In social research, reflexivity is not hegemonic yet. Among some, positionalities that appear to counter what they consider ‘scientific’ methodologies through for instance proximity to subject matter continue to raise eyebrows, if not outright protest. At one 2003 conference, having explained my thesis topic, and my own ethnic background, to another social science PhD scholar, her immediate response was: ‘But if you’re studying your own people ... how can you be objective?’ That this reaction came from a (non-Roma) Czech national researching the persecution of the Roma of Europe—and who’s own positionality is thus by no means beyond reproach—was quite a surprise.

ethnography and participant observation

The fact that the group this study is interested in is one I too am a member of also permits me to draw on observations other than those revealed in interviews, or the literature, due to what is in effect my ‘participant observer’ status. Having myself migrated to Australia as a child, and growing up in the very midst of the networks that comprise the Polish community of Sydney, I am in a position to use the information absorbed throughout a life essentially spent ‘in the field’, collecting data in a manner any anthropologist and many geographers might term ‘participant observation’ and ‘ethnography’. Of course until only a few years ago this ‘data collection’ was largely incidental and unfocused, completed without the present project in mind. And, equally, the fact that in engaging in participant observation and ethnography I was merely being myself, playing my usual role in my usual milieux and not pretending I am part of something I am not, or trying to get my foot in the door of an alien culture and its households, allows me to dodge most of the accusations levelled against these techniques. Such critiques of ethnography and participant observation typically
revolve around questions of positionality, situated knowledge, orientalism, colonialism, etc., and are the consequence of outsiders' attempts to acquire knowledge of a group by penetrating it, usually through deep immersion, even membership. But, it is argued, can such research ever really grasp the group studied from an external position, or will the end result be one always viewed through the filter of one's own lifetime of accumulated—and often unconscious—preconceptions and stereotypes? Many others dismiss such critics by for example branding them as nihilistic relativists sceptical about positivist epistemology and method, and the very existence of an independent, absolute 'truth' (eg. Huber 1995). As Ezzy (2002: 18) points out, however, defenders of the modernist method merely use postmodern relativism as a 'straw man' to discredit postmodernism, while 'preferring to ignore the issue of the historical and situated nature of knowledge' that the postmodernists raise.

By being myself located well within my own research—through membership, at least since migration, of the group studied—I am generally able to escape accusations of 'outsiderism', though certainly some may still try to claim that my proximity to the research presents a problem.

For the most part, however, the proportion of data collected by way of what may be categorised as 'participant observation'—which I prefer to just term 'everyday life'—remains relatively small compared with that obtained through this project's two chief methods, the semi-structured interview and the visual analysis of photographic material. The only sections where I really rely on data gleaned in this manner are those concerned with descriptions of the Polish community of Sydney, including the Solidarity Children subset. In these instances I rely on my own observations, and various discussions outside the confines of the interview over many years, to complement the picture painted by interviewees and existing literature on the subject.

the interview

In tandem with respondents' photography, the long, semi-structured interview forms the foundation of the thesis' methodological approach. The two here are heavily reliant on one another, with, as will be shown, photos not only illustrating but directing verbal response, and interviewee response in turn providing the all-important context by which the photos can be closely analysed. Though this combination of technique is, at least in geography, rather unorthodox, that visual and verbal data can coexist, supplementing each other to help form a more coherent whole, a more complete, more colourful picture, should be of little surprise; we do after all live in a world where the visual—the things we see, the pictures we take, paint, reproduce—is integral to human experience and can hardly be separated from verbal descriptions of it. The two work
hand in hand. In this research topic for instance, themes like nostalgia, homeland, returning home, and migration are inherently visual, or can be—as the plethora of images dedicated to portraying or remembering these can attest. And often these images can convey a message, a moment, a memory far more effectively than words—whether the researcher’s or a respondent’s—ever could.

According to Winchester (2000: 7-8), oral qualitative methods vary significantly, spanning a broad spectrum from the more general/structural and quantitative surveys and questionnaires, to individual-focused, highly qualitative biographic and oral history research. Interviews fall in between these two extremes, though they themselves are subject to a hierarchy. Winchester distinguishes between the unstructured, semi-structured and structured interview, the former tending towards the 'individualistic' end of her spectrum, and the latter toward the 'structural' extreme. Defining each of these types of interviewing is difficult, there being no clear demarcation line separating them from each other, or from oral and life history, which some sources group as subcategories of unstructured interviewing (Dunn 2000). As the terminology suggests, structured interviews adhere to a strict set of predetermined questions, with the respondent being 'asked exactly the same questions in the same order' (Dunn 2000: 60). Semi-structured interviewing utilises questioning which is 'ordered but flexible' and content (rather than questions) focused (Dunn 2000: 61). Unstructured interviews are 'informant focused', with almost conversational interaction, and questions which are largely 'determined by the informant’s responses' (ibid.). Oral and life histories are similarly unstructured interview-based methods. Oral history involves the use of participants in particular historical events or periods as respondents, and was developed as a means of providing a voice to those whose experiences tended to be ignored by traditional historiography, until the 1960s primarily reliant on written sources that happened to find their way into books, newspapers or archives. By contrast, life histories are more concerned with the way the lives of individual interviewees have unfolded, rather than their role in key events (Dunn 2000: 63). Their use has included migration studies, where life histories have proven an effective tool in revealing in substantial detail the process of migration as it operates on an individual level (Miles and Crush 1993, Findlay and Li 1997, Pulvirenti 1997). For instance, life histories can much more easily explore the motivating factors leading to a person becoming a migrant, and can provide a richer account of the experience of migration and its effect on individual lives and identities, than can, say, more limited, structural questioning, quantitative categorisation (McCracken 1988: 16-7), or statistics. They also effectively permit alternative voices and histories to be heard, voices and histories previously silenced due to their limited presence in dominant discourse and the andro/euro-centrism of the archival record (Miles and Crush 1993:
This thesis, through its use of the life histories/personal narratives of members of the Solidarity children generation—a group whose stories have not yet made it into the public arena—has a similar goal in mind.

Given the overlap that exists between the different categories of interviewing outlined above, it is difficult to attach a specific description to the type of interviewing embarked on here. Suffice to say it sits toward the individual/life history end of the continuum, possibly between the semi-structured and unstructured interview, encompassing elements of both. Since the goal of much of the questioning was to create personal narratives that provide detailed, vivid accounts of a person's past experiences, it can be argued that the interviews also fall under the category of life history. In general, it is these experiences, and accompanying opinions, that drive the individual interview, rather than a rigid set of predetermined questions. But this does not mean that the interview process can be accurately described as being unstructured; a set of questions was still drafted and acted as a guide in each of the interviews, but these questions, and the order in which they were asked, were not strictly adhered to, changing in response to the answers and stories provided by interviewees.

Appendix A provides the list of questions that helped guide the interview. While the same questions may not have been asked of each participant in precisely the same order, the same ground was covered in all interviews. Each interview began with introductory questions that acted to both 'break the ice' and ascertain respondents' age, socio-economic background, family history and other general details. The remainder of each interview was generally less structured, beginning with a life history (some more general than others), with the participant being prompted to provide a detailed account of the period of, and immediately surrounding, migration. In some instances the resultant narrative was so detailed, spawning countless tangents and asides, that the question sheet could just be thrown aside as the interviewee covered all relevant ground spontaneously and without much structured prompting. In other cases the questions were more structured, roughly following a script that went on to inquire about various matters to do with adjustment to life in Australia, including current identity, commitment to 'Polishness', Polish cultural life and the local Polish community, and so on. At the core of each of the interviews were questions prompting the interviewee to provide a detailed account of the experience of, and emotions and opinions associated with, travels back to the Polish 'homeland', with particular attention being paid to the first—and usually most emotionally charged—of the journeys, and the ways in which subsequent trips (if they took place) differed from the first. Throughout the interview, and especially the segments dealing with the return 'home', interviewees were prompted to discuss photography, the Polish landscape,
identity and belonging at great length. These issues, especially photography and landscape, were also discussed in detail in a subsequent stage of the interview process, which saw the interviewer together with the interviewee browsing through the interviewee’s own photographs.

Interviewing was an in-depth and very lengthy process. In most cases each respondent underwent two to three interviews. Interviews tended to be 1 to 2 hours in duration. The first interview was usually especially long. If the first, questions-initiated part of the interview was not deemed complete by the end of the first session, it continued in the next session (occasionally continuing even into a third session). During the second or third interview—depending on individual circumstance—the participant was asked to bring along to the following session photographs from their ‘homecoming’ trips to Poland. In this next session, the interviewee then browsed with the interviewer through the collection of photos she or he brought along, providing explanations of the contents of the photos and the context in which they were taken. The photographs also acted as stimuli that initiated further, generally very detailed, discussion about various subject matter (mostly to do with the travelling ‘back’ and associated stories and asides) that viewing the photos brought to mind. Further questions were also asked by the interviewer, these being largely spontaneous and unstructured, initiated by photographs or the respondent’s reactions to them. The resulting, photo-directed narrative provided a lot of vivid information that not only effectively supplemented the account produced in the more formal, verbal part of the interview process, but in many instances revealed important details previously entirely missed. A more thorough treatment of the photographic component of the thesis methodology, focusing on both photo-elicitation and the visual analysis of photographs, is located towards the end of this chapter.

language

My own membership in the Polish community meant that I was able to communicate with respondents in their language (or ‘dialect’) of preference: Polish, English, or maybe something in between. In the vast majority of cases English was the tongue of choice. Only one respondent chose to be interviewed exclusively or largely in Polish. However, in the remaining cases it was rare for respondents (or for that matter myself) to speak solely in English. A mixture of Polish and English (a sort of ad-hoc Polish-English dialect) was more likely, with dialogue littered with Polish words and phrases that may not exist in English or may just seem more appropriate than their English language equivalents. Sometimes whole sentences of Polish were even thrown in, or the dialogue kept shifting, switching from English to Polish to English again—often
mid-sentence—depending on what the speaker felt most comfortable with or what they thought the situation demanded. Such switching was more likely by those more proficient in Polish, i.e. usually those who migrated at an older age, while the use of key Polish words and phrases interspersed in predominantly English sentences was more widespread, evident across all ages at migration and Polish language proficiency categories.

Though interviewer-interviewee interaction was in most instances overwhelmingly in English, the fact that Polish remained an option which most participants used at various stages suggests that my being Polish, and able to speak the language and communicate on the same level as the respondent, was an important if not invaluable factor in the research. Given the English language proficiency of all respondents, a researcher unable to speak Polish may still have been able to undertake similar research, but the resulting discourse would have in parts differed significantly in wording—if not content.

the photograph

The research methods outlined thus far can be described as being part of the social science orthodoxy, at least for the last few decades or so. The interview itself, in many ways, has been a mainstay of many disciplines since the beginning of the qualitative revolution. The other chief methodological approach undertaken by this thesis, involving photography, is much more novel, perhaps even controversial.

We increasingly live in an ocularcentric, scopophilic1 world (Rose 2001: 6-7; Jay 1993; Jenks 1995). The image is king, while visuality and visual culture reign supreme (Mizroeff 1998, 1999). The current era—however one may wish to describe it—in particular is one where human ‘reality’ is heavily influenced by (if not largely constructed by) the images we consume in everyday life. Some theorists have even gone so far as to claim that, given the contemporary proliferation of disembedded images, of simulations and simulacra, not only do we glean the bulk of our ‘reality’ from the ‘unreal’—the reproduced, re-screened, or just conjured up out of thin air, or computer applications—the real and unreal have effectively merged to become a single, indistinguishable (at least to the naked eye) entity (Baudrillard 1988). Photography plays a key role in this visual culture. Not only is the consumption of still images that remain or started life as photographs extremely widespread, so is their production—except for those without access to a camera. Despite this, for a long time

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1 Scopophilia is the ‘love of looking’, or voyeurism. The term is frequently employed in feminist theory and film studies (where it is often used to refer to the mainly male gaze of Hollywood cinema). See Mulvey (1989).
the study of images, especially popular images like photography, has not been taken particularly seriously in the social sciences, including geography. This has only relatively recently begun to change, though there remains much work to be done.

That more research on and using photography in geography has not been undertaken seems at first rather peculiar given what some describe as the inherent visuality of geography; as Schwartz and Ryan point out, 'geography has long been an enterprise centred on the visual representation of the world' (2002: 3). The recent so-called 'visual turn' in geography (ibid.), nurtured largely by trends in cultural studies and the humanities in general (where the visual appears to continue to maintain a greater presence) has far from turned the discipline around. Typically, the bulk of studies focusing on the visual look at the representation and/or conceptualisation of landscape, power and social relations in painting, cinema, maps (eg. Crampton 2001), the media, brochures, etc. Where photography is dealt with it is often through the use of historical rather than more contemporary images, generally as part of historical geography (Schwartz and Ryan 2002, Ryan 1997, Rose 2000, Jager 2003), or professionally and/or published photographs that appear in and are part of 'elite' discourse (Lutz and Collins 1993, Marsh 1985, Kinsman 1995, Dilley 1986). But such work only scratches the surface; the potential scope for geographic research on and utilising photography is far greater than this. As Schwartz and Ryan (2002) point out, 'photographic practices—from tourist photography to domestic photography—play a central role in constituting and sustaining both individual and collective notions of landscape and identity'. A lot of the potential then lies not in the historical/consumption/professional end, but in the so far comparatively untapped domain of popular, everyday photographic practice: the 'snap'—family, travel, or otherwise.

Some geographers are beginning to recognise this, and are formulating methodologies to meet the challenge of domestic photography, mainly through self-directed photography. Self-directed photography involves asking research participants, for example in a preliminary interview, to take photographs of people and places important to them and their sense of identity. Aitken and Wingate (1993) make use of this technique in their comparison of children-environment transactions of middle-class, homeless and disabled children. Closer to the present thesis, as part of his methodology McAuliffe (2004) examines sites important to second-generation Iranian immigrants in Sydney, London and Vancouver by requesting they take photos of the communities and spaces they inhabit with disposable cameras he has provided them with. Markwell (1998) takes a similar approach in his examination of space and place in gay men's leisure, while Markwell (2000) turns the method, which he terms photodocumentation, onto members of tour groups travelling to outlying corners of
Malaysia. Research involving self-directed photography/photo-documentation, a technique which maintains a presence also in social science disciplines other than geography (eg. Chalfen 1974, Ziller 1990), typically combines the procurement and analysis of photographs with interviews. Such studies are similar to the methodology embarked on in this thesis. Where the approach proposed here digresses from that in the studies mentioned above is that the photographs of interest were taken independently, without my asking for them to be taken and without this project in mind. They are ordinary, everyday snapshots, as opposed to photos produced purely for a specific project. Further, many of the previously mentioned studies, when it comes to analysis of the photographic data did so by way of content analysis. Photographs were categorised, statistics calculated, and conclusions drawn—a process that seems to have more in common with quantitative than qualitative research. But in this thesis photographs are analysed on a more individual basis, more along the lines of discourse analysis, iconography or even semiotics. The precise manner in which visual analysis is conducted here will be discussed in greater detail later on in this chapter.

Like geography, travel too has significant connections to the visual world. Indeed, one of the reasons this study of migrants' journeys back to their homeland decided to employ photography as one of the core methods was the nexus between travel and photography. We travel, we photograph. The two go hand in hand, it seems. Taking photos of sites seen, events experienced, with the self and one's family and friends incorporated into it all, has become since the inception and popularisation of photography an integral component of the tourist experience. Susan Sontag writes: 'travel becomes a strategy for accumulating photographs ... most tourists feel compelled to put a camera between themselves and whatever is remarkable they encounter' (1978: 101). Crawshaw and Urry (1997: 179) argue that 'photographs provide evidence—that the mountains were that high, that the weather was so good. At home, afterwards, images are interwoven with verbal commentary to remember the experience and tell others about it'. The photos taken, then, act not only as mementos of travel, but communicate the trip to others back home—through the images themselves as well as the spoken words and written notes that often accompany the presentation. Given the travel-photography connection, that there is a disproportionately high number of 'photographic' studies that deal with tourists and tourism should be of little surprise (see Crawshaw and Urry 1997, Urry 1990, Selwyn 1996, Jenkins 2003, Markwell 2000, Dilley 1986, Chalfen 1979, Albers and James 1988). Much such work however focuses on 'professionally-produced' or 'elite' images such as tourist brochures and postcards. Where the emphasis is on popular photography, as for Markwell (2000) and Jenkins (2003), photograph production is often researcher-
initiated, with the data collected analysed by the statistically sound but, compared to other types of visual research, relatively simplistic method of content analysis, or a combination of content analysis and rudimentary semiotics. Nevertheless, such studies do hint at the visual language permeating, sometimes even driving, tourism, and the relationships that exist between the tourist site, the tourist, photograph-taking, and both pre-existing and resultant visual discourse—thereby constituting what Urry (1990b:140), Hall (1997) and Jenkins (2003) term a 'hermeneutic circle of representation'.

Although this study involves travel, and the literature on travel and photography remains here of interest (with some of the observations made and ideas proposed by it also applying here), there exist enough differences for it not to necessarily fit into this category. The returned migrant is, after all, hardly an ordinary tourist, though he or she may share some of the tourist's characteristics. For them travelling is imbued with particular emotion and nostalgia, and is steered at least in part by memory and family. As such it cannot really be expected that photo taking, and the images created, would necessarily follow what might be described as traditional tourist lines.

The kind of photos of interest here can also be considered 'family snaps', since many depict or implicate family members and/or sites. The literature on the family snap is burgeoning, albeit the bulk of it is firmly rooted in cultural studies and as such of an either historical (Rose 2000, Blunt 2003, Pinney 1997, Hirsch 1997), highly theoretical (Sanders 1980, Chalfen 1998, Kenyon 1993), or highly personal slant (Spence and Holland 1991, Forde 1997, Rugg 1997). More methodologically rigorous social research involving family photography is noticeably rare. Perhaps the reason for this may lie in family photographs being generally considered, as their name suggests, too personal to undergo such treatment. Another explanation might be the popularly held stereotypes surrounding such imagery: because they are so common they are also often seen as banal. But that does not mean that they should not be subject to scholarly study, or that it has little in the way of interesting results to offer. As this thesis seeks to demonstrate, analysis of such photographs can be far from banal.

Here the family snap is considered in precisely the manner previously largely marginalised by the literature—through its use as a crucial component of a methodology to answer wider social research questions. Among the few to have attempted a similar treatment of domestic photography are a handful of anthropologists such as Richard Chalfen (1987, 1998), though even here there is a tendency to veer towards the theoretical end of the spectrum. Chalfen (1987), for instance, provides a detailed account of 'snapshot' photography within a social science
context, though this work is generalist rather than specific in nature, formulating grand theories and making sweeping statements about what Chalfen calls ‘Kodak culture’, ‘Polaroid people’ and ‘the home mode of pictorial communication’, doing this without reference to any (small-scale) case studies. In this thesis the focus is more narrow: not the entire world of snapshot photography, but photos taken by members of Sydney’s Solidarity children generation on trips back to Poland. Although all snapshots shown to the researcher by respondents were taken into account, particular attention was given to images of place and landscape. Of course, often it is impossible to tear one type of imagery away from others—to remove family members and friends from the landscapes and sites they inhabit—especially when taking into account this genre of photography, where landscapes do not always stand alone but are instead often foregrounded by people. Thus the two subjects, people and landscape, sometimes have to be considered together. Just because a landscape is not a photograph’s primary subject (and hence the photo can not really be categorised as a landscape photograph) does not mean that it is not worthy of study; it might be thought of as simply the background to events and people independent of it, but this should not render it invisible or disqualify it from serious analysis. The background landscape is after all still there, captured, processed and reproduced for all to see and ponder, and as subsequent chapters will show, is in itself a rich source of data capable of answering many research questions.

While photographs can in general be described as being neglected as a tool of inquiry in the social sciences—and an argument is made here that they by no means are used to their potential—one sub-discipline that for a while now has made use of photography is visual anthropology. In fact, the bulk of the literature arguing for visual methodologies incorporating photographs tend to possess origins that can be traced back to this field (e.g. Prosser 1998, Ball and Smith 1992, Banks 2001, Banks and Morphy 1997, Poole 1997, Collier 1967). Whereas a lot of the photographic writing in the humanities and social sciences has been on photography itself, anthropologists appear to have completed the most work on how the use of photographs can be incorporated into the methodologies of research with a broader, social agenda. Banks and Morphy (1997: 14) in part define visual anthropology thus:

in methodological terms visual anthropology is concerned with the recording of visual or visible phenomena, with obtaining visual data ... As method, visual anthropology is in the first instance ... a reminder that much that is observable, much that can be learned about a culture can be recorded most effectively and comprehensively through film, photography or by drawing.

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But for all its preoccupation with the visual, even some of its major proponents, such as Banks, acknowledge that for the most part 'methodological insight is scattered or confined to quite specific areas such as the production of ethnographic film' (2001: 2).

Within visual anthropology, methodological approaches vary, encompassing a wide array of techniques including ethnographic film and fieldwork photography, semiotic or discourse analysis of past photography (particularly 'elite' or 'scientific' photography from the colonial era), to the use of photographs as stimuli in fieldwork interviews. This latter technique, referred to by Banks (2001: 87-94) as 'photo-elicitation', was in many ways recognised if not pioneered by anthropologists long ago (see Collier 1967: 46-66), yet its use as a primary methodological tool (as opposed to one of countless tools at an ethnographic researcher's disposal when conducting fieldwork) has been largely limited. Outside anthropology the method in the main is conspicuous through its absence. For human geographers, for instance, photo-elicitation seems like uncharted territory, despite anthropologists having mapped the way earlier.

Nevertheless, though there is some 'borrowing', the approach embarked on here is by no means a mirror image of techniques previously employed in anthropology. For one thing, as pointed out above, anthropologists have used photo-elicitation as one of many fieldwork methods at their disposal, generally not preferencing it above others. Furthermore, such work often uses in interviews historical or contemporary images produced by the researcher—not the participant—to help elicit responses. Looking at images actually produced by the respondents, and gathering from them discourses describing the photos and the events and places within which they are located, remains a research technique rarely tried before. Where participants' family (or travel) photographs have been used in interviews, their use has been largely peripheral: they act, as in Baldassar's (2001) work, simply as illustrations and stimuli to verbal discourse which continues to be considered paramount; or, as in Markwell (2000), the photographs are subsumed by a jumble of intersecting (and quite arbitrary) content categories into which they are (often not so neatly) slotted, thereby robbing the photographs of their individuality. Here, however, the photographic act, photographs and the visual worlds they contain will receive more focus—they will not merely comprise a means to another end, they will be one of the ends in themselves. They both act as prompts in interviews, adding to the verbal discourse gleaned earlier in the interview process, and as visual discourse they will also be closely analysed in their own right, with the spoken part of the interview providing the context for this analysis. The photographic component of the thesis methodology will thus be a combination of photo-elicitation and the visual analysis of respondents' photographs. Attempts will be made to strike a balance between the resulting visual and verbal discourse, helping to
wed these two together in a way that best aids the telling of a story that is inherently both verbal and visual—highly dependent as it is on its protagonists’ images as well as words.

**photo-elicitation**

In *Family Snaps: Images, Ideology and the Family*, Noel Sanders writes:

In amateur/snap photography ... the image is meaningless without the intervention of the narrator. No family snap has ‘meaning’ unless supported by another discourse—that of the photographer, or a member of his/her family ... No family snap exists without this verbal ‘ribbon’—hence the ritual of ‘showing one’s photos’ or the use of white-pencil annotations to sequences of photos in albums. (Sanders 1980: 5)

This thesis, too, recognises that independent visual analysis of popular photographic images is, maybe not impossible, but not necessarily desirable either. Freed from the kind of context a photograph’s taker, subject or owner might provide, ascertaining the precise contents of the image, the circumstances that led to it being taken, intended subject/s and meaning, etc, may prove exceedingly difficult. This, of course, is not to say that visual analysis independent of context can not take place. A photograph—whether produced by a photojournalist, an artist or an ordinary person capturing everyday things—can always be examined for form, light, angle and tone, while its contents and context can always be guessed at. Often in such analysis whether the guess is right or wrong is immaterial, as what matters is the reaction to and understanding of the photograph. In his seminal work on photography, *Camera Lucida* (1981), Barthes often contemplates individual photographs on their own, generally free of the contexts within which they were created. What matters to him is the image itself and the effect it has on him, not on what might have been on the photographer’s mind, or a precise explanation of the moment and subject/s captured. What the photograph looks like and means to the observer is paramount. Barthes’ central notion of the *studium* (that which informs) and *punctum* (that which pierces)² of a photograph is firmly rooted in this approach. Observer-focused, independent analysis, such as Barthes’, certainly has a valid place in the study of photography, though its use tends to be more suited to the philosophy, semiology, cultural studies and art theory end of the disciplinary spectrum. Where photographs are used to glean data about subjects

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² According to Barthes photograph’s *studium* might reveal to the observer visually facts about distant places, people and events; it may or may not be intentional, and different observers glean different tidbits of knowledge from the same image. The *punctum*, on the other hand, is more often unintentional, and consists of that element—overt or largely innocuous—of a photograph which shocks or otherwise emotionally engages the observer, and which for one reason or another stands out from all others. Or, as Barthes (1981: 27) puts it, ‘a photograph’s *punctum* is that accident which pricks me (but also bruises me, is poignant to me)’.  

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other than the photograph, as in history and the social sciences, context really is required. And, as Sanders (1980) points out, when it comes to snapshot photography this context best comes directly from the photographs’ originator/owner/subject. As such, this project relies on respondents to provide the necessary context by way of the presentation, including accompanying narration, of their photographs within the interview process, a technique akin to what has previously been described as ‘photo-elicitation’.

Those researchers, mostly anthropologists, who have in the past championed photo-elicitation have done so not so much because of its potential to provide photos with context, but due to its ability to add volumes to the verbal discourse a respondent might provide. The method can after all be simultaneously understood from two separate viewpoints: as the means by which photos acquire context via verbal explanation; and as a way to add to, and possibly direct, an interviewee’s verbal account with the aid of visual stimuli. Anthropologists Banks (2001), Chiozzi (1989) and Collier (1967), for example, clearly emphasise the latter perspective in their praise of the use of photo-elicitation. Banks writes that with the help of the use of photographs in semi-structured interviews, ‘vague memories can be given sharpness and focus, unleashing a flood of detail’, while ‘specific examples of social relations or cultural forms depicted in the photographs can become the basis for discussion of broader abstraction and generalities’ (Banks 2001: 87). Chiozzi, meanwhile, speaks of the introduction of photographs to the interview situation leading to his being ‘overwhelmed with information’ (Chiozzi 1989: 45). Similarly, Collier reports the benefits of interviewing with the aid of photographs compared with verbal interviewing alone:

Photographs sharpen the memory and give the interview an immediate character ...
The projective opportunity of the photographs offers a gratifying sense of self-expression as the informant is able to explain and identify content and educate the interviewer with wisdom ... Projective material in the interview functions as a third agent. Photographs, examined, ... become the object of discussion. This appears to reduce stress in the interview by relieving the informant of being the subject of the interrogation. Instead his [sic] role can be one of the expert guide leading the fieldworker through the content of the pictures. (Collier 1967: 48)

The research embarked on in this thesis tends to concur with these observations. The introduction of respondents’ photographs in the latter stages of the interview process added a whole new dimension to the discourse. Interviewee accounts became more detailed, more vivid. Not only that, but, faced with visual evidence, whole new swathes of information entirely overlooked in the previous, purely verbal interview
segments were revealed. The mind can be fickle, an interviewer's questions may barely scratch the surface, but photographs can certainly act as a potent trigger for various neglected memories, opinions and emotions to be brought out. Plus, of course, there are also the images themselves. Even aside from the words they spawn in interview these in themselves are a bountiful source of data worthy of serious consideration—as will be detailed further below.

As mentioned earlier on in this chapter, with each of the respondents the photographs were introduced to the research following the completion of the first stage of the interview process—a period of semi-structured, in-depth interviewing free of visual stimuli. During an initial interview session respondents were asked to bring along to a subsequent session photographs from their trip's back to Poland. Almost all were able to do this. There was one exception. One of the respondents, it turned out during the course of interviewing, had never returned to Poland, and thus there was no trip to have photos from. In a second case the individual did not have access to her photographs as they were held by her parents, who lived interstate. There was no instance of anyone going to Poland and returning without any photographs, though in some cases not all of the photographs taken could be brought along to the interview, usually because they were not in the interviewee's possession, or could not be located at the time. Most participants had taken on their trips, and brought to the interview, vast numbers of photographs. Two, however, stood out in bringing a comparatively smaller number, less than thirty; both professed not being particularly interested in photography. The manner in which photos were presented also varied. A slight majority were mounted in albums, often in rough chronological order, though loose-leaf photos, some in chronological order but many not, were by no means uncommon.

The respondent chose the sequence in which the photographs were presented. Approximate chronological order was generally followed, especially if this is how the photos had already been organised. The presentation of each photograph or sequence of photographs was usually accompanied by an explanation of content. The interviewee spoke of who the people in the picture were, what they were doing, what place was being portrayed, why, and so on. Often the explanations of these photographs were very detailed and in turn themselves led to asides or entire stories, some of which were not necessarily depicted in image form—the images triggered their unearthing. Many of the photo-inspired tales the respondents revealed were, with the aid of pictures, not only more vividly and enthusiastically told than they were previously, through words alone, but did not even emerge in the earlier, verbal component of the interview. That this happened is indicative of a symbiotic relationship between photography, memory and storytelling. It also has certain
research implications. What of, for instance, that which has not been photographed? What about all the places, events, and people never captured on film (or memory card)? Or images of things which are never again witnessed? As demonstrated, verbal interviews do not pick up everything. People do not immediately remember, let alone verbalise within the confines of interview, all that might be relevant. Photos definitely help the process, but are themselves not always there. This issue of photographic voids or absences, and the relationship between memory, photography, and events and places both photographed and not, will be touched on later on in the thesis.

Although, for the most part, participants volunteered significant amounts of verbal information when browsing with the interviewer through their own photographs, occasionally during this part of the interview process some questions were still asked. These questions generally had to do with individual photographs and their contents, as well as the tales the images spawned. Sometimes such questions were necessary because some respondents were not very talkative, especially when unprompted by unambiguous questions. It was therefore necessary to ask questions along the line of 'What does this picture here depict? What's happening here', etc. At other times further questioning was the result of my own interest in those aspects of each photograph which respondents may not have deemed being worthy of automatic description or discussion. I was, for example, interested in the Polish landscape and the kind of places visited and captured and depicted in image form—even if these happened to constitute but the background to the photograph's primary subject matter. Acquiring this kind of contextualising made later analysis of the actual images easier—and also led to interviewees looking at, and talking about the photographs and the places and landscapes they contained in ways they may not have previously.

Once all the images brought along by the respondent were viewed the interview was formally finished. A request was next made of the participants to borrow some or—if practical—all of their photographs for scanning and closer scrutiny. The sheer size of some photo collections, including bulky, unwieldy albums, sometimes necessitated the selection of a smaller number of photographs from the collection on the spot. But even where all photos were borrowed it ultimately became necessary to reduce the total number to a more manageable level, where a fewer number of images could be analysed in greater detail. Photographs selected for later consideration were then scanned and saved in electronic format, while the original images were returned to participants.

Selection was not by a rigid set of eligibility criteria inasmuch as rough guidelines and, it has to be admitted, intuition. After all, photos often had to be chosen quickly and on
the spot, in front of the participant. There was no attempt made to produce a sample representative of the entire body of photographic work viewed, or a single respondent’s portfolio. Such an approach (essentially a form of content analysis) was not the goal of this project. The focus was on depictions of place and landscapes (natural or human built or modified), whether or not these were the intended, predominant subject of a photograph. Hence, a photo of a person or group of people backed by a cityscape or a mountain or forest backdrop here was still classified as a landscape image. As many of such images as possible were included, the greater the surface area of the photo dedicated to landscape the better. Photographs of good or reasonable quality were preferred over less reproducible ones, i.e. those with poor light or aesthetics in general. Admittedly, aesthetic value is often a matter of taste, making objective selection on these grounds alone almost impossible. Conversely, photos whose content (or even aesthetics) stuck out for one reason or another—like Barthes’ punctum one could say—or with content of substantial interest to this study, were rated highly, even if the images may not have met some of the other criteria. Thus, included were various photographs which, though not falling into the category of landscape imagery, were regarded as being of particular interest nevertheless. A good example are photographs of the ubiquitous Polish family celebration—among the most frequently recurring, and remarkably homogeneous, of respondent image types (it really is a separate genre all in itself). Returning migrants had to endure a vast array of such celebrations as they travelled the country from one family to another, the cumulative effect of which was often food and alcohol and family ‘overload’, and a myriad of photographs. Some such photos illustrate quite well the emotionally charged experience of returning to one’s homeland, and seeing one’s extended family after prolonged absence. They also illustrate what many professed to be the best, and others the worst, aspect of their travels home: family, food, and hospitality, all in generally large doses.

Before we move on to the final section of this chapter, which deals with the way in which the photos collected were analysed, I should perhaps point out that, just as with my own experiences, I have also decided to include in this project some of my own photographs, and the stories tied to them, in this study. Given that this study was in part inspired by my own travels back to Poland as a young adult, and the countless photographs I took over the course of these trips, it is only fair that they, too, be open to scrutiny and analysis. That said, my photos will be treated here as any of the others with regards to selection and analysis; their use will be minimised in favour of participants’ photography.
visual analysis

Photographs—and images in general—are notoriously difficult to reduce down to words and analyse. Images are, as Burke puts it, 'irredeemably mute' (2001: 34). The situation is exacerbated by some of the epistemological considerations forwarded in recent decades by proponents of cultural theory, including poststructuralism. According to such views, photos by their very nature defy description and authoritative analysis, except where they are treated not as concrete, objective loci on the time-space continuum (and thus capable of telling us about a particular person, place or period), so much as autonomous objects in their own right, decoded differently by different audiences, and imbued with a multiplicity of meanings. For centuries now humanity has attempted to write about, to decode, imagery. For the most part the process was an intuitive one lacking names and a rigorous methodology. Over the last century, however, many attempts were made to invent, or at least codify, various visual methodologies. Thus we now have at our disposal a number of different ways of (or, at least, different names for) analysing images, including iconography, psychoanalysis, content analysis, semiology and discourse analysis (Rose 2001). In a way, however, these methods still represent different sides of the same coin; essentially, visual analysis, under whatever intellectual category, remains the same intuitive, highly subjective common-sense method 'reading' images always has been. With the ebb and flow of academic trends it became necessary to reinvent the wheel time and time again, each time under a different name and new umbrella of jargon and justifications (Burke 2001: 171-7). Take for instance iconography, semiology and discourse analysis. The visual analysis inherent in these methodologies is remarkably similar once one gets past their distinct jargon and philosophical foundations. Certainly, there is no reason (other than, perhaps, the vagaries of academic fashion) not to treat or wed the methods together and just call the outcome visual analysis. This is more or less what will be attempted here. Following a brief outline of the main, commonly recognised methods for analysing visual imagery, the remainder of this section will focus on the way, based on aspects of some of these methods, in which this study looks at and interprets images, in this case the photographs of study participants.

The one visual analysis method that stands out and can’t readily be grouped with the others is what is known as content analysis. Image content analysis (the method can also be applied to non-visual material, e.g. newspaper articles) is of all visual methods the most methodologically rigorous and the most likely to present itself as quantifiable, objective and authoritative. Its very origins lie in the positivist paradigm and its need for a 'scientific' way of analysing visual data, one concerned with replicability and
validity (Rose 2001: 55). Content analysis essentially involves, in a standardized fashion, 'the processing of large amounts of visual data covering long time spans' (Ball and Smith 1992: 26). This is possible by condensing each image into pre-determined content categories, thereby providing a basis by which images can be quantified and treated collectively with relative ease, and all the authority of statistics. Examples of studies primarily reliant on content analysis of images include Robinson (1976) and Lutz and Collins (1993). Robinson explores shifting trends in beard growth and shaving through an examination of images of men in the *London Illustrated News* between 1842 and 1972. By categorising and counting the different types of facial hair, or their absence, Robinson was able to track changes in male beard fashion (at least in the Western world). Lutz and Collins (1993) analyse representations of 'non-Western' peoples in a sample of about 600 photographs published in the magazine *National Geographic* in the period 1950-1988. Some studies combine content analysis with other methods. For instance Markwell (1999) uses it in combination with interviewing, while Jenkins (2003) combines content analysis with both interviewing and semiology. Though it does have an important place in the study of images, especially in the social sciences, content analysis does possess major drawbacks and will not be employed here. Far from solving problems, its qualitative approach seemed to raise more questions than it answered. Chief among these is the assumption that everyone interprets, and codes, images in an identical fashion. As Rose (2001: 67) points out, through 'its concern for coder replicability, content analysis assumes that different viewers can see the same image in the same way, and as a method it simply has no interest in audience creativity'. Another problem is that the technique, in concentrating almost exclusively on the content of collections of images, ignores image production and audiencing, where images actually acquire much of their meaning (ibid.). Among the reasons content analysis is sometimes combined with other methods is so as to address this problem. Furthermore, content analysis, through dealing with such large numbers of images, and reducing each to categories, numbers, graphs, etc., the potency of individual images, and much of their meaning, is effectively taken away. An image is a lot more than a category, expressed in a few words, that it might fit into. Then there is category allocation itself—a highly subjective procedure that appears at odds with the method's claims to scientific rigour and objectivity. For the reasons outlined above, and given this thesis' qualitative emphases, content analysis is here rejected as a prominent component of project methodology. Its concern with sample size, representativeness and replicability is anathema to the more qualitative, in-depth analysis of individual images favoured here.

The remaining visual methodologies are based around the analysis of individual, rather than 'representative' or random collections of, images. Iconography was
developed (or at least coined) by art historian Erwin Panofsky and other members of the ‘Warmburg School’ in the 1920s and 30s. The movement developed in part as a reaction against formalism, or the analysis of visual imagery chiefly ‘in terms of composition or colour at the expense of subject matter’ (Burke 2001: 34). Panofsky was concerned with in-depth ‘readings’ of images—mainly painting—examining closely the potential symbolism and cultural meanings of the various components comprising an image. This analysis was to be undertaken within historical context. Panofsky advocated detailed study of the period and region within which the artwork was produced, as well as familiarity with texts to which the artist may have been exposed (Rose 2001: 147). A second element Panofsky deemed essential to the understanding of the image and its ‘intrinsic meanings’ was ‘Synthetic intuition’ (Panofsky 1957: 38), elsewhere referred to as ‘common sense’ (Rose 2001: 147). Iconography became among the primary backbones of work in art history since the middle of the twentieth century, though it has along the way been supplemented by other interpretive/iconological methods—namely psychoanalysis, semiology and poststructuralism—as these have come along. Critiques of iconography revolve around its reliance on intuition, as well as its ‘lack of a social dimension’ (Burke 2001: 40). Burke laments that Panofsky aimed to ‘discover “the” meaning of the image, without asking the question, meaning for whom?’ (ibid.). That different audiences produce different readings was ignored—iconographic readings sought only to ascertain the artist’s (or, occasionally, patron’s) interpretations and motivations. On this last point the method differs from the other modes of analysis, which do, to a greater or lesser extent, addressaudiences.

Where iconography focuses on conscious meanings, psychoanalysis privileges unconscious meanings and associations (Burke 2001: 169). Though its origins lie in the work of Sigmund Freud, the application of its theories to visual analysis (with the exception of a single essay by Freud himself) is a more recent development. Visual psychoanalysis is interested not in image originators as autonomous individuals inasmuch as the use of psychoanalytical concepts to ‘interpret aspects of visual images and in particular their effects on spectators’ (Rose 2001: 101). Like iconography, and quite unlike content analysis, psychoanalysis relies on intuition rather than a rigorous, methodological approach. Typically, psychoanalysis studies work ‘with just one or two psychoanalytic concepts, exploring their articulation—or rearticulation—through a particular image’ (ibid.). These concepts may include sexuality, phallocentrism, gendered visuality, voyeurism, scopophilia, and fantasy, to name but a few (see Mulvey 1989, Rose 1986, Nochlin 1989, Silverman 1992, Modleski 1988, Rose 2001: 100-34). Films in particular have proved a popular subject in visual psychoanalysis. Psychoanalysis’ drawbacks are obvious: it is extremely speculative, even more so than the other methods, given its focus on the human unconscious, the ultimate unknown.
Still, its contribution to understanding visual—and human—culture are significant, even though its reputation for jargon makes it rather inaccessible. The relevance of psychoanalysis to social research such as that embarked on here is, however, questionable. Deciphering conscious thoughts, feelings and meanings, and overt, visible social trends and phenomena is desirable—and difficult—enough without also delving into the deep chasms of human unconsciousness.

Semiology, also known as semiotics or structuralism, attempts to approach visual analysis in what its proponents like to purport is a methodologically rigorous manner, though unlike content analysis it does this not through quantification but through the systematic decoding of individual images and the systems of signs and meaning that compose, and surround, each image. To this end semiology has formulated a complex, specialised terminology that seeks to systemise—and transform into a ‘science’—our understanding of the language of signs (and the meanings they convey) that permeate everyday existence. Semiology was developed in the early twentieth century within the discipline of linguistics, though it was not until after the 1950s that it underwent popularisation through the work of such theorists as Claude Levi-Strauss, Roland Barthes, Althusser, Berger, and Saussure. Its chief concerns are not so much the specific components of an image, as the relationships between these and the structures and ideologies they represent and/or convey (Burke 2001: 176). Although semiotics examines individual images, it is less concerned with particular images per se than their reduction ‘to simple patterns’ (ibid.), representative of broader systems. This generalising approach, together with a jargony terminology and tendency to (over)state the obvious, in the most obfuscating (‘scientific’, ‘authoritative’, ‘objective’, etc.) way possibly lies at the heart of many critiques of semiological analysis (Ball and Smith 1992: 54). Rose comments that ‘each semiological term carries substantial theoretical baggage with it, and there is a tendency for each semiological study to invent its own analytical terms’, leading to ‘a certain density of terminology which is not always easy for a novice to grasp’ (Rose 2001: 73). The ‘overtheorising’ (Ball and Smith 1992: 54) tendencies of semiology are also problematic because they are suggestive of the epistemological paradigms within which its protagonists have traditionally operated. Semiology assumes that code can be decoded, that texts can be read, in one ‘correct’ way only, with basically ‘no place for ambiguities or for human agency’ (Burke 2001: 175), irrespective of language, culture, gender, or class. As Burke sums up, ‘the weakness of the structuralist approach is the propensity to assume that images have “a” meaning, that there is a code to be broken’ (2001: 176). It is in reaction to these absolutist views that poststructuralism, with its emphasis on multiple meanings and readings, emerged.
The final of the commonly recognised visual methods is perhaps the least methodologically rigorous—in fact most work falling into this loosest of categories rejects operating within a stated, overt methodological framework altogether. This approach is known variously as postmodern or poststructuralist deconstruction or discourse analysis; it is not bound by shared techniques, so much as by overall philosophy (itself not really self-defined, but a reaction against certain other theoretical movements, including modernism, positivism, structuralism and Marxism). Prominent theorists commonly identified with postmodernism and poststructuralism include Foucault, Derrida, Deleuze and Baudrillard. The concept of the text (or discourse), to be deconstructed, is for postmodernists counterpoised against the modernist idea of a work, to be interpreted. For modernists the work

is singular, speaking in one voice, that of the author, which leads the reader to look for one meaning, presumed to be the author’s. A postmodernist text, however, implies that any piece of literature or work of art is not the product of a free and unique individual but rather a field of citations and correspondences in continual permutation in which many voices speak, blend, and clash (Barrett 1996: 147).

This is sometimes referred to as intertextuality (Rose 2001: 136). Derrida defines deconstruction thus: ‘to deconstruct a “text” ... means to pick it apart, in search of ways in which it fails to make the points it seems to be trying to make’ (Derrida, cited in Barrett 1996: 146). This is intended to highlight the impossibility of clear argument and of ‘constructing a theory or method of inquiry that will answer all questions’, thus guarding against the modernist assumption ‘that the world is simple and can be known with certainty’ (ibid: 146-7). As with the kind of analyses of discourse undertaken or inspired by Foucault, sometimes the goal of deconstruction was to locate ways in which power and knowledge was, through various, interlinking forms of discourse, created and disseminated. Indeed, according to much such theory discursive control is all-pervasive: everything we purport to know, humanity itself included, is but the product of discourse.

Among the chief preoccupations of postmodernism is ‘polysemy’ and ‘the instability or multiplicity of meanings’ (Burke 2001: 176) inherent in all texts and their readings. Hence an image can have many interpretations, ranging widely from person to person; postmodernists argue that one reading—not even the image originator’s—is more valid or valuable than another. In fact, it is believed by poststructuralists that it is a text’s reading, rather than its creation, that gives it its meaning, with reading being ‘seen as not simply consumption but as production’ (Barrett 1996: 147) in itself. The multiplicity and instability of meanings attached to images is implicit in attempts by image makers and disseminators to direct image interpretation, for instance through
labels and other ‘iconotexts’ (Burke 2001: 176), another concern of poststructuralism and postmodernism.

Postmodernism in visual culture is commonly associated with appropriation, fragmentation, reproduction, image instability, and illusion. Poststructuralist readings of images often focus on these aspects of the visual world, demonstrating the illusionary, often manipulatory nature of imagery, and the associated blurring of the boundaries between imagery and the imaginary, between what we think of as reality and the ceaseless series of reproductions and simulations that seek to represent it. The current epoch in particular is frequently said to be characterised by the proliferation of such simulations and simulacra, even to the extent that these (mis?)representations of ‘reality’ have, it is argued, actually become our reality (or, as Baudrillard puts it, they have entered the realm of the ‘hyperreal’—more real even than the ‘real’).

Postmodern/poststructuralist visual analysis, at least as it is commonly practised, has several flaws. It tends to be scattered, intuitive and broad in scope; although it purports to focus on a single image or small collection of images, its preoccupation with intertextuality leads to numerous digressions as the almost infinite number of intertextual connections are looked into. The individual image thereby becomes subsumed by the web of discourse that not only produced it but steers its consumption. The discourse itself, meanwhile, becomes ‘free-floating’ and ‘unconnected to any social practices’ (Rose 2001: 162). Meanwhile, for Burke the chief weakness of poststructuralism lies in its ‘assumption that any meaning attributed to an image is as valid as any other’ (Burke 2001: 177). An image may not necessitate one ‘correct’ reading only, as structuralists argue, but nor does it seem likely that all meaning is entirely decontexted and subjective, and that potential readings are infinite and equal. Such a stance, essentially tantamount to absolute relativism, appears just as arrogant and problematic as the unilateral absolutism of structuralism. As always, the answer may lie in avoiding the extremes and taking a middle path. Another problem is the extraordinarily theoretical, jargon-ridden and inaccessible nature of much poststructuralist work. A lot of what authors intend to say just seems to disappear among unimaginably convoluted sentences, word (and punctuation) games, and endless (and equally unreadable) references to philosophers and the utterances of fellow theoretical travellers. There is nothing in the handbook of poststructuralism or cultural studies that dictates things had to be this way, yet such dense writing somehow snowballed to become poststructuralism’s less than noble legacy. Which, in a way, is a shame, as postmodernism and poststructuralism have made substantial contributions to the way the world is theorised, and the way we look at—and
deconstruct—images. If anything the movement has imbued imagery with new currency, importance, and meaning, reigniting interest in their use and study.

As was mentioned earlier, content analysis excepted, the visual methods outlined above differ from one another only relatively superficially. These differences are generally based more on epistemological standpoints and the prevailing academic and/or philosophical trends associated with the period of each method’s ascendancy, and on method-specific terminology, rather than a methodologically distinct way of looking at images. The fact that at different times Panofsky’s iconography has been equated with either semiology (Burke 2001: 176) or postmodern discourse analysis (Rose 2001: 144-9), or that structuralists like Levi-Strauss or Barthes ‘might all be described as doing iconography rather than breaking with it’ (Burke 2001: 176), broadly suggests that I am not alone in not seeing these methods as irredeemably separate. If boundaries between the methodological approaches of iconography, structuralism, poststructuralism and psychoanalysis exist, they certainly are very blurry ones. Each method possesses jargon and protagonists largely indigenous to it, and each may focus on image production, audiencing or symbolism to differing extents, but in the end image analysis is the analysis of images, irrespective of fashion or philosophical overtones, and there is no reason not to approach it in a wholesale, commonsense (and jargon-free or neutral) manner. This is in part what this thesis proposes to do.

Ultimately this study examines images the way iconography, structuralism, poststructuralism and psychoanalysis all fundamentally do—by looking closely at images and the elements that comprise them, attempting to interpret or ‘read’ them as comprehensively as possible using the available visual—and contextual—evidence. At the same time, however, theoretical and epistemological extremes and terminology associated with each of the methodological approaches will be avoided in favour of what Burke (2001: 184) calls a ‘third way’ of visual analysis, a kind of triangulation of established visual methods, trends and epistemological considerations. This approach permits research to steer clear of inaccessible jargon and extreme theoretical standpoints, striking a (in many ways obvious and commonsense) balance between privileging authorship and audiencing, the image and social context, between multiple and unitary meanings and readings, and between positivism—which through the image sees reality—and the visual scepticism of structuralism and poststructuralism. If I was pressed to give a name to the visual techniques employed I would just term it visual analysis. If I was further pressed to make a choice, stating outright which of the commonly accepted visual methodologies and theoretical perspectives my analysis most closely resembles, or borrows most heavily from, I would probably have to
answer iconography and postmodernism/poststructuralism, but only because these approaches are the most flexible, approachable and amenable to use in social research. Both, as outlined earlier, have their own drawbacks, but these will be avoided by staying clear of dogmatic extremes and eschewing the kind of dense, unfocused and all but unreadable theory that characterises (and, to many, discredits) much poststructuralist writing.

In practice looking at images here involves just that, looking, and interpreting them with the aid of the context provided by interviewees. Is it really possible to describe in words, and in the abstract, the way one looks at, interprets and writes about images? In the end, I don't know. I've closely examined and written about images for a large chunk of my life, mostly from an art history/theory perspective, yet never had to justify the precise way I do or should do this in a stated methodology.

conclusion

This chapter has sought to outline the methodological framework within which this study sits, a framework encompassing—and bringing together—two traditionally quite disparate core techniques, in-depth interviewing and image analysis.

The chapter began with a definition of the study group, and a description of how, and how many, study participants were drawn from among members of the Solidarity Children generation. It is these participants, and their verbal and photographic accounts of the migrant experience, and in particular of travelling back to the 'homeland' and its landscapes, and the feelings, memories and images such trips unleash, that form the backbone of this thesis.

As this research is fundamentally qualitative in nature the case was made for the comparatively small interviewee sample size used here. It was argued that the kind of large sample sizes demanded by quantitative-leaning research, or other sources pursuing the goal of representativeness, ultimately results in individual opinions and life stories being submerged by some kind of grand, generally stylised and fairly detail-less story of the collective. Generally the larger the sample, the more supplemented by numbers and maps (meant to add a degree of scientific authority, but which in fact take away lived reality), the more totalising and obvious the resultant narrative. All such work does is provide new statistics—how correct or representative these are is contentious—for recognised, testable trends. It takes intensive, qualitative research, arguably ideally dealing with smaller rather than larger groups of participants, to actually uncover subtle but important aspects of the human experience which may not have been noticed, let alone scrutinised, before.
Another issue this chapter tackled was the question of positionality. Claims questioning the supposed objectivity of a researcher being located within the group studied were debunked. In fact, the entire traditional assumption of the existence of the objective and detached outside observer came under attack. The argument was made that in many instances insider studies are possible, perhaps even desirable, and are capable of acquiring access and providing insights that are just as valid—if not more so—than is the case with outsider research.

This was followed by an articulation of the interview component of the research methodology. Interviews were long, in-depth and semi-structured, in some aspects even resembling oral histories. In most cases the interview process consisted of two distinct parts, the first verbal only, and the second using participant photographs as interview prompts. This latter technique is sometimes known as photo-elicitation, and proved extremely useful in not only providing photographs with descriptive context, through which they could later be examined more closely, but added a vast array of verbal data. Faced with visual evidence, respondents provided a lot more information—and much more detailed information—than they had in that part of the interview free of visual stimuli.

The next section of the chapter dealt with the most novel aspect of the thesis methodology: photography. It began by noting that, despite the proliferation of photography in the everyday, the general dearth of studies on, or using, photography in the discipline of geography, and within the social sciences more generally. It was shown that those studies that do exist approach photography from either a historical, elite discourse, and/or content analysis perspective. Qualitative social research utilising contemporary, everyday ‘snap’ photography remains rare, though there does exist some interesting and original work utilising what is sometimes termed self-directed photography or photo-documentation. In the humanities, especially cultural studies, ‘snap’ photography does possess a significant presence, though work in this field tends to be historical, theoretical and/or highly personal in nature, with relatively little relevance to social research. The kind of examination of popular snapshot photography embarked on here, combining within a social research framework interviews, photo-elicitation and the visual analysis of respondent’s individual images has been seldom attempted before.

There followed a description of the precise manner in which photo-elicitation functioned within the interview process, with it providing respondent’s photographs with context aiding subsequent analysis of selected images. The different ways in which the analysis of photographs can be undertaken was also discussed. Several
commonly recognised visual methodologies are potentially at the researcher's disposal. These include content analysis, iconography, psychoanalysis, structuralism and poststructuralism. However, instead of choosing one of these methods for analysing the photography of this study's participants, I have argued that—the quantitative-based content analysis aside—these methods differ from one another by way of theoretical positions and indigenous jargon and protagonists only. At heart they are basically variations on the same theme, and can easily be grouped together or treated as one broad method, under an umbrella name: visual analysis, or perhaps iconography. This is precisely what is proposed here: a commonsense 'reading' of images, based on context provided through interviews (and also the history, geography and visual culture of Poland, and the Polish diaspora), and free of the theoretical extremes and faddish, sectarian terminology of the likes of semiology, poststructuralism and psychoanalysis. Emphasis will be on image production and meaning for respondent as producer (and/or consumer) rather than potential readings and meanings for other audiences, though these too will be considered. The visual approach employed here should become clearer and less abstract in later chapters, upon actual introduction into the fabric of this thesis of respondent photography.

The remainder of this thesis will employ the methodological approaches outlined above, to focus on the experiences, and images, of the study participants, as well as providing some information on the communities of which they are members. The next chapter will acquaint the reader with background information on Polish migration to Australia, and the Polish community of Sydney—including the Solidarity wave migrants. This introduction will then give way to a specific focus on members of the Solidarity Children generation, accomplished largely through the study participants and their accounts of journeys to and from (and in between) their two homelands.
Figure 3.1. Map of Sydney metropolitan area, showing areas connected with the Polish community and other locations referred to in the text.
Figure 3.2. Map of Poland, showing major cities and regions, and other locations referred to in the text
3

Community

Crucial to understanding the chief themes of this thesis is a detailed account exploring the context of the Polish community in Sydney. Thus this chapter provides a background account of the history, demography and geographical distribution of the Polish-born, or other ethnically Polish, residents of Australia, and on Sydney’s Polish community more specifically. Latter sections of this chapter will focus more exclusively on the Solidarity Children generation of Polish immigrants to Sydney, introducing the study sample and outlining some of its characteristics.

While this remains at heart a qualitative thesis, parts of this chapters will predominantly rely on quantitative data such as census statistics, and past studies of the Polish community, as it is here recognised that such background information is important in any attempt to understand a community or any of its facets or concerns. The lack of many in-depth studies of Sydney’s Polish community, and the total absence of any studies focusing on the Solidarity Children group, has led to the existence of a gap in the research. While this thesis as a whole will help bridge this gap by turning to the qualitative accounts and cultural products of community members, this chapter will begin the process by turning to existing data and statistics, at the same time combining these with personal observations and the experiences of informants, laying the groundwork for the chapters to follow. The result will comprise a framework around which the bulk of the research contained within this study will be constructed.

historical background

According to the 2001 census Australia’s Polish community consists of approximately 58,000 Poland-born individuals, and a further 58,000 belonging to the second generation, that is those persons born in Australia with one or two of their parents born in Poland (ABS 2002; Schindlemayr 2000: 1). Polish immigrants came to Australia in two major, easily identifiable waves of emigration out of Poland.

The first wave took place in the years which immediately followed the end of the Second World War, with a total of 71,721 Poland-born persons arriving in Australia in the period 1947-55. Of this total, around 10,000 were not of Polish ethnic background
and included a large number of ethnic Ukrainians and Belarusians, 1,500 Poles of German background, and several thousand Polish Jews (Schindlemayr 2000: 1).

The second wave began in 1980 and was precipitated by the political unrest which led to the formation of the Solidarity Trade Union and, in particular, the declaration of Marshall Law and the communist government crackdown on Solidarity in 1981. This wave saw the influx of a further 20,000 Polish-born immigrants (Kalusi 1985: 37; Schindlemayr 2000: 1). Most migrants from this period were relatively young, married and with young children. Further, as opposed to the early postwar immigrants, most came from urban areas and 'had a high level of tertiary and professional education' (Schindlemayr 2000: 1; Drozd 1993: 67-8; Jamrozik 1988: 743). This wave of immigration continued through to 1989, when the communist system in Poland collapsed. Comparatively few Poles migrated to Australia after 1989.

**Polonia**

*Polonia* is a term used by Poles to refer to the community of Poles (and in many definitions their descendants, though they may not necessarily identify as Polish) living outside Poland. The *Polonia* diaspora has comprised an important—some may say integral—part of the Polish nation and national consciousness since the partitioning of Poland between Russia, Prussia and Austria in the late 18th century, ending its existence as an independent state. At first the Polish diaspora was made up chiefly of political exiles—mainly aristocrats, writers, poets, political activists and various other members of Poland's artistic or political elite forced out of Poland by the partitioning powers—who pursued their goal of a resurrected independent Poland wherever conditions for such activities were more favourable. Western Europe, particularly Paris, was the preferred destination. This exodus accelerated following the failure of the short-lived Duchy of Warsaw created by Napoleon, and later after the failed uprisings of 1830 and 1863 against Tsarist Russian rule, when much of what remained of Polish autonomy and other rights in the rump post Treaty of Vienna Kingdom of Poland were stripped away, and the persecution of those overtly supporting the uprisings (mainly the upper and middle classes) intensified. This also resulted in political exiles being sent to Siberia and other remote regions of the Russian Empire, leading to sizeable concentrations of Poles in those parts of the world.

Davies estimates that 'some 3.7 million people left Poland in the period between 1870 and 1914—31 percent from Galicia, 33 percent from Prussian Poland, and 36 percent from the largest of the partitions in Russia' (2001: 224). Galicia, with its smaller population, was particularly hard hit; in the three year period 1911-1914, one quarter of its population is thought to have emigrated. As well as Catholic Poles, the exodus from
Polish territories included large numbers of Jews from the Russian and Austrian sectors heading to the US and the large cities of Western Europe, especially Germany; and ethnic Ukrainians/Ruthenians from Galicia and ethnic Germans from the Prussian sector migrating to the New World.

The exodus to the United States was the most sizeable, sowing the seed for an American Polonia variously estimated to now number between 5 and 10 million (Jancz 2000: 8). The vast majority of the US Polonia consists of third, fourth or fifth generation ‘Polish-Americans’, whose attachment to Polish culture and language is extremely limited. According to the 1990 US Census, persons who identified as possessing Polish ancestry numbered 6,542,844, of whom 93.8 percent were born in the US. Of the total, a mere 787,847, or 12.8 percent, professed regularly speaking a language other than English at home. Only 408,604 persons were born outside of the United States, of whom 120,560, or 29.5 percent, entered the country between 1980 and 1990. These figures demonstrate the very different character of the American Polonia compared with its counterparts in other, especially English-speaking, countries. Whereas in Canada, the United Kingdom, and Australia the Polish émigré communities consist of much higher proportions actually born in Poland, in the US the vast majority are the descendants of an older, pre World War I wave of migration. Moreover, because most Poles migrated to the US in the period of economic migration, the original immigrants were of a lower socio-economic background than was the case in other destination countries, where political migrants tended to make up a higher proportion of total Polish immigrants.

Migration from Poland in the period of Polish independence 1918-1939 was relatively low, but World War II and its immediate aftermath opened the floodgates. The invasion of Poland by both Germany and the USSR in September 1939 resulted in enormous displacement. While much of Polish Jewry was forced to move to ghettos and later concentration camps, over a million Catholic Poles were forcibly removed from Poland to work in factories and forced labour camps in Germany proper. After Poland's capitulation, many thousands of Polish soldiers, as well as government officials, escaped via Romania to the west, first to France, then Britain. Meanwhile, some 1.5 million priests, soldiers, landowners, members of the intelligentsia and others in the upper and middle classes and their families from that part of Poland occupied by the Soviet Union were forcibly transported to Siberia and Kazakhstan. Many of them, freed by an amnesty following Hitler's invasion of the USSR eventually made their way overland to India, Palestine or other parts of the British Empire, from where they journeyed to join the Polish Army in the West. Others, notably women and
children, ended up in refugee camps such as those in eastern Africa; following the end of the war they were resettled in Commonwealth countries such as Australia.

The cessation of hostilities in 1945 was accompanied by the disappearance of Poland behind the Iron Curtain and population movements of gargantuan proportions. At war's end, survivors of 1.5 million Polish civilian forced labourers and working prisoners of war found themselves in Western Europe, chiefly in Displaced Persons (DP) camps in Germany. Those that did not choose repatriation to Poland waited, usually many years, to be resettled as refugees in such countries as Canada, Australia and the US. They were joined by servicemen of the Polish armed forces serving under British command (Pakulski 1988). At the same time, there was an exodus of Polish Jewish Holocaust survivors to Israel, Australia, Canada and the United States; Poles from those parts of prewar Poland annexed by the USSR to postwar Poland; ethnic Germans (and not a few Poles) from western and northern postwar Poland to West Germany; and many of those deported during the war into the depths of the Soviet Union back into Poland.

Another wave of significant emigration out of Poland took place in the 1980s. This, the so-called Solidarity, or post-Solidarity, wave of migration was precipitated by the turmoil of the early 1980s, and is the focus of this thesis. The period 1979-81 witnessed a degree of liberalisation of Poland's communist facade, due mainly to the activities of the popular Solidarity (Solidarnosc) trade union, at the time—and for a short time only—the only legal trade union unaffiliated with the Communist Party. The period of relative calm ended on December 13 1981 with the declaration by General Jaruzelski of Marshall Law, with the aim of delegalising Solidarity, dismantling its infrastructure and cracking down on its activists. The armed forces took control of the country. Curfews, checkpoints, arbitrary searches, arrests and incarceration followed. After opposition activists left prison they and their families faced discrimination, many losing their jobs and being refused any but the most menial employment. Hundreds of thousands opted to leave, or in many cases were politely asked to do so and were issued with one-way passports. Although the official Polish government figure for 1980-89 is 271,000, Okolski (1994) estimates that the real number is closer to 1.1-1.3 million (see Iglicka 2001: 4). Some emigrated by way of third countries, travelling to for example Italy, West Germany or Austria on holiday, then requesting asylum and awaiting resettlement in Canada, Sweden, Australia or the US under various refugee or family reunion programmes. Others, particularly those more overtly persecuted by the regime, emigrated by directly dealing with foreign embassies while still in Poland, a process that could take time (many of the individuals interviewed for this thesis pointed out that the main reason their parents chose Australia over, say, Canada—the
Of the Solidarity émigrés, approximately 22,400 ended up in Australia (Ribarow 1993).

The pressure of an active, underground opposition centred on Solidarity, coupled with a dire economic situation, the extreme unpopularity of the regime, and Gorbachev’s promise of non-interference in internal Polish affairs, eventually led to the Round Table Talks in February 1989, which in turn resulted in semi-democratic parliamentary elections and the resounding collapse of the Communist Party in June 1989. By the end of 1990 Solidarity hero Lech Walesa was elected president and the Polish government in exile, operating out of London since World War II, closed down. Since then, Poland has undergone intense democratisation and economic liberalisation—the so-called Shock Therapy. These rapid transformations eliminated the chief cause of migration out of Poland and, consequently, emigration underwent a dramatic decline. Emigration out of Poland is now almost exclusively of an economic or family reunion nature, with young people unable to find good employment in Poland most likely to emigrate. At present the most common destinations include the countries of Western Europe, especially Germany, the UK and Ireland (the last two being the only European Union countries thus far permitting Poles to work without visa restrictions, a situation that combined with high youth unemployment in Poland has led to a large exodus of young Poles these two countries), as well as the United States.

The onset of economic and political liberalisation has permitted greater bidirectional flows between Poland and destination countries, with émigrés and their descendants more likely than pre-1989 to travel back ‘home’ for short—or extended—periods to visit family and/or their ancestral homeland. In some instances Poles have migrated back to Poland to live permanently. While this backward migration is more likely to involve individuals who had lived outside Poland for a relatively short time only, leaving shortly before 1989 and returning sometime after following disillusionment with life in their respective destination countries and/or drawn by the opportunities that a newly capitalist Poland may offer, it also included retirees who, after working and saving in the West, moved back to Poland to retire.

In describing the history of large-scale migration out of Poland, and in discussing the distribution of the substantial Polish diaspora, now some 10 million strong, this section has placed Australia’s Polish population in context. Far from being isolated, the Australian Polonia is part of a vast émigré community spread throughout the industrialized world, not to mention significant swathes of Eastern Europe and central and northern Asia. In the past this community has been viewed as an integral part of the Polish nation, through its contribution to Polish culture and politics. But, as has
been demonstrated, the Polish communities of various countries are far from similar. The massive US Polonia is made up of an overwhelming majority of locally-born individuals descended from economic migrants from the pre World War I period. The UK has a large proportion of World War II ex-servicemen and various other political exiles. The Polonia of Germany, estimated to number well in excess of a million, is younger still, with most migration taking place from the late 1950s through to the 1980s—and at a reduced rate until today. Sweden’s Poles are largely from the Solidarity wave of emigration. Canada’s Polonia represents a rich mixture encompassing all the waves already mentioned. As the next section will show, Australia’s Polish population is similarly diverse—and unique.

**Poles in Australia**

Poles have been present in Australia since the earliest days of European colonisation, though at first they comprised individuals (migrants and visitors alike) rather than groups of any substantial number. Initially these were made up largely of political exiles, an elite composed chiefly of young, well-educated, adventurous men (Jamrozik 1983), including among others the explorer Count Strzelecki (who climbed and named Australia’s highest peak, Mount Kosciuszko), the botanist Brinowski, Burke and Wills expedition member Kossak, Boberski, the mayor of Ararat, and many army officers, engineers, not to mention the odd convict, even a bushranger (see Paszkowski 1962, 1985; Sussex and Zubrzycki 1985: 2-3; Jamrozik 1983: 13-4). From the 1840s onwards they were also joined by a trickle of economic migrants, mainly from Prussian Poland, but also from the Kraków district. The first large Polish group, made up of 33 Poles, arrived in 1844, from a single village in Poznan (Posen) province in the Prussian part of Poland. Four years later the Silesian Catholic settlement of Sevenhill was founded 120 km north of Adelaide (Paszkowski 1988), while nearby in 1856 was established the almost exclusively ethnically Polish agricultural settlement of Polish Hill River (Jamrozik 1983: 14; Sussex and Zubrzycki 1985: 3; Szczepanowski 1973). By the 1880s this Polish ‘colony’ numbered some 400 people (Paszkowski 1988). Another, similar area of Polish settlement was centred on the Queensland township of Cracow in the late 1870s, but the town was abandoned following a disastrous bushfire, with most of its survivors moving to Brisbane (Sussex and Zubrzycki 1985: 3). Polish Hill River, meanwhile, survived until the early 1900s, when unfavourable economic conditions forced most settlers to move to Adelaide and other cities. In the 1970s the original church at Polish Hill River was purchased by the Polish Association in South Australia, and has since become the site of an annual Polish pilgrimage and other community gatherings and events (see Stankowski 2003). Descendants of the original Polish settlers still live in Sevenhill (Sussex and Zubrzycki 1985:3).
The majority of early Polish immigrants were not, however, agricultural settlers but lived in major cities or gold rush settlements. Unlike the great emigration that headed for the United States, they were not from peasant or working class backgrounds but belonged to the higher strata of society (Paszkowski 1988: 737). They were also relatively few in number. Although exact figures are difficult to ascertain because in official statistics Poles at the time were listed as Germans, Austrians or Russians, Paszkowski estimates that around the beginning of the 20th century the Polish population 'fluctuated around 1,500 people' (1988: 737). The number began to increase slightly following the end of the First World War with significant Polish-Jewish immigration, and to a lesser extent Poles from Siberia and the Russian Far East fleeing the Bolshevik Revolution by way of Harbin, Shanghai or Japan.

What was but a trickle turned into a flood in the ten years which followed the end of the Second World War. Between 1947 and 1954, almost 60,000 Poles (including children born in refugee camps in Germany and elsewhere to Polish parents) arrived in Australia (Johnston 1988). By 1954 Australia was home to 56,594 individuals born in Poland and a further 8,406 Poles were listed as being born abroad elsewhere (Price 1985: 21); of these, only 17.8 percent were now Jewish, while 73 percent identified as Catholic and a further 5.6 percent Orthodox. This migration was part of a larger Australian intake of 170,000 persons undertaken under the auspices of the International Refugee Organisation, set up to deal with over one million Displaced Persons.

The Polish immigrants comprised three main streams. The first—and largest—included refugees from Displaced Persons camps in Germany, the remnants of a Nazi forced labour workforce. Since it was younger, often teenage, individuals that the Germans preferred to transport from Poland to use as forced labourers, most of these refugees were in the late 1940s and early 1950s still young, and as a consequence of their interrupted childhood not very well educated. The second group was made up of demobilised members of the Polish armed forces who had fought in the West; most had lived in Britain since the end of the war and were assisted to settle overseas by the British government and Australian 'comrades in arms' (Johnston 1988: 740). The third group was composed of some of the 1.5 million Poles deported by Stalin into the depths of the Soviet Union in 1939. An August 1941 agreement with the Polish government-in-exile led to an amnesty. As a result, 75,000 men were able to form a force and travel to join the Allies in the West, accompanied by another 33,000, chiefly women and children, who made their way to refugee camps in India, Palestine, Iran and east Africa. A lot of those that lived in African refugee camps were recruited to come to Australia (Johnston 1988: 740). For instance in February 1950, 1,198 Polish
refugees from Uganda were ferried aboard the General W.C. Langfitt to Fremantle, laying the foundations for a significant Western Australia Polish population, one with many of its members sharing comparatively common experiences (see Smenda 1999, Harasymów 1999).

Partly as a result of the shared experiences of many groups of immigrants, including similar age, and their settling within relative proximity of one another, the Polish communities of many Australian cities were of a remarkably cohesive character. This was true of the Soviet/African refugees as well as the ex-servicemen and Displaced Persons streams. But the fact that members of all three groups tended to fall within a very specific age category, and the comparative paucity of Polish immigration between 1960 and 1980, meant that for a long time Polish immigrants formed a very homogeneous group, and grew old together. While the subsequent 1980s wave of immigrants introduced a degree of heterogeneity, numerically it was not as substantial as the postwar influx, and it is the latter group that still dominates community life and demographic data alike; indeed, despite the many mainly young Solidarity-era immigrants the Polish-born community is one of Australia’s oldest, and its numbers are rapidly declining.

Following arrival in Australia, Polish refugees were placed in immigrant camps, usually in rural areas, and ‘had to work under a two-year contract assigned to them by the authorities’ (Johnston 1988: 741), including the Snowy Mountains Scheme, various works for the Tasmanian Hydroelectric Authority (HEC), as well as menial agricultural and factory labour. Once contracts finished the Poles generally moved to capital—or other large—cities closest to their camps. Melbourne was the most popular destination, followed closely by Sydney, then Perth, Adelaide and Hobart. Newcastle, Maitland and Northam, WA, were among other popular destinations. The history and experiences of the postwar Polish immigrants are documented in quite a few sources, including many memoirs, autobiographies, oral histories and other personal accounts (e.g. Parry 1988, Pawloska and Harrison 1999, Budrewicz 1982, and the Polish-Australian Oral History Project).

The Solidarity wave of immigration from Poland to Australia in the 1980s, precipitated by the communist government’s crackdown on the Solidarity movement, led to 22,400 Polish-born individuals seeking refuge in Australia in the period 1981-89. While many of these fled Poland for overtly political reasons, fleeing personal persecution in Poland by the authorities, others did so due to a combination of economic and political factors, seeking to escape what they perceived to be a hopeless situation in Poland and find a better life for themselves and their children abroad. Some joined families already
here, while most had few contacts in Australia, receiving assistance from the Australian government, spending around six months in migrant hostels whilst acclimatising and establishing themselves. The Solidarity immigrants were of similar age and, to an extent, educational background. The majority were married couples with young children, with the parents falling in the 30-45 age group. Only about 2 percent were aged 50 or over (Jamrozik 1988: 743). They were of an urban background, having attained predominantly high levels of education and professional employment status—at least in Poland, as in Australia their employment status was significantly downgraded. While the Solidarity immigrants in effect rejuvenated an aging Polish community already in numerical decline, their differences from the postwar group in all categories but a shared language and (to a lesser extent) culture meant that the new group did not readily mix with the older one. The two groups in effect comprised two very different communities, separated by a substantial ‘cultural gap’ (Jamrozik 1988: 745). As Schindlemayr (2000: 2) points out, ‘probably the most difficult problem facing the Polish community remains the ongoing differences between these two groups of Polish immigrants’.

The cohesiveness of the Polish community is further broken if one considers the presence of two additional sub-groups, Australian-born children with one or more Poland-born parents (the second generation), and the Poland-born children of the Solidarity wave of immigrants. The former category includes mainly the children of the postwar wave of immigrants (as well as that of Polish-born Jews from the interwar, World War II and immediate postwar periods). A disproportionate number of members of this group fall in the 40-50 age group, having been born within some ten years of their parents’ arrival in Australia. Although their parents attempted to foster a strong sense of Polish national identity and to place strong emphasis on language, the second generation tends to be heavily assimilated into Australian culture, with only a small minority reporting to still speak Polish at home (Schindlemayr 2000: 39). The latter category, the children of Solidarity migrants, include individuals that migrated to Australia with their parents as children or teenagers in the 1980s. At present falling mainly into the 18-35 age group, they display various, often conflicting, levels of Polish or Australian identity, assimilation and Polish and English language proficiency and use, and will make up the focus of much of the remainder of this thesis.

**demography and geographic distribution**

Today Australia is home to approximately 55,000 Poland-born individuals. Due to aging, the Poland-born community has been in rapid decline following a peak in the 1991 census of 68,496 persons. By 1996, the number dropped to 65,102; decline was
more pronounced in the fall in the number of men (8.3%) than women (1.5%) (Schindlemayr 2000: 6). At the time of the 2001 census 58,110 individuals declared Poland to be their birthplace—a decline since the 1996 count of an astounding 10.7 percent.

The majority of Polish-born persons in Australia immigrated in the 10 years immediately following the end of the Second World War. In 1996, 58.3 percent of Poland-born persons arrived before 1981. Numerically, the Solidarity group is smaller, but as the ranks of postwar Poles decline due to death, the Solidarity Poles are becoming more prominent.

Ascertaining the precise size of the children of the Solidarity immigrants group is difficult because of the only partial correspondence between census age categories and the generation's average age span. However, since it can be assumed that most of those falling into the 15-24 and (to a lesser extent) 5-14 age categories in 1996, and who were born in Poland, were part of this generation, a rough estimate can be made. In 1996 such individuals numbered around 7,200 Australia-wide. Of these 2,052 were in the 5-14 age group and 5,217 were aged 15-24. This represents 11.2 percent of the total Polish-born population. NSW is home to approximately 2,000, including 1,504 aged 15-24 in 1996. Aged 20-29 in 2001, the bulk of the subjects of this study will be drawn from this group.

Although exact figures are uncertain, based on the optional religious affiliation question in the census, at least 7.4 percent (or 4,806 persons) of the Polish-born are Jewish. Because many individuals of Polish-Jewish ancestry may have stated they have no religion or failed to list a religion, the real figure may be somewhat higher. While much of the remainder of the Polish-born population of Australia is Catholic (75.9 percent), the total also includes small numbers of Lutherans (1%) and Orthodox Christians (0.6%)—mainly ethnic Germans, Belarusians or Ukrainians born in prewar Poland.

The 2001 census for the first time included a question pertaining to an individual's ancestry. In 2001, 150,900 reported Polish ancestry. This group, constituting 0.9% of the total Australian population, included a sizeable proportion, 36.7%, who also declared another ancestry, indicating a mixed ethnic background; some 49.3% of the group, or 74,000 persons, were born outside Australia (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2002). The fact that the number of foreign-born individuals identifying Polish ancestry is significantly higher than the number of the Poland born in Australia is indicative of the non-Polish birthplace of some of those claiming Polish ancestry. Many were born during or immediately after World War II in DP or refugee camps, or in exile in the
Soviet Union or elsewhere in the world. Some in this category also stated multiple ancestral backgrounds—the result of, for example, only one of the two parents being Polish. This was probably particularly the case among those born under DP circumstances in Western Europe.

Of those with Polish ancestry, 38.4% were counted as being part of the second generation—born in Australia to one or more parents, while a further 12.3% were born in Australia to Australian-born parents, i.e. were third or subsequent generation migrants with at least a partial self-identified Polish background. Some 60,500 (or 40.1%) of the 150,900 with Polish ancestry claimed to speak a language other than English at home, a figure roughly the same as the number of the Poland-born in Australia and highly suggestive of the lack of frequent use of the Polish language by not only the bulk of the second generation but also some of those actually born in Poland. Of course, census language questions are highly subjective and do not accurately gauge language proficiency or actual use—a declaration of a language other than English being spoken in the home doesn’t mean that this other language is the only, or even preferred, language spoken, especially among children. The ancestry question similarly is highly subjective, subject as it is to self awareness and the vagaries of identity, also leading to results with a tendency to overstate ethnic diversity due to the same person being counted multiple times. However in many ways measuring identity in this manner comprises an important tool which, at least when coupled with language and birthplace statistics, is able to paint a more complete picture than would contemplation of birthplace and language use alone. The case of the Polish-background population is proof of this, as a lot of Polish-identifying individuals were born outside of Poland, and, conversely, a lot of otherwise statistically Polish individuals (i.e. those born within the (fluctuating) territory of Poland) would identify not as Polish but, for example, Jewish, Ukrainian or German.

The Polish-born population of Australia is dispersed throughout Australia. Victoria, with 34.3% of Australia’s Polish-born population, or 19,950 individuals, is home to the largest number, followed by NSW with 29.0% or 16,862 persons. South Australia (11.9%), Western Australia (11.0%) and Queensland (9.8%) are further down the list. Most Polish-born Australians reside in the capital cities, Melbourne and Sydney being home to the largest number.

There are significant differences in the composition of the Polish-born populations of each state by arrival in Australia, religion and ethnic background. As well as possessing the highest proportion of older, pre-Solidarity immigrants (61.2%), Victoria is home to a much higher proportion of Polish-Jews than are any of the other states. In
Victoria over 3,500 individuals, or 15.5% of the Polish-born population, professed to being adherents of Judaism on the census forms (the number is likely to be higher if one considers that many individuals of Jewish background may not be religious, placing themselves in the 'No Religion' category at census time (4.7% in Victoria) or not answering the question at all (5.4%). By contrast only 5.3% of the Polish-born of NSW readily identify with Judaism. At the other end of the scale are the ACT (0.4%), South Australia (0.3%, or just 25 persons) and Tasmania (0.3%, just 3 individuals) (Schindlemayr 2000: 32-33).

Poles live throughout the Sydney metropolitan area, with notable concentrations in a number of suburbs and Local Government Areas (LGAs). Of these, most are located in the southwestern, western and eastern suburbs of Sydney. LGAs with approximately one percent or more of their population born in Poland (compared with a Sydney-wide average of 0.4%) include Ashfield (1.2%), Liverpool (0.9%), Woollahra (1%) and Waverley (1.2%). With the exception of Liverpool these LGAs are quite small and home to relatively small numbers of Poles in the absolute sense. The LGAs of Blacktown in western Sydney and Liverpool, Fairfield and Bankstown in the southwest are home to the largest absolute number, with around 1,000 or more present in each.

The above figures do not necessarily correspond with where members of the Solidarity immigrant group live. Woollahra and Waverley for example may appear on paper to be home to many Poles, but most of those resident there are in fact Polish Jews from an earlier wave of migration. In Ashfield, which was the focus of Polish settlement and community life since the postwar era, and one of the few suburbs associated with Polish immigrants (at least in the past—today it is more readily associated with the Chinese community), the Polish population tends to be predominantly older, part of the postwar generation of immigrants. Nevertheless, the fact that Sydney's first and most well known Polish club is situated in Ashfield continues to makes the suburb an important community locus. Meanwhile, Solidarity-era Polish immigrants are concentrated in the western and southwestern suburbs of Sydney, including the Liverpool, Fairfield and Blacktown LGAs.

Many Solidarity immigrants have, since migration, followed similar patterns of settlement. The six months immediately following migration, for families that came as refugees assisted by the Commonwealth government, was spent in migrant hostels, most notable the hostel in Villawood. This was followed by a longer period in rental accommodation, usually units close to shops, transport and other Poles. Immigrants who came by other means, for instance those assisted by family, stayed with family or friends for a brief period before seeking out rental accommodation. The large numbers
of Poles that arrived between 1981-1989, and their tendency to settle in (relatively limited) rental unit accommodation in or close to areas they already knew and where other Polish immigrants lived led to the establishment of a number of areas of concentrated Polish settlement. Examples of these included Nagle and Speed Streets in Liverpool and the area surrounding Warwick Farm train station, both areas with a large supply of inexpensive unit accommodation. In the late 1980s well over a dozen Polish families lived in each street (often several lived in each building), spawning a vibrant community street life, especially among the children, most of whom were similar in age. Smaller but still significant numbers of Poles still live there, though now they are more likely to be owner-occupiers or be members of the younger generation. As these recently arrived migrants acquired better employment and saved enough money to purchase houses, most gradually dispersed into surrounding 'mortgage belt' suburbs such as Hoxton Park, Hinchinbrook, Green Valley and Casula. Often these were newly-constructed homes within or close to LGAs they had previously lived in.

The pattern of distribution of the Solidarity children generation follows that of their parents. This is mainly because many still live with their parents, or, if they do not, have chosen to remain in the local area. Some of those who have moved out of the family home live in the same inexpensive, apartment-dominated neighbourhoods popular with their parents' generation following immigration. Others have purchased, or rent, houses in the more outlying 'mortgage belt'. Still others have moved into more central parts of the metropolitan area, such as the inner west or eastern suburbs.

**past studies of Polish community**

Australia's Polish community has received relatively little academic attention; this in particular being the case with the Solidarity wave. Meanwhile, work focusing on the children of the Solidarity immigrants—a group distinct enough from all others, including their parents, to warrant study in their own right—is entirely non existent. Many studies of the Polish community in Australia (e.g. Sussex and Zubrzycki 1985, Helman 1979, Kaluski 1985, Harris and Smolicz 1984, Jamrozik et al 1983) were published in the late 1970s or early 1980's, either before the Solidarity influx began or in its midst, when the events in Poland and the exodus they precipitated catapulted Poles into the foreground of public attention. Coming as they did at the time of the peak of Solidarity immigration, the latter studies could not delve into the subject of Solidarity immigrants adequately as they were either still coming into the country or arrived only recently, meaning that the lives of Solidarity immigrants following migration—their settling down, their and their children's gradual adaptation into their
new society—could not be covered beyond a brief period immediately following migration. Later research projects could and do provide insight into the Solidarity group, though their contributions remain limited due to their quantitative nature (e.g. Schindlemayr 2000, where the numerical majority of the postwar generation group skews the statistics), and/or the lack of specific focus on the Solidarity subset within the community (let alone the children of Solidarity). Certainly this is the case in Drozd and Cahill (1993), a compilation work which deals predominantly with issues affecting the older generation of Polish immigrants—not because it sets out to but because this group remains the most significant in terms of numbers, its problems (namely aging) being the most visible. This is also evident in countless other studies, including that of Drozdzewski (2002) and, to a much lesser extent, Jancz (2000). A notable exception is that of Drozd (2001), a qualitative study concentrating solely on the Solidarity wave migrants to Melbourne. But even this book, based on a Masters dissertation, essentially ignores the Solidarity children group, even though they were clearly an important part of that particular influx. By focusing exclusively on only one demographically fairly tight group this thesis seeks to prevent the problem of the experiences of one group being subsumed by those of another, larger group, or otherwise pretending that the Polish-born population of Sydney constitutes a coherent, homogeneous community. This approach will also ensure that the maximum voice is accorded to what in academic and popular discourse alike is the most under-studied, marginalised subset of the Polish group: the Solidarity children generation.

Among the few studies to focus predominantly on the Polish community of Sydney are Jancz (2000) and Drozdzewski's (2002). Drozdzewski's geography honours thesis, using qualitative methodologies, looks at constructions of Polish cultural identity and the local natural environment within the Polish community of Sydney. It is an excellent contribution to our understanding of the Polish-Australian community, in the way family history and ethnic identity of its members has affected interaction with the Australian natural environment, for example through the construction of the Bielany Polish scout camp on the outskirts of Sydney. However, in focusing on the Sydney Polish community as a whole (which for Drozdzewski encompasses the second and even third generations) the experience of Solidarity Poles (including the Solidarity children) is marginalised, mainly because of their relative small numbers and invisibility compared to the other generations. Further, Drozdzewski does not examine the influence of return journeys to Poland among Polish-Australians, nor the transnational links between Polish-Australians and their homelands. Her focus is more on identity and community life within Australia, without paying much attention to transnational linkages.
Jancz's doctoral dissertation is concerned with 'the predictors of psycho-social adjustment of Polish immigrants to Sydney', taking into consideration personal characteristics as well as demographic information (2000: 2). His study involved a sample of first generation Polish immigrants who migrated post 1980. Jancz found that psycho-social adjustment was best predicted by pre-arrival characteristics such as extraversion and education, as well as employment status following arrival, and length of residence. Jancz's study is valuable in that it analyses the adaptation and assimilation of Polish immigrants, through a hitherto lacking focus on Solidarity-wave Poles. In concentrating largely on psychological aspects and theories, and in relying chiefly on surveys and technical psychology jargon, it remains however an overwhelmingly quantitative thesis that is incapable of revealing much about individual experiences. Further, just as past studies of the Polish community neglected the Solidarity generation, Jancz's work relegates into but a footnote the experiences of the children of the Solidarity migrants. This may be the result of their being less accessible to the researcher and, perhaps, the perception that due to their younger age at migration and consequent easier adaptation/assimilation to life in Australia, they are somehow less worthy of study. As this thesis will seek to demonstrate, nothing could be further from the truth.

**community life and infrastructure**

The Polish-born community is heavily fragmented into several sub-groups, based largely on age, time of migration and religion. Except by way of family ties, relations between members of the different groups are relatively limited. Anecdotally, it would also appear that intra-group interaction is not particularly significant. This is especially the case with the Solidarity generation, for whom the limited community life that exists is built largely around small family and friendship networks, and nodes of capitalist consumption such as shops selling Polish smallgoods or videos. This observation is even more true of the Solidarity children generation, whose exposure to the Polish community is primarily only through family contacts, and perhaps a small number of usually long-term friends. Indeed, one of the arguments of this thesis is that in most instances young Polish-Australians have greater links with Poland than they do with one another, and the local Polish community itself.

The Polish community, to 'outsiders', remains relatively invisible in comparison to other ethnic/immigrant communities. This is due to a number of factors. Perhaps the most important of these is the notion of race. As northern Europeans, Poles tend to be indistinguishable from Australia's Anglo-Celtic majority by appearance alone. Usually, Poles' ethnic background is identifiable only by accent and often distinctive surnames.
By contrast, immigrants from many other regions, for example South and East Asia or the Middle East, tend to be more readily recognizable as non-Anglo 'outsiders' through race alone, and partly as a consequence have born the brunt of racism and stereotyping. Another factor is religion. The Catholicism of most Poles does not in itself single them out as—at least at present—their religion is considered part of the Australian mainstream. This status also alleviates the need for separate religious infrastructure and limits the formation of tight communities around common religious beliefs and worship. The third element is time since migration of community members. The fact that the Polish community became firmly established in Sydney in the 1950s, and that the bulk of its members migrated during that period means that on the whole it is assimilated into Australian society. Even the Solidarity immigrants migrated relatively long ago compared to many other, more visible, groups and appear to outsiders to have been assimilated into the majority culture and society. Of course the opposite was the case during the 1950s, when the recently arrived Polish immigrants were highly visible. This visibility was as much due to their lack of familiarity with local language and custom and initial segregation from Anglo-Celtic Australia as it was due to the paucity of even more 'visible'—i.e. non-white—'New Australians' at that time (certainly the fact that attitudes to the slightly later waves of immigration from Italy and Greece tended to be less positive than towards Poles and other central and eastern European suggests that race, and maybe also cultural difference—real or perceived—were significant enough factors). Similarly, Solidarity Poles were more visible, and the communities they formed more cohesive and pronounced, in the years immediately following migration than they are now. The lack of both English language skill and familiarity with local cultural and employment conditions not only made them stand out more in the eyes of outsiders, but resulted in the community turning inwards, to its own members and infrastructure. Consequently this period became a sort of boom period or golden age in the eyes of many. Everyone was socially close. Many close friendships were established. Polish church masses and clubs were full to overflowing. However with time and improved employment prospects, English language skills and a sense of increased economic well-being and of being a part of Australian society, community life among Solidarity migrants declined. What remained were the firm friendship networks built during the initial period, and it was these networks that continue to form the core of the Polish Solidarity community today.

Polish community infrastructure, while scattered throughout the metropolitan area, tends to be more concentrated in areas where Poles reside, or which were associated with Poles in the past. Community infrastructure can be subdivided into four main groups: community clubs and groups; religious institutions; commercial outlets
providing predominantly Polish specialist goods and services; and service-provider businesses owned by, or which employ, Polish-speaking individuals and which serve the wider public as well as the Polish community. The latter category includes, for example, doctors, dentists and lawyers, who while providing a service to anyone, irrespective of ethnic background, have by virtue of their ability to speak Polish drawn many Polish-born customers. Many immigrants, especially those with poorer English skills, feel more comfortable speaking to their doctors or lawyers in Polish, and thus actively seek service providers who are also fellow community members, especially if the service provider-customer relationship is to be a long-term, serious and/or sensitive one. Commercial outlets specialising in Polish produce or specifically targeting the Polish community include the increasingly ubiquitous multi-purpose ‘Polish store’ (polski sklep). These often sell Polish smallgoods such as sausages, confectionary, Polish magazines and books and, increasingly, also rent Polish videos. There are a number of such stores throughout Sydney, including in Ashfield, Bankstown, Plumpton, and Liverpool. Often these are attached to Polish clubs. Other Polish stores are more specialised, including a number of Polish butchers, bakers, video libraries and travel agents. These are often scattered throughout the suburbs and tend to be located far from major consumption strips or shopping malls. All Polish stores enjoy a high (and increasing) level of popularity. Since the late 1980s the stores also increased in number. Many are run by, and are very popular among, the Solidarity wave of immigrants. Their increased popularity and number, and patronage by Solidarity Poles, seems at odds with the experience of the community’s religious and club infrastructure.

There was a time when religion and local Polish clubs and organisations were at the forefront of forging intra-community interaction and a kind of collective Polish-Australian consciousness and a sense of community. This was especially the case following the major waves of migration, and was more evident among the postwar than Solidarity Polish immigrants. Today the significance of both is much more pronounced. Ethnic Poles being overwhelmingly Catholic, the Catholic church from the beginning of mass Polish immigration to Australia acted as a rallying point, with frequent Polish language church services in areas of Polish settlement. The role of the church, and its authority, was strengthened by the fact that it provided opposition to the communist regime in Poland. The influx of Solidarity immigrants only further empowered the church, as Solidarity activists were closely tied to the Catholic church, and Polish masses in Australia were among the chief foci of Polish anti-communist opposition in Australia. Sunday Polish mass was when much of the local community came together, these services being extremely popular. The situation changed dramatically once the Solidarity immigrants became increasingly embedded in
Australian society, and especially due to the loss of the Church’s opposition role in Poland. As communism crumbled the church gained a modicum of power, and its failings, especially its attempts to interfere in the post-communist government of Poland, were exposed. Consequently reverence for the Polish Catholic Church among Poles in both Poland and Australia declined, as did church attendance. In Australia this decline was more pronounced among Solidarity than postwar Poles, and at present it is older, postwar Poles who make up the bulk of regular attendees. Many Solidarity Poles, and especially the Solidarity children generation, attend Polish mass only once or twice a year, if at all: Christmas Day and Easter Sunday (as well as a short service on Easter Saturday in which a basket containing painted eggs, bread, cold meats, etc., is blessed; this service traditionally sees greater attendance than any other throughout the course of the year). But even attendance on these holy-days has been in steady decline—not least because of a loss of interest in Polish and religious matters among now largely adult and independent Solidarity children generation. Having said that, the Catholic church still wields considerable power among the Polish community. This is particularly evident in the fact that among the most popular and influential local Polish community periodicals is Przegląd Katolicki (Catholic Review), a Catholic publication. This influence is however anecdotally now limited largely to more religious, generally older Poles.

Polish clubs, too, no longer appear as popular as they once were. Polish clubs are located in the suburbs of Ashfield, Bankstown and Plumpton. The clubs provide the local Polish community with venues to come together over drinks, or for many different types of events such as dances, live bands, film screenings and sports telecasts or matches. They also help organize Polish folk dance groups, scout groups, soccer teams and excursions. Generally attached to them are a Polish restaurant and shop, though these are independently owned. The club in Ashfield, in the inner west, is the oldest and most well known, but at the same time it is the one geographically most removed from the main areas of contemporary Polish settlement, i.e. the greater west and southwest. The Ashfield club was a thriving centre of community life as late as the mid 1990s. It was well frequented by even young Polish-Australians, including those born in Australia. This was due primarily to a very popular disco which took place there on Friday and Saturday nights, and on such special occasions as New Year's Eve. These dances have however become decreasingly popular over the years—this decline being the result partly of fights and a generally deteriorating atmosphere, and partly of the participants' increasing assimilation into the wider Australian society and consequent shift from chiefly Polish to more mixed friendship networks. The height of the discotheques' popularity corresponded with an identity crisis among the Solidarity children generation—a time, usually in late adolescence and early adulthood, when
they rediscovered or attempted to intensify the Polish side of their identity. Ultimately, though, both this resurgence and the popularity of the club among sections of the young proved to be short lived. The failure of the discotheques to attract significant crowds resulted in the loss of revenue to the club. This, combined with bickering, alleged mismanagement and declining patronage by other age groups, contributed to the club teetering on the verge of bankruptcy by 2002. A community-wide appeal and management shakeup were subsequently launched, but in March 2003 another setback eventuated, this time in the form of a fire which destroyed the restaurant, Polish military museum and Polish club archives, all located on the premises.

All three clubs have lost out due in part to the declining numbers of the postwar Poles—the traditional customer base. For many years, especially recently, the Solidarity Poles have felt alienated by club management and to an extent clientele, both traditionally dominated by postwar Poles, with whom they had little in common. As a result, many Solidarity Poles did not get involved and attended the clubs only to eat or shop at the (independently owned) restaurants and Polish shops attached to them, or to watch Polish soccer matches or—in the case of Bankstown—screenings of Polish films. Given the advanced age and declining numbers of postwar Poles this dominance of community clubs and organizations by this group has proved a significant problem that is only now being addressed.

Also in decline appear to be various other Polish organisations. Once again, among the reasons behind their decline are dominance by the postwar generation, the decreasing size of this generation, and low levels of interest among the Solidarity generation and—in particular—the Solidarity children generation. Another prominent factor is the collapse of Poland’s communist regime. While communism dominated Poland it constituted an entity the entire local Polish community rallied against. This opposition brought the different groups together, and at the time there existed a number of political organizations and loose associations engaged in trying to discredit communism and aid the opposition back home. The result was an alliance between the postwar and Solidarity Poles—an alliance that began to crumble at about the same time as did the communist government of Poland.

There also exist a number of what can perhaps be termed elite institutions. While without broad appeal among the general Polish community these seem to successfully bring together more active, politically, intellectually and/or culturally inclined members of the community. Notable examples of such organisations include the Polish Historical Institute in Australia (PHIA) and the Australian Institute of Polish Affairs (AIPA), which while headquartered in Melbourne has a significant presence in Sydney.
Established within the last decade, AIPA works closely with the Polish embassy and government and organises trips to Australia by various Polish dignitaries, where they might conduct lectures in selected capital cities. One of its main stated aims is to increase awareness of Poland in the general Australian community and correct errors about it made in the Australian mainstream media. One example of AIPA activism has been in response to misleading statements made about the Holocaust, such as references in some documentaries to 'Polish death camps'. Arguably among the chief strengths of AIPA has been that Polish Jews feature prominently among its membership. In bringing Polish Catholics and Jews together in this manner however AIPA stands largely alone among the various Australian Polonia organisations. For the most part the two communities remain quite separate. Where they come together is primarily at the upper, more elite levels of society, and in their mutual memories of, interest in, and travels back to Poland.

This section has outlined some of the ways in which Polish-born individuals interact with one another, and the infrastructure that such individuals have created for themselves and fellow members of the local Polish community. As has been demonstrated, Sydney's Polish community is fairly fractured, with contact between its members relatively limited and based largely around family and friendship networks and nodes of capital consumption such as Polish stores. The only time the community really comes together in numbers of any significance is when queuing for sausage or videos in one of these stores, or at film screenings of the latest blockbuster film from Poland. Meanwhile, more traditional foci of Polish community life, such as clubs and church, though once popular, have undergone rapid decline. This dislocation of community members from the community and its infrastructure is more pronounced among the Solidarity and Solidarity children than Postwar generations, further accentuating the differences between them. This situation puts into question the adequacy of the term 'community' in reference to the Polish-born, as members of this group form anything but a cohesive community in real time-space. The community of the Polish-born inhabitants of Sydney is perhaps as much virtual or imagined—based on assumptions of common origins, linguistic and cultural similarities, and a shared interest in Poland—than anything else.

These observations appear to mirror those of Drzewicka and Nakayama (1998), who noticed similar processes at work among the Polish residents of Phoenix, Arizona, especially the Solidarity generation. Their study found a similarly decentralised community that was brought together chiefly only through 'sites of capitalist production' such as Polish grocery stores. Intra-group interaction was limited, but this did not mean that Polish identity was diminished and most of the study's participants
retained an interest in Poland through, for instance, Polish news, books, magazines, visits from family members from, and travels back to, Poland. Drzewicka and Nakayrna (1998) argue that the above situation was a consequence of the decentralized layout and fragmentation inherent in ‘postmodern cities’ such as Los Angeles and Phoenix—as opposed to for example ‘modernist’ urban environments such as those of Chicago, where, the authors argue, the concentration of the Polish community in particular neighbourhoods led to a Polish community with dramatically different characteristics. While the Sydney Polonia might resemble that of Phoenix because Sydney, too, may be categorized as a postmodern city, it seems more likely that factors other than geographical determinism are at work—factors such the history and demography of the local Polonia, and the generational, class and educational differences between its members.

‘community’? inadequacies of the term

As outlined above, it is difficult to speak of a single cohesive Polish community when referring to the Polish-born and/or Polish-identifying. Even though the term ‘community’ is at present de-rigueur in describing immigrant or other minority populations (and is perhaps the best such term of a pretty inadequate lot—hence its use here) it belies the fact that often such groups rarely function as a cohesive, communal entity with common interests. Certainly this is the case with the fragmented Polish-identifying ‘community’, a more apt description of which might be a collection of loose networks or sub-communities brought together only through a common ancestral language and interest in, ties to, and memories of the Polish homeland.

Polish-background individuals in Sydney, and Australia as a whole, can be easily subdivided into several, in most cases fairly distinct (one might even say homogeneous) subgroups, based largely on generation and the period and circumstances of arrival in Australia, not to mention religious, ethnic, and/or linguistic background. Taking aside the Polish-born Jewish, German and Ukrainian groups and their descendants—groups that have always been considered quite distinct to and separate from what is commonly meant when speaking of the ‘Polish community’, except when it came to country of birth statistics—the main groups include the World War II/postwar influx generation; the 1980s Solidarity generation; the Solidarity children generation; the postwar second generation—Australian born children of postwar migrants; and the second generation Solidarity migrants—those children of the Solidarity émigrés born in Australia.
The research sample is drawn from members of the Solidarity children generation. Chapter two has outlined how study participants were recruited for this thesis, including the parameters which determined eligibility for participation. This section will outline the characteristics of the study group. Unless otherwise indicated, discussion of what respondents are doing, or where they are living, 'at present', refers to the situation at the time of their being interviewed, that is in the period 2002 to 2004. The following section focuses on how the respondents described their lives and feelings of identity prior to returning to Poland for the first time. This will permit the experience of return, and post-return life in Australia, to be directly compared to pre-return experiences, which will be done in subsequent chapters.

Emigration and arrival in Australia

Respondents' families arrived in Australia between 1981 and 1989. Most left, according to the interviewees, because of the unsettled political situation following the Communist government's crackdown on the Solidarity movement. Many of the parents were themselves active in Solidarity. The following are how five different respondents described how their families came to leave Poland:

We left Warsaw in 1985. The reason for migration was basically that my dad was, couldn't never get a job, as he understood it in Poland, as a consequence of his political activities. He was jailed by the communists. It was during his stay in incarceration when he told my mum to basically seek and go to Warsaw and find out which, what government is likely to allow us to migrate and where does the migration process take the shortest time and where it is the climate and so on are favourable for staying. And my mum as well, as a consequence of writing an anti-communist paper, she lost her job. And she was re-employed for a month and then lost her job again as a primary school teacher

My father wanted to leave Poland desperately for many years. He hated the political system and felt unable to change it. He wanted better future for me and he also had a very positive expectation of "the west" despite never traveling anywhere more west than Hungary.

My father was a political dissident, he was a member of Solidarity and the group that led Solidarity in our town. They were arrested and tried ... I think a couple of months following after the declaration of Marshall Law, sometime in 1982. They were tried before a military court, which was what Marshall Law was about—you did not have a civil or criminal case. The charge was the usual ... attempts to undermine the socialist state or treason or sedition or whatever ... whatever it is that they call it.
Essentially what—what was their offence was that they were still members of Solidarity.

I think when my dad got out of prison he couldn't find any work, but ... Eventually we basically went to the Australian embassy in Warsaw, and we were able to come to Australia on the basis of being refugees. It wasn't that common—I know a lot of people would run away to Austria or Germany and try that way [...] But in our case we could prove [that we were political activists] quite clearly ... so it was easy for us to go through the Australian embassy. It took a long time, but—I remember being at least three times in Warsaw with my parents, at the [Australian] embassy [...] it probably took about two years. The delay wasn't because of the Australian embassy ... it was more on the communists' part, where they would just drag their feet—they wouldn't give you the documentation that you'd need, to prove things, that the embassy had to see. They were doing everything in their power to stop us from going. The Polish government said to us, you know 'if you leave' ... 'you can't come back, because you're a traitor, so, you know, it's a one-way ticket'.

Others, including those not overtly active politically, left Poland because they sought a better life, and greater opportunities for themselves and their children, abroad. As the previous account mentioned, many also travelled to Australia via third countries:

[We were in Italy] Almost a year and a half ... something like that ... a long stay. Basically we went [there] on a holiday [and never returned] ... My parents just decided to leave Poland and never return [...] I guess probably because whether people admit it or not, for probably quite a few if not majority the big decision would be for better prospects in their lives. Better opportunities, and also better future aspects, on my perspective as well. Better opportunities as to schooling, and better opportunities ... versus what was happening at that time in Poland, and the possible future that was attainable there.

These were the antecedents of the Solidarity generation.

**education and socio-economic background**

Eighteen Polish-Australians, aged 18 to 35, participated in this thesis. Nine were male and nine female. They came from all parts of the Sydney metropolitan area, though half lived (at least prior to moving away from the parental home) in the southwestern and western suburbs of Sydney, where the greatest concentrations of Solidarity-wave Poles reside. All but four were brought up in households where at least one parent (and in most cases both) possessed tertiary qualifications from Poland, where they also worked as professionals. This broadly reflects the university-educated, middle class nature of the Solidarity-wave emigrants out of Poland, including to Australia. However, in Australia the parents of most respondents experienced a significant
downgrade in employment and socio-economic status, working chiefly in low-paying jobs in the manufacturing or, less often, service industries, as labourers or tradespeople, or taxi drivers. This downgrade compared to their previous status was reportedly a source of much frustration, for the parents but also their children.

Only six of the respondents were brought up in households where at least one of the parents worked in occupations similar to those prior to migration. In all instances this involved a parent who worked either as an engineer or medical professional in both Poland and Australia. These families were materially much better off than any of the other households, and were among the few whose children were able to travel back to Poland early, prior to the conclusion of school. These families also reportedly found the transition period immediately following migration easier than the others, mainly because they were able to almost immediately secure professional employment, unlike the prolonged periods of unemployment or low-skilled employment which characterised initial life in Australia for others. The more rapid assimilation into Australian mainstream society was aided by language—the parents who worked professionally in Australia also possessed at least some degree of English language proficiency prior to arrival, compared to very few of those unable to find work in their professions. Further, this group resided (usually from not long after arrival) in the more privileged parts of Sydney, such as the North Shore and Eastern Suburbs, where the concentrations of fellow Solidarity Poles were also less. This group for the most part seemed to have less contact with other Poles than those who were less well off. The fact that they were able to gain professional employment, were financially better off, and lived in areas where few other Poles lived, combined to produce a situation where the families' friendship networks consisted mainly of people other than Poles. This was in great contrast to the Polish immigrants who suffered a socio-economic downgrade, who generally lived in areas where other Polish-Australians were concentrated, and whose friendship circles were more predominantly Polish.

At the time of the interviews, all but two of the interviewees were either completing or had completed university studies. Of the remaining two, one had entered the workforce immediately after high school, and the other left university after a few years of study. This pattern also roughly reflects the education characteristics of the Solidarity Children generation. They were/are very likely to pursue university studies; this probably has a lot to do with the mainly middle-class, tertiary-educated nature of their parents' generation (incidentally, the one respondent who did not go to university straight after school had parents who did not go either).
Following migration, respondents' adaptation into general Australian society tended to be rapid. No doubt the relatively young age at which study participants migrated was an important factor helping to ensure integration and language acquisition substantially more rapid than those individuals migrating from non-English speaking backgrounds at an older age—for instance the respondents' parents. Within the group itself there, too, was variety, much of it seemingly dependent on age at migration. As might be expected, those who migrated at a younger age became more integrated, more rapidly, into the receiving society than did those who migrated at an older age. Conversely, the latter group retained their Polish language and culture skills, and a sense of Polish identity, to a much larger degree than those who arrived in Australia at a younger age. The differences between those who migrated between the ages of around 11 and 15 (the upper age limit among study participants) and below the age of around six or seven were particularly profound; one group was for all intents and purposes 'Polish', with excellent Polish language proficiency, knowledge of Polish culture and history, a high number of Polish friends, etc; the other group was far more 'Australian', with much better English language and much poorer Polish language skills, few Polish-background friends and acquaintances, and a general lack of interest in Poland.

Detected also was the presence of a discernible intermediate group, who migrated between roughly the ages of seven and eleven, and who exhibited intermediate levels of language proficiency, integration/assimilation, sense of identity and belonging, Polish-background friends, and interest in Poland or local Polish community issues. Although members of this particular group were rated as moderate or intermediate for each of the categories outlined above, even within this group there was significant variability. Much of it could be ascribed to even the most minute differences in age at migration, with for example an individual who migrated at age nine being more adept at the Polish language, and more likely to identify with Poland and Polish culture, than someone aged seven at migration. Similarly, an individual who migrated at age ten or eleven was located more towards the 'Polish' than 'Australian' ends of the identity and integration and assimilation spectrum than did the person who migrated at age nine.

Other factors which may have influenced a respondent's location on this spectrum included gender, where the person lived and went to school following migration, and parental employment and educational background, including in Australia, although of course it is difficult to make definitive statements on the relative or particular influences of each of these factors given their highly subjective—and overlapping—
nature and the small size of the sample. Some trends did, however, emerge, one of the most important being area of residence following migration.

Almost all of the respondents spent a period of up to twelve months following arrival in Australia in one of the government-funded migrant hostels, usually Villawood in the southwest of Sydney. Given the relatively high level of refugee migration from Poland to Australia (usually via third countries) in the mid to late 1980s hostels like Villawood were home to substantial concentrations of Poles, and a lot of local friendship networks originated there. Following a period in hostel accommodation families spread out throughout metropolitan Sydney, though most at least initially remained within the southwest or greater western regions of the metropolis, an area home to significant numbers of not just other Solidarity-era Polish immigrants, but countless other immigrant groups as well. Indeed, the Fairfield-Liverpool area, where a lot of the Solidarity Poles lived or continue to live, is among the most ethnically diverse in Australia and home to almost as many foreign-born as Australian-born individuals. As such, those participants who lived and went to school predominantly in this area were exposed to a very multicultural environment which included also many Poles:

A lot of the kids at that school [high school] were also from other countries though not that many were Polish, mainly Italian, South American, Lebanese, Yugoslavian, etc., and a few others from smaller countries [...] In primary school I had only two friends that were Polish (one was in a higher grade) the other was in my class, so at the start it was quite helpful. The rest of my friends were both Australian and from non-English speaking backgrounds. In high school most of my friends were Australian, a couple were non English-speaking background, I didn't end up keeping in contact with either of the two Polish friends I had at school.

In part because of this diversity, being of a Polish background was not in any way seen as disadvantageous, nor the source of potential outsider status. As another interviewee put it:

If I felt an outsider it was certainly not because of my heritage, or ... my nationality. It probably would have—would have been because of my—academic elitism [laugh] ... more than anything else. I mean ... all geeks and nerds and dorks were—were outsiders, but for ... for reasons of their learning ability, not because of their—it wouldn't be possible in schools which would normally have about 70 percent of, um, students from non-English speaking backgrounds. No ... not at all.

At the Liverpool-area schools I personally went to perhaps every fifth student was Poland-born, and students from English-speaking backgrounds were in the overall
minority. Given this, it was not unusual to have a migrant, multilingual background in such schools, and one’s background was not a source of shame or jokes but a badge, to be worn proudly. If anything, in such an environment it was ‘skip’, attached to those with no discernible non-Anglo-Celtic ancestry, that was the pejorative label. Meanwhile, Polish schoolmates, most with similar backgrounds—abounded, though few actually thought to converse with one another in Polish, except when it came to secretive talk and swear words. All this, combined with limited exposure in school age to broader Australian society, meant that identity at the time was not a difficult, hyphenated, multifaceted affair. You were just ‘Polish’, even if you barely spoke the language or knew next to nothing about your homeland. You were definitely not ‘Australian’—that identity was reserved solely for the ‘enemy’, the Anglo-Celtic ‘Aussies’ or ‘skips’, against whom the ‘wogs’ sharply counterpoised themselves.

By contrast, those respondents whose families moved to less overtly multiethnic areas, for example the North Shore of Sydney, and attended the usually overwhelmingly ‘Anglo’ schools, grew up in an entirely different environment. They had few colleagues of Polish background, and the only Poles other than immediate family members they interacted with were those they knew through family networks. Several such interviewees spoke of being the only Polish person at school, or maybe they vaguely had heard of another Pole in another grade. Other non-Anglo-Celtic students were similarly relatively few in number. Under such circumstances, understandably, there did not develop the need to possess a strong outward ‘Polish’, or even ‘non-Australian’ or ‘immigrant’, identity, as it was easier to be subsumed by and integrate into the non-immigrant majority or its major school subgroupings. Certainly, the fact that Poles are ‘white’ and hence not immediately visibly ‘Other’ aided this process, so long as the individual’s English-language proficiency was sufficient to avoid targeting. When respondents surrounded in school by few other Poles and generally limited cultural diversity were asked whether they were ever singled out or otherwise made fun of because of their backgrounds, most replied no, that it was never an issue—except when it came to their surname. The (stereo)typically long, unwieldy and unpronounceable Polish surname (and sometimes given name): this was the one thing that, in other’s eyes, made Polish students different and may have led to questions regarding background. Members of this group seemed more likely than those who lived in more ethnically diverse areas or among greater concentrations of Poles to identify, at least while in school, as ‘Australian’ or ‘Polish-Australian’, though this was not necessarily accompanied by more ‘Australian’ behaviour, merely a function of the school and local environments and the identity politics operating within them.
Another potential influence on levels of identity, ‘Polishness’ and integration was whether or not the respondent attended Polish school on weekends. This factor, however, tends to be closely tied to age at migration as those who arrived at an older age were far more likely to attend since their higher levels of Polish language proficiency gave them a distinct advantage within the Polish Saturday school (those students who arrived at an earlier age, or were born in Australia, by all accounts tended to do poorly and often dropped out). Moreover, the better the Polish linguistic skills the more advantageous was enrolment as it was more likely to contribute good marks to the overall matriculation mark upon graduation, also helping to negate to varying extents the relative disadvantage of limited English language proficiency in mainstream school subjects. Polish school, then, acted largely on an opportunistic level, to help maximise marks rather than to aid with knowledge of the Polish language, customs and history—the original motivating factor behind such schools being set up, and the reason why many Polish parents pushed their children to attend.

Of those respondents that attended Saturday school and found it a positive experience, most said they enjoyed it because of the social interaction it permitted with other Polish students, especially those with similar migration histories, and therefore with similar language skills, concerns and interests, to their own. The teachers and syllabus, however, tended to be regarded with contempt or mockery. No doubt the students would have learnt a lot about Poland and Polish culture and literature, and attendance would have ensured Polish language ability was higher than it would have otherwise been, though these potential benefits tended to be downplayed by most participants. Although attendance might have had benefits tended to be downplayed by most participants. Although attendance might have aided identification with Poland and Polish culture, heightening the individual’s feelings of ‘Polishness’, at the same time systematic exposure to Poland in a school environment (the fact that lessons took place early on a Saturday morning didn’t help, fostering further resentment) could also have had the effect of removing at least some of the allure and mystery of the homeland and its language through their transformation into yet another school subject—and a relatively difficult one at that. Further, the fact that most Polish school attending respondents had migrated at a relatively older age also would have softened or negated the possible contribution of attendance to increased feelings of ‘Polishness’. At the very least Polish school attendance should be downplayed as a significant contributing factor because of the general overlap of the attendance and higher age at migration categories.

For the most part, what differences persisted among respondents when it came to their identity with Poland, Polish, and the local Polish community culture prior to the first return seemed mostly subtle; the differences could be largely explained by age at
migration, this being especially the case with levels of both Polish and English proficiency and knowledge of and interaction with Polish culture. Interaction with Polish-background peers was also important, although less so.

A generalised picture of study participant life in Australia prior to the first late teenage/early adulthood return trip can easily be painted. Knowledge of and interaction with Poland and Polish culture and products was scant and scattered, with both indicators increasing slightly with higher age at migration. Polish language use was limited, being dependent primarily on age at migration, and confined almost entirely to use with family and family friends. The following is the account of Karolina, who migrated aged seven:

> My Polish is mediocre. I can understand it very well but am not a fluent speaker. When talking to parents I try to talk in Polish but when I can't think of the word I use English, since being married and when visiting my parents my mum now insists we all speak in English so my husband doesn't feel excluded. Since moving out of home I think my Polish has maybe slightly gone downhill, but it wasn't that good to start with.

This contrasts with those who arrived in Australia in their teenage years, whose Polish would sometimes surpass their English, and who did communicate with peers of similar background in Polish or a mixture of Polish and English. Agnieszka, who arrived in Australia at the age of 15, observed:

> In my 15 years in Australia I still cannot say that I have adjusted to English being my second language. I feel incapable of expressing myself, I feel almost illiterate, especially when discussing topics such as literature, poetry, theatre [...] After two years of high school I could still not speak English. My written skills were considerably better, but I had problems understanding even simple questions asked in an Australian accent [...] I still speak Polish frequently [her partner is Polish], and speak it very well, though I tend to forget Polish words and substitute them with English, I do not know many specialist words, for instance when people ask me where my father works in Australia, or ask me what I do at work etc.

Participation in Polish 'community life' was minimal, even among the later arrivals. From their descriptions of their behaviour outside of the home most respondents appeared more 'Australian' than 'Polish', with again the teenage migrants being a partial exception to this. But even in the home few read Polish books or magazines or watched Polish films, and conversation with parents in Polish for many was difficult without resorting to some English words and sentences. Talking to siblings (where these existed), meanwhile, was an entirely English-language affair for younger and
intermediate aged migrants. Yet throughout their school years, and beyond, respondents continued to identify as ‘Polish’, or in some instances ‘Polish-Australian’. This self attached identity tag transcended actual objective indicators of ‘Polishness’ or ‘Australianness’, as gauged by language proficiency, friendship networks and other external behaviours, and seemed to have more to do with notions of ancestry, home life, the identity politics of the moment, and, in particular, memory and nostalgia.

All but those who were very young at migration (or, in the two cases mentioned in the previous chapter, not born in Poland at all) possessed memories, often vivid, often romanticised, of the Polish homeland from which they and/or their families hailed. Even where these memories were absent or infinitesimal, parents would, through various tales and family photographs, and to a lesser extent also books and the media, convey images of the homeland. These would in themselves be sufficient in arousing interest in Poland, and aid self-identity as Polish or part Polish. They no doubt are the very factors at play among second, or even third or beyond, generation migrants from various national backgrounds, who because of family stories, pictures, or just wondering about where their ancestors came from, develop a deep attachment, replete with a rich web of images, with the ancestral homeland before ever stepping foot in it. For the study participants it is myth and memory, and the homeland of images and the imagination, that were paramount in their conceptualisation of Poland, and negation of their own self-identity. For most, language, community life or direct links with Poland were comparatively inconsequential as their life in Poland receded further into the distant, intangible background. The real Poland had in their daily lives ceased to be, but on another level the imagined or nostalgic Poland, with its increasingly mythical landscapes and vaguely familiar people and places continued to infect the deeper recesses of the mind. It was so distant, so foreign, but so strangely familiar. And it pulled you in. It may have been left behind long ago, assimilation may have been all but complete, but the homeland was far from forgotten. It was still in there, not in daily behaviour but the mind, and returning to it would push it further into the background and send feelings of identity and belonging into an unprecedented spin. These nostalgic longings for, and return into, the homeland will be the subject of the next three chapters.

**conclusion**

This chapter introduced and accounted for some of the background history and characteristics of *Polonia*, or Polish diaspora, of Australia—and Sydney. It began by tracing the history of migration out of Poland and the various, quite different Polish communities it gave rise to throughout the world. In the United States the *Polonia* is
dominated by the descendants of pre World War I émigrés, in the UK by World War II or postwar migrants, while in Sweden it is the Solidarity Poles that give the local Polish community its defining character. In Australia the Polonia consists of a mix of postwar and Solidarity wave migrants, and the children of both groups. It is the postwar Poles who have thus far been the dominant group numerically, though as this group rapidly ages and its numbers decline the baton is being passed to the Solidarity migrants.

The chapter went on to show the highly fragmented nature of the Polish community, with its existing substantial, some would say insurmountable differences between the different generations, which rarely come together except through family bonds—so much so that the Polish ‘community’ can hardly be described as a single community at all. But even amongst the members of each of the generations there is evidence that as the length of time they have lived in Australia increases there is rapidly decreasing contact with or interest in the Polish community at large. This is more true of the Solidarity wave migrants than it is of the postwar Poles (with the latter continuing to maintain significant community links considering the time that has lapsed since migration) and is even more true of the Solidarity children generation, whose links to other, non-family members of the Polish community are very—and increasingly—tenuous. However, as the following chapters will demonstrate, this lack of contact with other Poles or interest in community activities does not suggest complete assimilation and the abandonment of an individual’s ‘Polishness’. Far from it. It’s just that this ‘Polishness’ is expressed differently—through interest in and communication, real or virtual, with Poland itself rather than the local Polonia.

The latter part of this chapter introduced the study sample. It showed that respondents broadly reflected the Solidarity Children generation from which they were drawn. Slightly more than half grew up in the southwestern or western suburbs of Sydney, where Solidarity Poles are concentrated. The remainder were from throughout the metropolitan area. Most respondents were from tertiary-educated, middle class families, though following migration in many cases the families were subject to a professional downgrade, with parents employed in low-paying occupations at odds with qualifications and experience obtained in Poland. Other families, however, were considerably better off, with at least one parent working in his or her pre-migration profession; these families also tended to live in more middle-class suburbs away from main areas of Solidarity generation settlement.

The chapter went on to paint a picture of respondents’ lives in Australia, post migration but prior to what further chapters will show to be the all-important first return trip to Poland. It was shown that research participants may have identified as
'Polish', but in most instances they were rapidly losing Polish language skills, had little involvement in the Polish community (except through parents), knew little of Poland other than from their memories (for those who had them), family stories and relatives' photos. This was especially true of those who arrived in Australia prior to adolescence; those who migrated as teenagers had better Polish-language skills (though were also poorer at English), had more memories of Poland, and possessed slightly stronger ties with the local Polish community, usually through similarly aged Poles who arrived at around the same time and with whom they spoke Polish. However, even for this group as more time was spent in Australia these local co-ethnic ties diminished, and 'Polishness' waned.

The following three chapters will examine the experience of return to the homeland, Poland, and how such return journeys have affected the respondents' lives in Australia, their sense of identity, and how they perceive their two 'homes', Australia and Poland. Chapter Four will begin by describing how journeys 'home' are experienced by returnees, with a particular focus on the respondents' initial trips back as young adults. Chapter Five will look at the photographs taken on return journeys and what they reveal about the experience. The concern of Chapter Six will be the 'toing and froing' between Poland and Australia that has come to characterise many respondents' lives following the initial return. This chapter will explore subsequent return journeys and how these differed from the first; how respondents' lives in Australia changed following return; as well as questions of identity and belonging.
4

A Homecoming

In the good old days nostalgia was a curable disease, dangerous but not always lethal. Leeches, warm hypnotic emulsions and a return to the Alps usually soothed the symptoms. Purging of the stomach was also recommended, but nothing compared with the return to the motherland believed to be the best remedy for nostalgia. (Boym 2001: 4)

The migrant's ancestral homeland is not easily forgotten. It remains lodged firmly within the mind. Whether it is at the forefront of thought, or providing a background for it, the homeland continues to exert an important influence on subjective experience. This nostalgic longing for places and people once immediate but now distant is partly responsible for directing journeys back into the 'home' country. At the same time, however, far from curing nostalgia, it could be argued that these homeward trips often merely reinforce it, or at the most transform it by adding another, fresh layer of homeland memories—and accompanying images. Further, as will be shown in subsequent chapters, far from resolving issues of identity and belonging—as those travelling, or their parents, might expect—in the long run journeys 'home' appear to only complicate what for many young migrants are already highly fractured, unstable identities.

As much of the rest of this thesis will seek to demonstrate through the experiences of several members of young Solidarity-era migrants from Poland to Australia, travelling back to the land of one's birth, or to that of one's ancestors, can be a momentous, emotional and potentially (at least temporarily) identity shifting event. This appears especially the case with the first trip back, or in some instances, the first trip back in adulthood. The present chapter examines the experience of return among members of the study group, focusing in particular on the first independent, post-secondary school trip back to Poland. Discussed here will be the timing of such travels, as well as the circumstances leading to them and the motivating factors behind them. An outline of the course of the typical return journey, and some of the key themes that characterise the experience for returnees, will follow. The themes looked at will include family,
food, places visited, and language. The chapter will also outline what respondents typically identified as the most and least positive aspects of their return journeys to Poland, and try to account for why these were identified as such. The differences in the way return trips were experienced will also be highlighted, with the latter sections of the chapter attempting to account for these by examining the potential influence of variables such as age at migration, gender, length and seasonality of trip, and places visited. Finally, the experience of return will be analysed as a potent example of transnationalism, in light of the literature on this subject, as well as the few similar studies focusing on homeland visits.

The topic of subsequent journeys, back to Poland will, for the most part be left for Chapter Six. That chapter will also look at questions of transnationalism, identity and belonging among the respondents, and how homecoming journeys have affected these.

nostalgia

Nostalgia’s etymological roots lie in Greek—the word is an amalgam of nostos, the return home; and algia, or longing (Boym 2001: 4; Chua 1994: 6). Although the term nostalgia is currently generally used to refer to a longing for a time gone by—whether one’s youth or a more distant age—when it was first coined it specifically referred to place, to one’s past home, or more accurately homeland, from which the nostalgic was removed not so much by time, but by space. The word (as well as, in a way, the condition) was invented by Swiss doctor Johanes Hofer in 1688, who diagnosed it as a medical ailment not unlike paranoia and characterised by a ‘mania of longing’ (Boym 2001: 3-4). Boym writes that another trait was ‘an amazing capacity for remembering sensations, tastes, sounds, smells, the minutiae and trivia of the lost paradise that those who remained home never noticed’ (2001: 4). And the best and most commonly prescribed cure for this ‘disease’: nostos, the return ‘home’.

Nostalgia may no longer exist as a medicalised condition, but as an element of human experience it continues to exert considerable influence. One only has to glance at the literature to note the proliferation of, and contemporary interest in, nostalgia, and its various manifestations (Ballinger 2003, Confino 2004, Davis 1979, Grainge 1999, West 2000, Coontz 1992, Browne and Ambrosetti 1993, Janover 2000, Jones 2001, Read 1996). In many ways it could be argued that a longing for places distant and times past is among the chief traits characterising the present, postmodern era, with its emphasis on not the steady march of time, and progress, but on ceaseless switching between past, present and future, or at least memories or other simulations of each of these. Nostalgia is not only about the past; it is lodged very firmly in the present through memory (without which it would be but the past), affecting the actions and discourse
in turn co-determining the future. Furthermore, nostalgia also defines in the mind of
the nostalgic the present time and place by counterpoising these against a remembered
or imagined idyllic past, or place. Thus memories of people and places left behind, as
with migration, can be considered of importance not only because of their relevance to
history, but also due to their contribution to the creation of the subjective present. I
suggest that it is through the gauzy filter of events and places long gone that the
immediate is viewed, defined, and understood.

If there is anyone who understands nostalgia, living seemingly perennially in its
defining shadow, it is the migrant (Akhtar 1999, Boym 2001). The homeland is just not
that easily left behind, and many migrants pine for it, or the versions of it they recall or
read about or see in media images.

**nostos: travelling back**

Though it has not received substantial attention in the social science literature on
migration (at least until relatively recently), travelling back into one’s homeland is an
episode the importance of which can by no means be overstated. The emotionally
charged, eye-opening nature of the event has, within the last fifteen or so years, been
aptly demonstrated by the burgeoning popular ‘travel’ literature and documentary
films tackling the subject (Zable 1991, Riemer 1993, Brett 1999). Typically, such works
involve middle-aged or older individuals either returning to lands they left long ago,
or attempting to rediscover their roots by travelling into territories once inhabited by
their parents, grandparents, or ancestors more remote still. Many involve returns to
lands ‘lost’ or irredeemably transformed by the carnage and upheaval of World War II,
particularly the Holocaust. Understandably, Poland pops up often as the setting for
such books or documentaries given that prior to War World II it was home to millions
of Jews, and as such among Holocaust survivors and their descendants it continues to
occupy an important place in their collective memory and imaginings. Such
experiences, full of tragedy and pathos, cannot be easily compared to the type of
returns contemplated here due to the unique circumstances surrounding Holocaust
survivor returns. As will be discussed, the return journeys ‘home’ for study
participants involves not only revisiting the past, but reconnecting with the Polish
present, especially the family members and friends resident there. For post-Holocaust
returns, though, the emphasis is on the absence of many of these contemporary links
(see Brenner 1999). Such returns tend to be very firmly rooted in the past, and in
memory, with the present primarily acting to conjure these past events up by
providing context and a trigger—the original landscape, albeit often changed, in which
the events were set. By contrast, for the group examined here, while childhood
memories triggered by landscapes encountered may play an important part of the return experience, the trips are also very much about discovering the contemporary Poland and its population.

The popularity of ‘return’ discourse can in part be traced to similar trends in tourism, where seeking out one’s ‘ancestral stomping grounds’ has become a notable branch of tourism (Coles and Timothy 2004), possibly among the latest manifestations of the ‘traveller’ quest for an ‘authenticity’ and a non-mainstream experience, though there is increasing evidence that this type of travel is, too, becoming institutionalised, thanks to an ever-malleable tourism industry (cf. Basu 2001, 2004). ‘Returnees’ interviewed for this thesis can also be categorised as being part of this return tourism seeing that the desire to rekindle links with family and heritage are key factors contributing to return travel. However, past exposure to the homeland and continuing potent family links with it suggests experiences different from that of travels inspired by more remote family heritage connections. Return trips home by young migrants, and also young members of the second generation (see Baldassar 2001: 249-91), thus should perhaps be considered quite apart from family heritage type tourism more generally; as this and following chapters will outline, the migrant returns contemplated here are not just about making the ephemeral past come to life, but are very much about engaging with a parallel contemporary world temporarily blanked out, rekindling neglected transnational links, and shifting identity and ideas of ‘home’.

Study participants can be divided into two groups: those who went back to Poland for the first time, generally accompanied by one or more parents; and those (the majority) whose first trip back was around or above the age of eighteen and entirely or largely independent. With one notable exception, all those who went back for the first time as children travelled again as adults. Given this, and given the different nature of adult-age as opposed to accompanied minor travel, this thesis will mainly concentrate on those trips undertaken in adulthood or the late teenage years.

Predictably, travelling back to Poland was more daunting, and a more momentous and adventurous occasion, the more time that had lapsed between migration or the last trip back (had there been any). Other factors influencing feelings about the importance and experience of the trip included whether or not the respondent travelled independently or was accompanied by parents, siblings or partners; age at migration; age at time of trip; length and timing of trip; the number of times the respondent had gone back; gender; and Polish language proficiency.

Those that travelled back to Poland for the first time as accompanied children generally did so in the early to mid 1990s. Only one individual travelled prior to the
collapse of Polish communism in 1989. This reflects the situation in the Polish émigré community of Australia as a whole, where travel back to Poland only really became the common phenomenon it is today after communism crumbled and travel to and around Poland became easier. Prior to 1989 return journeys were comparatively sporadic, though they did take place, especially among the earlier-wave migrants. In the 1980s especially returning Polish (usually postwar) migrants reached legendary status as they visited Poland in and, armed with hard currency, briefly lived a life of spendthrift exuberance local Poles—but also the very same migrants while in Australia—could only dream of. This led to a stereotyped image of Polish émigrés which continues to pervade Polish society: it is commonly assumed that they have all 'made it', or at least should have. The advent of Polish free market capitalism means that the favourable foreign exchange rates that allowed this to happen are long gone, though the myth of the wealthy, successful Polish émigré returned is far from dead. The expectation of success is still there; indeed, this expectation may be responsible for a lot of adult migrants refusing to return, or fearing it. My parents have never for example journeyed back, and I suspect the fear of not living up to the stereotype of the successful émigré plays an important part in this lack of return on their part. Some of the interviewees told similar stories, with several parents (quite in contrast to their children) not being keen on returning 'home' anytime soon.

Another reason for so few in the study group returning prior to 1989 or in the early post-communist period was that most of the families involved had not yet established themselves in Australia well enough to be able to afford the money and time to travel back. Unless urgent family business necessitated it, travel back to Poland was for many years following migration for the majority a luxury. At least initially, setting up life in Australia was an overwhelming priority. In many cases it was actually the children who travelled back first, uneasily adopting the role of family 'ambassadors'.

Usually the first independent trip took place within one or two years of the conclusion of secondary education, when the individual was deemed old enough to travel independently, and the (southern hemisphere) summer break was (finally, after many years of inadequately short school vacations) of sufficient duration to allow a comfortable trip that was cost-effective and permitted enough time to visit all family members and various sites of interest. Another important factor for the timing of such trips was that by this stage many families had been in Australia long enough to afford to send someone over. Sons or daughters were a natural choice to go, not only because school and/or university holidays afforded them more time, but also because there was a feeling that children were losing the Polish language and ties to Poland and these perhaps needed to be rejuvenated. By the late teenage years there might also
have developed an interest in one's identity, extended family and heritage, by then
distant enough to be intriguing. Memory and nostalgia, and the desire to rediscover
lands familiar and alien at the same time, also played a crucial part.

Post-school, many respondents were also able to take advantage of their own financial
resources rather than those of parents alone, and in some instances it was these
personal funds that financed the first adult trip. Subsequent trips were all largely or
entirely self-financed.

Finally, it may be relevant to examine the homecoming trips of young Polish-
Australians not in a vacuum, or in the context of diaspora transnationalism, but to look
at the phenomenon in light of even broader trends apparent in the host society. While
it is easy, and tempting, to identify 1.5 or second generation migrants' homecoming
journeys, and their transnationalism, as unique, the trips are in a way similar to the
potential role of the Australian ritual of the coming of age first independent trip abroad
should not be ignored. This phenomenon sees countless young Australians travel
abroad, whether on brief jaunts to SE Asia, packaged tourism of Europe, or more
extended 'backpacking' or working holidays. It is possible that for young Polish
immigrants trips back to Poland are motivated by similar factors, except that Poland is
chosen ahead of other destinations because it is relatively easy, and because the family
expects it.

Virtually all respondents spoke of the pressure of having to travel to Poland ahead of
anywhere on a first overseas trip, and once there, there was an obligation to visit
everyone, even those remotely related or acquainted with one's family. Even on
subsequent travels, I was told, it was difficult to travel anywhere in the world within
several thousand miles of Poland without also visiting Poland on that trip. So travel to
Poland, if there was any overseas travel to take place at all, seems among young
Polish-Australians to have been a foregone conclusion. 'Homeland travel' among the
young may be becoming quite a trend—just not a particularly well documented one.

As will be seen throughout the remainder of this chapter, and thesis, the importance of
travelling back for the development of the ethnic identities of those respondents that
did return cannot be emphasised enough. Although these experiences varied from
person to person, for all involved there was an intense reawakening of interest in their
family and heritage, in the Polish language and culture, and in Poland itself—at least in
the short term. In subsequent chapters it will be demonstrated how in the long run the
issue of identity was an altogether different, and much more complicated, story. The
feelings of 'Polishness' awakened upon initial travel to Poland in the late
adolescent/early adult period were to a certain extent the opposite of what most
participants had experienced between the period of migration and young adult return, when they displayed little interest in Poland or Polish culture and, seemingly, were rapidly assimilating into the Australian mainstream.

the trip

As was hinted earlier, and as will be demonstrated throughout the remainder of the thesis, trips 'home', and in particular the first adulthood trip, were emotional, highly important experiences that forever transformed the migrant’s relationship to the homeland, and to ancestry and feelings of identity and belonging. Where, prior to the return, interest in Poland and the Polish language and culture was generally negligible, except by way of the fragmented images available through memory, family and nostalgia, the return made Poland more tangible and helped to rejuvenate previously rapidly diminishing transnational links (the individual’s and also their family’s) with the homeland. The return permitted old, faded memories and the people and places associated with these to be revisited and reinforced, in the process also creating a whole new swathe of fresh memories and homeland images which would redefine Poland in the travelling migrant’s mind—and also potentially within the minds of those Australian-based family members and acquaintances with whom the individual verbally—and photographically—shared their experiences. In addition—and, in the short term, perhaps most importantly—though at first daunting the trips were a lot of fun. Not only were the relatives and places of youth rediscovered, and ‘Polishness’ rekindled, but the travel and relative independence and unprecedented attention, all in a country foreign and familiar at the same time, made for what was in most instances a thoroughly enjoyable experience that itself subsequently became the focus of nostalgic longing.

seasonality

Most trips, and especially most first late teenage/early adulthood trips, took place in the Polish winter. Winter in Poland is a time of predominantly cold, cloudy weather—sometimes sunny, sometimes snowy, but generally just grey and miserable, or at least that is usually how Poles in Poland see it. Respondents reported relatives constantly complaining about the weather and wondering why their guests had come at the ‘worst time of the year’ instead of summer. It seemed that Poles thought any time of year other than summer that Australians relatives travelled in was the ‘worst part of the year’, whether they came in autumn, winter or spring. It became clear to returnees, from relatives’ accounts, that Poles in Poland adore the summer, which they fete and await eagerly, seemingly dismissing the other seasons even though they may be just as—if not more—characteristic of Poland:
Everyone says that Poland [in the summer] is really nice and stuff but we just don’t have that image in our heads I guess because of always going in winter and stuff.

I only ever went back in winter as well and everyone would say ‘come in summer, why are you always coming in winter for?’

Respondents often had no choice but to travel in the winter, as this time coincided with the Australian summer holidays. Travel at any other time of year, while still at school or university, was just impractical because official breaks were considered too short. Two or three weeks was simply insufficient time to spend in Poland given the expense of such a trip and the necessity of visiting so many (often scattered) relatives. A few interviewees did, however, travel in summer. Most of those that returned for the first time in the summer did so because they travelled with one or more parents and their parents insisted on summer travel only. Such travel often required their travelling children to take extra time off school, or university. Interestingly, those few who travelled initially as children in the summer, when making subsequent adulthood trips went almost exclusively in the summer. Having experienced summertime return, it is as if they were unable to even entertain the thought of going in the wintertime. Return for them became associated with the summer, and with escaping the Australian winter.

Poland looks and feels completely different in summer than it does in winter. As a result, the time of travel clearly has the potential to exert significant influence on the return experience, and on the images of Poland the returnee would take back to Australia with her or himself. Certainly, some respondents travelled initially in the winter but subsequently at least once returned in the warm season, when the days were long, the sun shining and the trees far from bare. Judging by their accounts, it was not only an entirely different experience, but an entirely different country.

Winter was frequently discussed in terms such as these:

I think both of us only ever went in winter, so yeah for me ... [Poland is associated with] cold, and either rain or snow, and also in some parts just really grey, a lot of the cities ...

[What shocked me most was that] it got dark so early! It was about three o’clock in the afternoon and it was dark ... it was depressing.

Whereas descriptions of summer tended to be a lot more positive, especially where the returnee had previously returned in the winter:

[Returning a second time,] nothing was shocking anymore, nothing was surprising. Apart from the change of season—seeing Poland dressed in green as opposed to
dressed in ... grey. Um, it was a very nice time, in fact. Poles always told me the 'visit in the summer—it makes a much better impression on you'.

Some respondents also spoke of the practical advantages of traveling in summer:

My parents have a policy of never going back in winter because it’s—they just say it’s too cold and we don’t have the clothing, or we don’t want to invest in stuff that we’ll never wear again in Australia. In a way, practically it makes sense, because the days are so short and there’s no point going outside unless you want to ski because it’s so cold [...] I love the snow and I love that whole ambience of winter in Poland, but I mean if I had six months I’d make sure I was there for winter, but if you have three weeks and you’re working or studying and you really want to just see as much as possible and as many people ... it does make it difficult to travel. And in practical terms, it’s snow and wet, and you’ve got light from ten to three, and that’s it, and you really just want to stay inside.

Some of those who had only ever travelled in the winter expressed interest in next traveling in summer:

No, I definitely want to go in summer next time ... People always told me: ‘you must come in summer next time! It’s beautiful’ ...

Though it is tempting to generalise and state that summer made for more enjoyable visits that left a greater positive impression, it is doubtful that this was necessarily the case. Summer may have afforded more outdoor activities, and a landscape that was warm and verdant, rather than cold, bare and grey, but winter also had its attractions too. In part this probably had to do with the fact that respondents were coming from a relatively warm climate where truly cold, snowy winters were all but unknown, with the kind of bare, subdued vistas typifying the Polish winter landscape being similarly rare:

I caught the Polish winter—and it was a typical ... ugly winter—not very nice at all. Which didn’t matter at all to me—I was looking forward to it—I had not seen winter since one jaunt to the Snowy Mountains in 1991. I missed that season.

Compared with Australia, a wintry Poland seemed exotic, containing images that may not have been witnessed since emigration. Winter in Poland, for all its discomforts, was heavily imbued with memory and nostalgia. Summer could also be experienced in Australia (albeit the heat was more extreme, and the sunlight harsher). Winter, and also spring and autumn, were by contrast quite distinct, and special.

Another factor working against the prospect of wintertime trips being less enjoyable or otherwise successful than summer ones is oppositional seasonality between the
respondents' two homelands. At the time of the Australian summer holiday season the heat and humidity can be stifling. Given such conditions, travel to a northern hemisphere country such as Poland was for many a revelation, a welcome respite from the long, hot Australian summer. Similarly the mild Polish summer offered escape from the Australian winter, though the extremes involved would clearly be less pronounced.

Travel to Poland in the northern winter usually centred on Christmas and New Year's festivities. This was a period of extended family get togethers and celebrations without a summertime equivalent, and featured prominently in the accounts and photographs of those who travelled in the winter. The importance of celebrating Christmas in Poland was accentuated by a number of factors. These included the large size of the family gatherings involved in celebrations, when compared with Christmas in Australia, where the number of relatives involved was usually relatively small. These gatherings included many close relatives, including grandparents and cousins, who had not been seen for a very long time, making the occasion all the more special. But perhaps most importantly, a Polish Christmas harked back to the 'traditional' Christmases of childhood: it was cold, dark and there was snow outside; there was lots of traditional Polish Christmas food (and given the weather such feasts actually made sense); there were carollers about; one could trudge with relatives through the snow to pasterka, the midnight mass; the opłatek (holy wafer) could be broken with family members not seen for perhaps a decade. This was at long last a 'real' Christmas, the way it once was and was meant to be (and not only, incidentally, according to memory or family lore, but also the dominant Christmas tropes of the Western world; witness for instance the restaging by some in Australia of Christmas celebrations in June or July for that sought-after authentic 'Christmas' feel). Certainly the experience was very different from the Christmas respondents lived through in Australia. In terms of environmental context a much greater contrast is difficult to imagine. The fact that respondents lived in a country where the seasons were the opposite of what they were in Poland, as opposed to countries with corresponding seasons, or a similar climate, might have had a significant effect on the timing of travel and on the way the various seasons were viewed. (For Polish-born immigrants to Canada, the United States or the UK, travel in the northern summer would have been easier, since this corresponded with the traditional holiday period there. Most inhabitants of such countries would also have been well acquainted with the severe, dark winters of higher latitudes, limiting therefore the exoticism of travel to Poland at that time of the year)
Trips back to Poland, especially initial ones, tended to follow an approximate template. The correlation between the course and experience of the trip of the different respondents is at times quite amazing, though there is more marked digression during the trip's latter stages, and also on subsequent journeys.

Arguably the most important and emotionally charged stage of the trip was arrival and the period immediately following it. This was clearly especially the case if this was the first journey back for a long time—for most respondents, prior to the first journey back, Poland had essentially become a land from which they had become estranged:

Oh, absolutely it was an emotional time. The adrenaline, you know, was ... very high. The initial shock, as well. It was a very emotional experience for me to return to all the places of my childhood—and I was old enough to remember them—I knew most of my hometown—it was in my head—to the extent that I had no problems moving around the town. I remember addresses of people, where they lived, etc. [...] Meeting with everybody, and then saying goodbye to them [at the end]—it was a highly emotional experience.

Family members, too, had become but a distant memory—more so than was the case for those who migrated at an older age, for example the interviewees' parents, whose memories were more immediate and numerous, and who may have maintained greater links with relatives through letters and phone calls. Polish language skills, too, had for many study participants by the time of travel been significantly diminished, as had their knowledge of Poland and its culture. Given this, and especially in instances where returnees were travelling by themselves, arrival was a very daunting experience. Several respondents reported being extremely nervous on the plane trip into Poland, fearful of the unknown or the only vaguely familiar.

Arrival was in almost all instances by way of Warsaw airport (the sole exception involved overland travel from Germany). This was the gateway through which reunion, with the homeland and (selected) family members alike, occurred:

My uncle from Poznan picked me up [from the airport]. He took the train ... to Warsaw. And it's a good thing he did, because I was so disoriented that—I'm not sure if I could have found my way around. I was still rather young—I was 17. So he came over and ... and he took me to Poznan.

First impressions—an unattractive arrivals terminal and surly staff in military uniforms—were not necessarily positive (even if they contained nostalgic value, harking back to a premigration past). On arrival, the traveller was lifted out of an
everyday existence where Polish was a marginal tongue, readily modifiable through the inclusion of English loanwords and sentences, and dropped into a world where unadulterated Polish, spoken in a harsh and fairly homogeneous accent, was the lingua franca, and those who did not speak it seamlessly stuck out like a sore thumb. It was an uncomfortable experience, and not a particularly favourable introduction to Poland—the land from which the travellers hailed and to which they thought they at least partly belonged, yet which at first not only felt alien, but the returnees themselves were made to feel as strangers within it.

Fear was followed by a period of excitement once all the formalities concluded and those relatives who had come to ferry the traveller from the airport were seen and, inevitably, embraced. In most instances, on the first trip back these relatives had not been seen for close to, or even in excess of, a decade and were known more readily through family stories and photographs than memory. Understandably, it was an overwhelming experience.

Following a drive (in some cases a train ride) of one to over four hours, respondents were taken to the homes of the first of their many hosts. These initial host families were often in the respondents’ ‘hometowns’, the cities or towns where respondents had resided for at least a part of their lives in Poland. At other times the destination was other than the hometown of old, especially where there were no longer any relatives there. Which of the relatives had the ‘privilege’ of hosting their ‘Australian’ guest or guests first tended to be a source of some tension, being determined to an extent by, and in turn determining, inter and intra family hierarchy. The victors were generally either grandparents—if they were still alive and able—or those aunts or uncles or cousins most capable of travelling to Warsaw to collect the guest/s, and who were equipped also with enough resources, and time, to make ‘good hosts’. Being a good, generous host is an important virtue in Polish culture, with the idea being that no expense would be spared to show the guest (usually the hosts’ version of) a good, relaxed time.

There were obligations implicit in being a guest too; these included always happily accepting the hosts’ offerings, even if not particularly desired. To say no to offerings of tea, food or alcohol was considered somewhat of an affront; the best strategy was just to nod and say yes to everything. As will be discussed in the next section, this system of mutual host-guest obligations (where hosts prided themselves in being great hosts, but also expected guests to act as good, appreciative guests) exacerbated by the fact that the guest had travelled from so far away and was seldom seen, was a core driving factor behind much of the experience of travelling back to Poland.
family, friends, and obligation

Returnees remained with the first of the host families for varying periods of time, dependent largely on the total length of the trip, but generally lasting one to two weeks, sometimes even longer. From this first host household the returnee moved on to others, under the expectation that time would be fairly evenly divided between the different family branches, and that the visitors got to spend at least some quality time with each related household. Usually this meant spending at least one night in that family’s home.

There was in fact rivalry among the relatives of returning respondents, with different households competing against one another as to who would host their Australian visitor’s first, next, or for the longest period of time. If it was deemed that more time was spent with one family compared to another, respondents described the resultant feelings of resentment, often accompanied by ‘guilt tripping’, among those who felt disadvantaged. Once in Poland everyone who was not too distantly related and living had to be visited. Generally, seeing relatives (especially close ones, like grandparents, aunts and uncles) was not enough—you had to be a proper guest in their home, which usually meant staying with them for at least a night. Old family acquaintances, including ex-work colleagues, too, anticipated contact; though the expectations they held were not as great as those of relatives (hierarchically, they were lower down), they too often wanted respondents to stay in their homes, especially where they lived in places where no alternative accommodation—i.e. relatives resident in the local area—existed. Some of the people who the returnees had to visit were so distantly connected they were not known or remembered by the returnee:

[There were] so many people who knew something about you ... it was bizarre to be in the hot seat, in a way. People would go: ‘Oh, I remember when you were …’, or ‘I’ve seen photos of you’, and I would have no idea who they were, though I know they were somehow related.

A big taboo was staying in a hotel or hostel in a place where relatives or acquaintances lived, however distant or tenuous the links to the traveller, regardless of the prospective hosts’ economic circumstances or living conditions:

My sister and I [thought about staying in hotels] when we had a couple of weeks just on our own, travelling, but it’s just—as soon as you tell someone that you’re going somewhere, they immediately hook you up—they call their friend or some other relative and say ‘this person’s coming, pick them up from here’ and ... you’re already booked in for a three day tour of some crazy town.
The worst thing a returnee could do was ignore a part of the extended family, or not make a concerted effort to contact and visit old acquaintances. Those who were ignored felt slighted and sometimes these led to grudges, or other recriminations such as terse words from returnees’ parents if they were informed of someone deemed important being left off the itinerary. Often it would be the parents who (via telephone) insisted on particular visits, these being important to the maintenance of family and friendship networks. With friends, the only way out was not to tell them or anyone who might tell them that you’re coming and hope that you didn’t bump into them on the street, though with family this was clearly impossible. Given all this, there were significant obligations to visit as many relatives and family friends and the places in which they lived as was humanly possible within the confines of the trip.

Another factor to consider was rapid growth in the size of the extended family, which meant that upon each return more and more households had to be visited:

I think I now have—five cousins who’ve already had children, who’ve already moved out of the family homes, and so—the number of households is growing exponentially, and the next time I’m in Poland I’ll have to visit a lot more places.

Some returnees also mentioned the almost obligatory reciprocal gift giving, an exchange between guest/s and host/s. Carrying gifts for the extended family was described as being an initiative of the returnee’s parents. Largely due to practicalities, the returnees were not particularly enthusiastic about this:

[On the first trip] I carried—half my luggage at least, was gifts. It was just amazing—my mother bought presents for everybody. On subsequent trips I fought her off, I refused to take any more shit to Poland. Little souvenirs, everybody in the family had to get something—pillows for the aunts and shirts for the male cousins, and sweaters for the female cousins, it was huge—I have no idea how on earth I got through with all that baggage. Equally, I also came back with a shitload of stuff, because obviously everybody wanted to give a gift. We never knew when we’d see each other again, so—everybody wanted to give everything to everybody back in Australia.

Poland being a country which has witnessed significant internal migration within the last sixty years, the extended families of respondents were often dispersed throughout different parts of the country; it was almost unheard of for all relatives and family friends to be concentrated in a single city or region of the country only. (Such mobility could also be partly explained by the relatively educated, middle-class nature of the Solidarity wave of emigration) This meant that returnees covered large tracts of territory, travelling to many cities, towns and villages, as part of the visit of greater family and friendship networks. The time spent at each destination was usually quite
substantial, allowing returnees to come to know each place visited fairly well—especially in the smaller places, by the end boredom tended to set in as the (limited) sites of interest were one by one exhausted and daily routines became repetitious.

**travel**

Considerable travel within Poland was accomplished at only relatively minor cost to the traveler: because the returnee was a guest, a rare visitor, and also young, the long succession of hosts, related or not, covered much of the costs, travel between hosts' hometowns—if it was by public transport—being among the few exceptions. As the hosts attempted to show their guests a good time, trying their hardest to be 'good hosts', and hence to be thought of favourably not only by the returnee but also by his or her family back in Australia, the money and time dedicated to the guest/s could often be substantial. Hosting visitors from overseas involved many trips to see local sights, to dine out and drink in local restaurants and pubs, as well as excursions much further afield, to sites deemed worthy of visiting by the guest family.

Usually these were places considered of scenic or historical (or perhaps family) interest in the traditional sense: castles, palaces, forests, rivers and lakes or mountains, or cities or towns with significant historical or tourist value. The kind of attractions that returnees were taken to reveal what Poles in Poland—or at least individual host families—considered to be sites of special significance, extraordinary places worth visiting. Whether, however, such places are representative of Poland as a whole, or would convey an image of Poland that matched everyday reality or even returnees' perceptions, is debatable. Many respondents reported suffering something of a sensory overload as relatives took them to countless churches and museums that the hosts thought were of interest, and perhaps they were in moderation, but there were only so many old buildings and paintings that a young visitor could see before boredom set it. One returnee even codified her feelings into a saying, 'Not another bloody church!', which she would repeat internally when frustrated by relatives' choice of sightseeing destinations. The quip eventually grew to become an ongoing joke between her and her brother back in Australia, to whom she spoke by phone, who was subject to similar experiences on previous return trips and thus only too well understood her annoyance.

The family tourist trail, it should be pointed out, changed slightly with the seasons. In the cooler parts of the year the emphasis was mainly on indoor-dominant sites and recreation, and the country's cities and towns in general. Summer, the weather being warmer, the hours of daylight much longer, and the relatives equipped with more free time, was more likely to involve more wide ranging travel, and a focus on outdoor recreation, with more trips to rural areas and various natural attractions such as the
Baltic coast, the Mazurian Lakes and Tatra Mountains. In particular, cousins or other relatives close to the respondents’ own age were more likely to travel with the returnee in the summer, this being a time of school and university vacations, and a tradition of extensive summertime travel among the young people of Poland.

Apart from staying with relatives in their home cities and towns and embarking with them on daytrips, many respondents also engaged in some independent travel. This was more likely to occur if the returnee was travelling with others, for instance siblings, parents, partners, or if they met up with travelling friends from Australia (or, sometimes, elsewhere in Europe) for the purpose of travel around Poland. Independent travel was also more likely to take place toward the end of the stay in Poland, when returnees’ patience for staying with relatives was all but exhausted, and, especially, on subsequent trips into Poland, when the proportion of non-family travel to staying with relatives increased (see Chapter Six). With each trip that followed the first, there was an increasingly pronounced emphasis on seeing more of Poland, compared with spending time with relatives and letting them act as tourist guides.

travel abroad

Trips to Poland were often combined with travel to other countries. These included countries visited on the way to, or from, Poland—including for instance Australia, Great Britain, Greece, and Italy—as well as countries visited (sometimes independently and sometimes with relatives) from within Poland. The latter included nations neighbouring Poland, such as Lithuania, Germany, Ukraine, Czech Republic and Slovakia, and also more distant but still relatively accessible destinations such as Switzerland, northern Italy, Austria, Greece, Russia and France. Interestingly, one respondent even visited the United States, Canada and Japan en route to Poland, while making his first return visit to the country (along with his parents):

I guess the main reason was going to Poland, but ... actually it turned out that it was cheaper for us to get round the world tickets rather than return, so that time on the way we stopped over in ... Los Angeles, then it was New York ... then we visited a couple of cities in the states—Washington, Philadelphia—then we flew to Toronto, Paris, Warsaw, then coming back through Tokyo. So it was like a whole bigger trip at the end of the day.

Amazingly, this whole trip only lasted three weeks, of which an intensive one week was spent in Poland. However, this account stood out from all others—all other respondents, on their first trip in particular, prioritised spending time in Poland to a far greater extent. These side trips to third countries not only added further to the diversity and enjoyment of the entire homecoming journey, but seemed to act as
yardsticks against which Poland and returnees' experiences in Poland could be measured; conversely, experiences in Poland led to the third countries themselves being viewed through a kind of filter, where people, landscapes and cities were constantly compared with (favourably or unfavourably, but generally the former) with those in the 'homeland' and, upon travel to Poland again, vice versa.

The following are examples of how respondents spoke of their side trips to western Europe and the way in which these might have helped them view Poland:

I think the cities are also a lot—the places we went to I think are a lot more—they seemed a lot more modern and cosmopolitan than in Poland, ... yeah, there's definitely this kind of bleak outlook in a lot of Polish people that you don't find so much of in other European cities.

And I think the main thing also is you don't have those—I don't know whether they were all built during the communist period, but all those, you know, blocks of apartments that are almost everywhere—we didn't see so many of those.

But yeah, certainly, [in Germany,] like in Austria ... everything was really sparkling, and just really well maintained.

Trips to Poland combining travel abroad tended to be especially common on subsequent journeys. For many Poland became not just a lone or primary destination, but a steppingstone to other nearby countries. In these countries the respondent tread a more traditional tourist path, one in which one’s migrant background and the unstable identity issues associated with these became less relevant:

Well ... before I actually got to Poland I was in Rome—I was in Rome again when leaving—so that was my first taste of Western Europe. And it had made a huge impression on me. I absolutely loved it. Rome is this huge, sprawling, crowded metropolis. The entire place looks basically like one old town, and I absolutely loved exploring there. I could—I could have stayed for much longer. Then, after coming back from Russia, I went to Prague. Also, while in Russia I was in Estonia ... then I went to Austria through Germany for five days of skiing, so—my experience was moving beyond Poland to see other parts of Europe ... I think that's a personal experience—it has really nothing to do with migrant experience. I was a student, I was a uni student, making his first backpacking forays, if you like, and—also a European by heritage—so I was finally discovering the civilisation which I had come from. And I fell in love with travel and I've travelled ever since.

Another returnee, Aleksandra, also spoke of visits to third countries enabling her to compare Poland to the Western European countries visited:
We travelled to Italy and France and all these places before going to Poland, and I think ... that gave us a context for experiencing Poland as part of Europe. Because we could see that Poland in a way had changed to such a degree that it was ... just like many other places. And I felt that quite a lot, in 2000 especially. Going to Warsaw I felt that—because I had travelled for three months throughout Europe, and ... when in '96 this was a positive feeling, OK, look, Poland's finally made it, it's got the shops, stock in the shops, it's got some colour. It's not a big grey, drab concrete jungle, it actually looks like a Western country, but with much better architecture [laugh], and much more interesting. It kind of looks like it's made it. But in 2000 I felt like ... but this is only specifically Warsaw ... it had almost sold out to the overseas market, and I saw all the hamburger joints, and all those kind of multinational companies had already installed themselves there ... And I just felt like—it lost a sense of being Polish, because it was just absolutely consumed by all the imported goods and all the imported ideas and shops and ... and I didn't like that. And everyone was really happy that it was such great centre, and that German businessmen come to Warsaw for a business deals here, and Americans or whatever.

While on initial visits Aleksandra approved of Westernisation in Poland, by the time of the 2000 trip she thought Poland was becoming too much like the West, becoming decreasingly distinguishable from it.

In some instances participants actually professed feeling more comfortable in these 'third' countries they travelled through than they did in either of their two 'home' countries, Poland and Australia. This probably had at least partly to do with the different nature of travel when abroad. In both Australia and Poland for Polish-born Australians identity issues were at play: individuals often grappled with who they exactly were, where they belonged more, and often others made these decisions for them. In Australia others marked them as not 'really' Australian, while in Poland they were identified by locals as not 'really' Polish, but as Australians. When travelling through third countries, by comparison, such dilemmas did not apply. There, the traveller was obviously an outsider; he or she knew their place and did not waste time thinking about identity, belonging and dislocation. Instead, they could just enjoy themselves as any other tourist, and if anyone inquired about their nationality they could choose an identity that suited the occasion, without it being chosen for them. Such fluctuations in respondents' feelings of identity and belonging, and their responses to others' attitudes to these, will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Six.
experiencing and evaluating return

This section examines several key aspects of the return experience, including family, food and drink, celebration, freedom, peers, language, and favourite and least favourite aspects of the trip. These are all themes which respondents frequently brought up in interviews. The final part of this section also looks at what returnees commonly described as the best parts of the experience of return, as well as the worst.

family

Family undeniably played a key part in the return journey 'home'. Being reunited, and bonding, with the extended family—many members of which may not have been met for a very long time, if at all—was arguably the most important element of the return experience, and certainly among the primary factors initiating, and driving, travelling back. The accounts of returnees suggest that the importance of family was especially paramount on the first journey back, its influence diminishing with each subsequent trip. Later trips became increasingly about seeing Poland (and also nearby countries) rather than hanging out with, and being feted by, aunts, uncles and grandparents. Similarly, family was more important at the beginning of each trip compared with its later stages, when the veneer and novelty of family wore off, routines became increasingly boring and the returnee pined for more variety and independence. Of course, sometimes family overexposure affected the other side also: the more the returnee returned, and the more host families saw of him or her, the less likely they were to be enamoured as exoticism declined and the guest became more and more like any other (flawed) relative.

Visiting family could sometimes be a significant source of tension, stress and resentment. This tended to occur after already spending a period of time in Poland. Perhaps understandably, not all of the family members scattered throughout Poland were equally liked by each respondent. Some relatives were described as quite annoying, and staying with these was not always necessarily viewed as positive. Though it might have been best to avoid them, or to minimise time spent with them, this was generally considered impossible if not inconceivable: as mentioned earlier, everyone had to be visited. There was virtually no way out.

Several respondents complained that this was the worst aspect of travelling back to Poland. Zosia was one of them:

It was just so tiring going from place to place and ... but also not really having much choice in what you're doing and everything. I know [my sister] got the absolute shits with that. Dad kept going on how there's the expectation that if you come all the way...
from Australia you’re gonna visit certain people and they’ll get really upset if you don’t.

Although they would have liked to, they could not just drop in for a brief but intense period, perhaps to or from other destinations, visiting a select few households only. Such behaviour would have caused outrage among those individuals who were bypassed, if they found out.

One interviewee, Tomek, however, did manage a daring solution to this particular dilemma: on his second trip back he travelled to Poland and did not visit anyone: not a single relative or friend, completely turning his back on the burdensome obligation system of which most spoke. He simply stayed in hotels in cities where no relatives of his lived and hoped he would not bump into anyone that might recognise him and report the encounter to other kin. Of course, his parents, too, had to be in on this audacious plan and could not breathe a word of his presence to anyone in Poland. The trip—short, intense, fun and family free—was according to Tomek an incredible success and he left the country with few regrets. None of the other respondents attempted anything similar, though several admitted to thinking about such a scheme.

**food, tea and alcohol**

Among the most common themes to emerge from respondents’ accounts of travelling back to Poland had to do with eating and drinking or, more accurately, the excessive consumption of food, alcohol, even tea:

> So that’s the story ... we’d eat all day ... It was a cycle—you’d wake up, have breakfast, sit around the table, have some tea, wash up, start making dinner ... and it was just like that ALL day ...

Even if you go and visit not only family members, but friends, the general idea was, you know, you stop over for a tea, and then tea becomes a snack, and a snack changes over to dinner, and dinner time merges with supper, and obviously during the whole thing there’s drinks. I guess if anything that can be frustrating or annoying, because [...] your whole schedule, all the things you had planned, straight away sort of blows up.

This emphasis on eating and drinking large amounts of food and alcohol was closely tied to the sometimes fawning Polish hospitality—under the unwritten regulations of which the more food is offered, accepted and speedily consumed, the greater is the host’s success. The enthusiastic consumption of that which is offered also helps to confer on the guest that status of a ‘good guest’ (a ‘poor guest’ would be one that did not readily accept generous offerings of food and drink, or who complained or was
otherwise less than enthusiastic about what was on the table). Other factors that seemed to contribute to discomfort included traditional Polish cuisine and drinking habits, which were often at odds with what respondents had been used to in Australia.

Food and drink were reported sometimes as highly positive and on other occasions as negative—often by the same individuals. As guests, returnees could expect sequences of impressive, usually traditionally and laboriously prepared Polish meals which in Australia they may have only eaten on the most special of occasions, and even then sometimes in modified form. Sometimes the hosts would even ask the visitor what their favourite meals were, and prepare them. Grandparents in particular proved very obliging in this regard. The entire journey was in some ways a huge gastronomic extravaganza, a culinary trip ‘down memory lane’ to the smells and tastes of childhood, of Poland. But the picture was not always so rosy, and even if it at first appeared that way, overindulgence and pushy hosts tended to dampen the experience somewhat:

I like to see these people, but then they overfeed you—another major problem. Especially the first time I went back, and we had that complex timetable, so my mum would try to fit in three visits in a day, and every person would put on the most elaborate banquet in the world. And you’re just like ... I mean I don’t eat a lot generally, but to ... to have a little bit at one place was enough for, but then to go to the next place, and then another one—I just couldn’t stand it, no matter how gorgeous they looked. But in Poland you can’t refuse the food, otherwise, you known, they’re going to get very offended. So we were literally stuffing our faces ... we just couldn’t ... And so the whole enjoyment of being with people—it’s eroded, because you’re really forcing yourself to eat these vast quantities of food. It’s almost like the most important thing—if you like them you’re going to eat their food, and you’re going to eat lots of it. And if you don’t like them, then you can refuse them ... it’s very bad ... and no one understands. ‘Oh yes! Just a little bit—but you’ve got to try this and this and this ...’ and then you’re quite full before you know it. So they’re a bit full on, especially family.

Prominent gripes included the fattiness and huge portions of much family cooking (especially as practiced by older generations), as generally respondents were accustomed to eating, in Australia, a far leaner, less meaty diet; the constant pressure to eat as much as humanly possible, sometimes even more, for to reject a second helping or not ‘eat till you drop’ could cause grave offence; and the frequency and unusual timing of meals. In Poland the main meal of the day, obiad, is normally eaten around 3 or 4pm, and this is followed by a smaller supper (kolacja) at 7pm or later. All meals are large, and almost all involve the seemingly obligatory inclusion of meat—all of this proving too much for some, particularly those stuck with retired grandparents.
ever eager to please, cook, and make their grandchildren eat. The short periods between obiad and kolacja, and the seemingly perpetual offerings of snacks and tea (which in Poland never seems to stop flowing) in between meals, proved a bit too much for many visitors. Getting out of the hosts’ house and sightseeing—and, later on, independent travel—offered the only (albeit temporary) respite.

Three respondents had a particularly difficult time when it came to food. They were vegetarian—a relative rarity in Poland, and difficult for hosts to handle given the prominence of meat in Polish cooking. They found eating difficult, though reported it being more difficult on their host families, who were frustrated by their inability to know what food to offer their guest/s. Many comments were made by desperate relatives: ‘You mean you don’t eat meat and potatoes, what are you doing?’ ‘What about ham? That’s not really meat ... Or chicken? But surely you can eat fish ...’ relatives are reported to have pleaded. However, the general negative predisposition to vegetarianism was not necessarily universal:

Yeah, once they pushed you to no end about it ... and made jokes about it ... but some people were really cool about it ... like dziadek [grandfather] on mum’s side was like, ‘great, I know this health food store just down the road, they have tofu and all these ... awesome vegie burgers and great things ... so some people were more open to it than others ... But most people weren’t very open to it ... they were saying things like, ‘Oh, here’s some lettuce leaves’.

Another element of the experience of return to recur regularly in interviewees’ accounts is alcohol. Returnees being guests, their presence in a household a rare and celebrated event, they were expected to drink sometimes copious amounts of alcohol, especially vodka. Drinking vodka in the evening, with a meal, snacks, or by itself, is an integral component of entertaining in the Polish household, and participation is considered all but compulsory. The pressure is especially great on males, who are expected to drink a lot. Not keeping up with everyone else in drinking can be looked down upon; unless an individual is already well and truly drunk, declining an offer of alcohol is another social faux pas capable of causing offence to the host. Women are, however, partially excused, and can decline or drink small amounts only, though a few female respondents still reported feeling under pressure to consume alcohol, despite not really wanting to. Many of the returnees, (in part probably because of their young age upon initial visits), were not particularly used to drinking, or at least intoxication, while in Australia. Even a lot of those that did drink mentioned that they had never been as drunk, or as often, as on those return journeys ‘home’. For some, then, the return was enmeshed with the consumption of alcohol—for better or worse. For most it added to the experience by heightening enjoyment and social interaction. However,
for others it brought feelings of guilt, either because they said no to offers, or because they felt they could not say no.

Returnees were frequently taken out to various venues by relatives—in particular by younger and/or more well-off relatives. Pubs and bars were a popular destination—including those in or near the centres of major cities or towns located in medieval cellars (a common and popular location for restaurants and bars), which made quite an impression on respondents who hadn't experienced anything like it before. Several nominated going to and eating/drinking in such underground venues to be among the best aspects of their trip or trips to Poland. Another common theme touched on in interviews was the inexpensive nature of going out on the town in Poland compared to Australia (or for that matter nearby European tourist destinations). To those armed with Australian dollars—even relatively impoverished students, as most respondents were at the time of their journeys—eating good restaurant meals or consuming alcohol in bars seemed ridiculously inexpensive. Thus for those parts of the trip where returnees ventured away from family and friends the money they did have was able to stretch far, affording them the kind of exuberant lifestyle that could not be easily sustained when travelling around Australia, Western Europe or North America. This affordability, and associated indulgences, only further contributed to the enjoyability of the experience of return.

Celebration

A particularly frequent theme to emerge from respondents' photographic and verbal accounts of their travels is the family celebration. Everywhere returnees went where there was family, or even merely family friends, they were met by this ubiquitous Polish way of entertaining. Medium to large groups of people would sit down at a big table with a smorgasbord of traditional Polish fare, including various 'salads' (Polish salads tend to be creamy and anything but leafy), bread, cold and cooked meats, potatoes, pickled cucumbers and cakes prepared by the hosts—or, more specifically, the woman or women associated with the household, as for most men in Poland the kitchen remains a no-go zone. It was the job of the male host to keep the alcohol—and conversation—flowing. Such celebratory gatherings were remarkably similar to one another across the country.

Returnees were familiar with such gatherings from Australia, as their parents and parents' friends would occasionally entertain in a similar manner. The core difference was that in Poland the returnees from Australia were the centre of attention and (unlike in Australia, where they could more or less, after a token greeting, do as they pleased) were expected to stay with the main group and talk at length, filling in all of
those gathered on news from Australia. The pressure was especially substantial where
the respondents were the first members of their family to return to Poland, whereupon
they had to act as family ambassadors, speaking not only for themselves, but parents
and siblings—not to mention for Australia itself.

**representing the family, and Australia**

Being the focus of attention, and having to speak so much, was often quite difficult
considering many of the respondents’ limited proficiency in the Polish language.
Expression, without reverting to at least some English, was often a major problem and
a cause of frustration, though it generally improved with time (see section on language
below). A major complaint held by several interviewees was the way in which the
same questions were asked time and time again. These included requests for
information about parents as well as about Australia in general. In particular those
family and friends gathered wanted to know about kangaroos, Aborigines, Pauline
Hanson and, if the journeys took place at a specific time, the Tampa and John Howard.
Family members in Poland generally knew little about Australia except stereotypes
and various other tidbits of information gleaned from the news or natural history
documentaries. They were, however, extremely curious.

I think just going to my dad’s friends’ place, stuff like that, because it was all the
same conversations, everything, like eating and ... I think ... I mean it was fine at the
start but after about three or four weeks it was just—I had enough of that.

After a while there developed what one interviewee called a standard ‘spiel’, which
they got very good at repeating:

just doing the same rounds, and just ... having the same conversations. I mean you
could basically learn ... I don’t know, about ten phrases about what you’re doing in
Polish [laugh] and recite them and ...

The repetitiveness of much conversation and explanation actually appeared to help to
overcome the language barrier for many of those participants less adept at Polish.
Learning a ‘standard spiel’ and repeating it over and over again enabled easier and
more effective expression than was the case when trying to explain new, complex
concepts in what was essentially a very limited vocabulary.

**wolność**

Wolność, which in Polish means freedom, was another factor that helped to make
respondents’ trips—especially initial trips—as successful as they were. In all instances
the first return to Poland took place while returnees were still economically largely
dependent on their parents, with whom they still resided. In the majority of cases, subsequent return journeys, where these occurred, also took place while the respondent still lived in the parental home. Further, initial independent travel often took place when the study participant was aged 18 to 20, usually within a year or two of the completion of high school, and sometimes even earlier. Given all this, returnees for the most part were not particularly experienced when it came to independence and being well removed from and relatively unaffected by parental supervision. For most their first trip to Poland was the first time respondents spent a substantial period of time away from their parents. The impact of the comparative freedom enjoyed by returnees during this period of temporary independence should probably not be underestimated. Compared with their relatively sedentary existence in Australia, travel to and around Poland offered significant freedom, independence, and the opportunity to do a lot of things hitherto not attempted in Australia. Of course there were limits, including those imposed by the host families, not to mention some control remotely exerted by parents. Nevertheless, these did little to stifle feelings of freedom and independence, considering that these were still greater than in Australia.

One of the participants, who had returned to Poland previously as a child, revelled in the comparative freedom of travelling back as a young adult:

It was different again, going back there when we were a bit older in that, I guess we were all we suddenly had our own independent lives—we could go out and do our own thing. So it's not like you're just kids and you have to, you know, sit around and play and do what your parents or grandparents tell you to do.

The above quote juxtaposes childhood return journeys against those made later on, as young adults, underlining their very different character: whereas childhood trips were seen as stifling, being essentially an extended family holiday, young adult trips were more about independence and discovery.

**rowiesnicy**

Another important element influencing the experience of return is the presence in Poland of significant numbers of related *rowiesnicy*. The word *rowiesnicy* literally translates as peers, though in most contexts a more accurate meaning would be relatives or acquaintances falling in the same general age group. The nature of the Solidarity wave of migration to Australia meant that most of the individuals involved arrived in Australia with their immediate family only. Few lived in Australia in proximity to members of their extended family. Where extended family was present, it often involved distant relatives who migrated in the postwar period, though sometimes Solidarity generation migrants did help their parents or siblings and their
families to migrate. Among the respondents only three had extended family in Australia, and none included cousins similar in age to themselves. About half of the respondents did not even have a brother or sister. This paucity of related rowiesnicy when growing up in Australia was in direct opposition to the comparative proliferation encountered in Poland:

It's such a shame that it's so rare to see them all. It's just like ... discovering a whole new raft of brothers and sisters.

Returnees tended to have a lot of contact with their cousins on trips to Poland and formed fairly close relationships, especially where the age gap was not too pronounced. Many reported being excited by the fact that they had, in various parts of the country, numerous cousins with whom they could 'hang out', talk freely and, often, travel. This was a refreshing change not only from Australia, but from spending time with other, usually older relatives, with whom they could not talk as freely or on the same level as they could with their cousins. Similarly, being shown around and taken places by cousins was regarded as a lot 'cooler' and less embarrassing than if aunts or uncles fulfilled the role of tourist guide. Certainly, cousins were more likely to be aware of what the visitors might want to see and do, or at least what were fun things to do for young people in a given place. A lot of the visits to pubs, bars or clubs were, for example, initiated by cousins. Sometimes cousins even introduced the visitor to their friendship networks and got them to partake in parties or took them on trips as an honorary member of the group. New Year's Eve proved a particularly popular event in this regard. Celebrating this holiday with older family members was considered rather daggy and, where possible the visitor or visitors were sent off to spend time with their cousins and their friends, where there was a lot of drinking and smoking of various substances to be done.

Understandably, spending time with similarly-aged cousins and their friends seemed to make a big impression on returnees. It afforded the returnee entry into the world of the youth of Poland, or at least into the kind of circles cousins mingled in—into, potentially, the kind of existence the respondents may well have led had they not migrated. The time spent going out, drinking, or even just conversing with cousins and their friends was a common source of vivid memories which respondents recalled fondly in interview. A few even mentioned that, after getting to know their cousins upon return, the thing they missed most about Poland was, according to one interviewee, 'mainly just the good times with cousins'. Another mentioned that 'it would have been nice to grow up with them, and stuff like that'.
language

One of the biggest problems reported by respondents in their discussions of travelling back to Poland had to do with language. The problem affected some returnees more than others. Language proved a substantial obstacle in particular among those individuals who originally emigrated as young children, whose proficiency in the Polish language was lower than those who migrated at an older age, for example in the teenage years:

At the start I did find communication very difficult, and then everyone just thought I was really quiet ... because I didn’t talk! I don’t know, I couldn’t ... I could guess when the attention was on me then—I don’t know what I was saying ... I definitely simplified things a lot ... And I think also when—because dad was there I was always like asking him ‘oh, how do you say this?’ But I guess by the time of the second trip I was more grown up and would make more of an effort ... and just try to get stuff out.

But even those who possessed good Polish language skills recalled finding the going tough at times. For instance Agnieszka, who emigrated at the age of fourteen and generally spoke immaculate Polish, was still confused by some Polish words and phrases used in Poland, but less so among the Poles of Australia. She admitted to the following linguistic faux pas, both of which arose because words with rather different meaning in Polish and English sounded similar in both languages:

I said for instance that: “W Australii ja kupuje mleko bez prezerwatyw” – which, I thought meant: “In Australia I purchase milk without preservatives”. In fact, the word “prezerwatywa” (Preservative), as I found out, means “condom” so what I said was: “In Australia I buy milk without condoms”. What was odd to me was that no one knew what I was talking about and they were unable to guess, and I had no idea why they didn’t understand me. I also told my aunt I was going to “exhibicja” (i.e an exhibition) to which she informed me that “exhibicja” is more a type of an orgy or an open sexual act, and exhibition is simply “wystawa”.

Almost all respondents said they frequently felt frustrated by their inability to express themselves in Polish as they wanted to, or as they could in English. Inserting English words or sentences into dialogue, as was common when speaking Polish to family and, sometimes, friends in Australia was simply impossible when speaking to most Poles in Poland, and often it was difficult to find an appropriate Polish equivalent for an English word or turn of phrase the returnee would normally use. Grzegorz verbalised the problem thus:
I was a seventeen year old who was possibly speaking at the level of a twelve year old over there. My English at the time, for a seventeen year old, it was at a fairly high standard. I was used to a fairly wide vocabulary, and to expressing myself precisely, and accurately. I lacked that in Polish—I felt at a loss for words because I did not want to use simple or primitive language, as a child might—I wanted to be able to express myself in Polish the same way that I do in English, and I found that to be impossible on many occasions. Not in colloquial conversation, but in discussion or debates—I was at a loss for words.

There was also the problem of slang and words and terminology which had not arisen at the time of migration, and which were not used by the Polish communities of Australia:

I would not know what they are saying when they were using slang. Especially slang that had come up within those last seven years [since emigration]. I found it extremely funny every time that they used words like that—then I'd have to ask 'what on earth do you mean by using—by saying—"siano"?'. Siano means money it turns out—I had no idea! Siano means hay, as far I'm concerned ... So, yeah, I'd have to stop and ask about the slang all the time, which was a great experience, discovering all that.

Aside from being frustrated by their inability to communicate as effectively as they wanted, many interviewees were annoyed by their accent, specifically that often people they met made reference to it, or it otherwise immediately marked them as 'outsiders'. The fact that they spoke Polish with a pronounced and—to Poles in Poland—readily identifiable and unusual accent, came as a shock to many respondents, especially those who had not until then considered their Polish to be too bad. Speaking Polish in Australia, most did not realise they were in possession of an 'Australian accent'. Nor had anyone in Australia pointed it out. A lot of the shock might have been the result of individuals being very self-conscious about possessing a Polish accent when speaking English. Being readily identifiable by others in Australia as an outsider, and forced to identify as 'Polish' as a consequence (confronted with a foreign accent, many in Australia inevitably ask: 'where are you from?'), led to confusion when, in Poland, one's identity was questioned or denied. Just like in Australia, in Poland too, the accent indicated otherness, and may have helped to send the returnee's identity and sense of belonging into some confusion.

Inevitably, as each returnee spent more time in Poland, their Polish language capabilities improved immensely. As one participant observed:
My Polish picked up, you know, I speak Polish better today than I did five years after leaving the country—simply because I spent so much time over there—I've spent eight months in Poland in the last several years—since the end of high school.

Those returnees who at the beginning of their first trip were almost tongue-tied, by the end were a lot more comfortable with both syntax and pronunciation. The transformation was especially pronounced where the length of the trip was of several months' duration (a lot of the wintertime trips lasted around three months; summer trips, on the other hand, generally lasted a month or less), and where immersion in the language was more complete. Some respondents reported that both their relatives in Poland and, upon return to Australia, their parents commented positively on the dramatic improvement in the returnees' Polish. In some instances reacquaintance with the language was associated with a broader resurgence of interest in Poland and Polish literature:

Having to use Polish that intensely for the first time in many years ... yeah, definitely [my Polish improved]. And I think my parents noticed that immediately when I came back. And because of that, because of this revival of interest I also started reading a lot more—I never stopped reading in Polish actually—but also reading, and corresponding with them [family members], a lot more—just the links became strengthened.

This resurgence, however, extended largely only to transnational-type links. Most affected was interest in Poland itself, and communication with and further travel to it and those relatives resident there. As will be demonstrated in Chapter Six, it rarely seemed to lead to increased participation in local Polish community life per se. In some instances this did happen, though when it did it was relatively short-lived. Polish language skills too again declined following return to Australia, as the opportunities to speak the language decreased.

**gender relations**

Another potential source of tension, at least for some respondents, had to do with gender roles and relations. Though gender roles and expectations do not present as big a problem for returnees to Poland as they would, anecdotally, for young immigrants returning to countries where the gap between genders is more visibly pronounced, it is nevertheless an issue. The communist era in Poland fostered a climate where gender equality was an overt, stated ideology, and where most women participated, or were expected to participate, in the labour market. However, this nominal equality rarely extended into the household, where sharp divisions of labour continued. Today women are still expected to do all of the cooking and almost all of the housework, even
if they work in paid employment as much as (and sometimes more than) their male partners. This situation rarely appears to be questioned by anyone in Poland, at least on the popular level.

A small number of the female respondents noticed this unequal division in the various households they visited, and felt uncomfortable with it. The divergence of gender roles seemed especially pronounced during larger family gatherings, when the women would cook and serve the food, and spend a lot of time on their feet, whereas the men just ate and drank and talked, with occasionally their duties extending to the pouring of drinks. The women did not appear to mind this—indeed, they enthusiastically embraced the role of doting hostess—but a small number of the female returnees did. Although, as guests, they were free from any domestic duties, this did not stop them empathising with their female relatives and what was perceived as the injustice of their plight.

In most cases, however, respondents (female and male alike) did not nominate disparate and pronounced gender roles within the Polish household as an issue that they noticed, let alone which concerned them. In part this may have been the result of the gender dynamics in the households within which they themselves had grown up, including in Australia. Generally gender in the respondent's immediate family functioned in much the same way as it did in Poland, with a similar division of roles in the household. The fact that returnees were young also might be of significance—the majority still lived with their parents and were relatively unexposed to public discussions of household gender equity, or for that matter feminism in general. Nor were they equipped with the experience of living and sharing household tasks with a partner in a contemporary Australian context—an experience that often breeds awareness (and sometimes resentment) of traditional gender roles and expectations.

It is probably no coincidence, then, that the two individuals who spoke strongly of gender roles in Polish households and their discomfort with them—a brother and sister—had a mother who, the brother (Marek) admitted, was not at ease with the traditional Polish family model. Indeed, Marek hypothesised that her discomfort with attitudes to gender in Poland might have been among the main reasons behind her dislike of Poland and refusal to visit the country. Marek reported that his mother did not like her life in Poland prior to migration, in part because her husband was constantly entertaining work colleagues and fellow Solidarity activists at their house and, as his wife, she was the one who was expected to serve the guests and clean up after them:
She absolutely hated the fact that anybody would just knock on the door, my father would receive them, put vodka on the table ... she had to ... be the hostess, all the time. She was completely—she was sick of it [...] But [now, in Australia] she very much enjoys the fact that the house is not invaded by guests so often.

Marek's mother was apparently quite happy, by coming to Australia, to escape such gatherings and the work associated with them. She also thought distance from family, and social customs, accorded her more freedom in Australia:

The distance also allows her to, sort of, separate from the family over there and I think she feels a lot freer. She imagines, I am not sure how far she knows the law in Poland, I don't know, but she imagines that law being more disadvantageous to women than in Australia.

Conversely, Marek's father misses Poland, has visited it, and would ultimately like to retire there. Among the things he misses most about Poland, according to Marek, is the thing that his wife misses least: the plethora of close friends and the frequent get-togethers at the family apartment:

His entire social life in Poland was based on the house party, on the dinner party, on drinking at home. He really misses that here. My father has got that entire, you know, intellectual, cultural world back there. When he went back to Poland for the first time two years ago, for nearly ... five weeks, I think ... he absolutely loved it, you know. He was—he was lost in the place. He came back convinced that he would go back for his retirement. That's not necessarily a done deal by any means.

For Marek's father the gatherings meant fun and left pleasant memories; for Marek's mother, on the other hand, they meant work and resentment, and less rosy memories. Marek's mother made her feelings about gender expectations and unequal roles known to the rest of the family in recent years, and these opinions no doubt would have influenced her children's observations and feelings when they themselves returned to visit Poland.

Another example of the influence of gender on the experience of return has to do with image and presentation. Two of the female returnees recalled feeling a bit upset in Poland because of the limited nature of the wardrobe with which they had travelled. The clothes which they were able to bring with them were only a fraction of what they would have liked. The situation was exacerbated by, in both instances, the travel taking place in winter, a season for which the returnees were ill prepared in terms of clothing, especially clothing which was simultaneously warm and fashionable. Also, both women reported being annoyed by the stylish way in which many women in Poland (in particular in their own age group) dressed compared with their experiences
in Australia, as well as compared with what they themselves were wearing in Poland. These women were prepared for the cold, and were fashionable and immaculately groomed at the same time. One of the two female respondents, said that compared with the other women she encountered she felt ‘daggy’, and, worst of all, could not do much about it because of the limits imposed by her suitcase and small winter wardrobe. Feelings such as these appeared to impact significantly on the way she felt about her trip to Poland, if not necessarily about Poland itself.

**best versus worst**

While all respondents described their return journeys as overwhelmingly positive experiences, there was also much not to like about the trips, and about Poland. Such flaws in particular became more clear the more time was spent in Poland. Everyone was asked about what for them were the best and worst aspects of travelling back to Poland. Experiences commonly rated highly included catching up and spending time with family, revisiting places associated with one’s youth, food, and travelling to the major tourist attractions, especially highly aesthetic and/or historical ones like Krakow and the Tatra Mountains. The latter category included various places with no close equivalent in Australia. The following are samples of what some of the returnees described as being the most fondly recalled aspects of their trip/s:

Meeting my mother’s family in the villages in south Kieleckie [province]. Also, travelling by bus from Bielawa (near Wroclaw) to Opole through indescribably bad and narrow, almost 4WD roads amongst the fields (what you would call the ‘scenic route’), villages etc.

I enjoyed mostly the time we spent with our grandparents, cousins, etc., in Plock [respondent’s hometown] and Szewnica [her grandparents’ village]. I remember trying to hit a bottle with a rock on a frozen pond, it was a fond memory because I won the game ... The overall experience was OK, a great eye opener and it was good to see that the grocery shops were brimming with products, unlike the last time I saw them. I must say that the food was very tasty. The bread was nice, the Swiss chocolate was nice, the pierniki [gingerbread cookies] were nice, it’s little wonder I came back about 6-8 kilos heavier.

Well all of it. I found it a great and tremendously positive experience, you know. Despite how wet and grey and dreary the scenery was ... um, rediscovering all of the places of your childhood is an enormously ... moving experience, in many ways. And my family and our friends are by and large great people—a few exceptions, but not that many—I love spending time with them, you know, socialising with cousins or friends, my peers; the hospitality—as you’d know—is ... is great. There’s vodka on the table ... and dinners, and things like that. I was very warmly received ... Which
parts did I like best? I suppose because I love travel, apart from Swiebodzin, my home town, which—well, you knew so many people, dozens, literally dozens of people—my schedule was very hectic. Apart from coming back to Swiebodzin, and coming back to Golczewo, my grandmother's place. Also there's the bits of travelling that I did—Warsaw, Zakopane, and Kraków—were great for me, because it was really the first substantial travel that I'd done in my life. While we were in Poland, we didn't travel outside the country much—apart from the rare vacation—in Australia we never had the money to travel. There was one jaunt to the Snowy Mountains, I've been in Canberra a couple of times, but within Australia I had done no travel, so this was the first substantial travel that I did—and I loved it. I've loved it ever since.

For me it was Christmas, and Krakow ... we have cousins down there, so just having people around our own age, and I think also, just the really beautiful buildings and whatever. But, apart from that also, the ... just, there's lots to do there, and really great clubs and all that, and kind of all those underground cafes and pubs. Yeah, it was just a really beautiful city.

Least fondly remembered aspects of the experience included family (or more accurately spending too much time with particular family members), difficulties with communication, Polish customs and ways of doing things seen as inferior to what the returnees were used to in Australia. The latter especially included chamstwo, a kind of overall rudeness that is seen as characterising many Poles, especially older ones and those in the service sector. It is thought to be a hangover from the communist period, where polite customer service was notoriously lacking. Coming from Australia, where the respondents were used to politeness when dealing with staff in restaurants, shops or the bureaucracy, this rudeness came as something of a shock. The fact that such behaviour was the opposite of the way they were treated by relatives in Poland only exacerbated the situation. People encountered, it would seem, were especially nice and hospitable if they knew you, rude and uncompromising if they did not.

The following are extracts of how some of the interviewees described their least favourite aspects of the return to the homeland:

[While] staying with my father's sisters, shopping in small Warsaw supermarket where I wanted to buy nice toilet paper for my aunt (with pictures) instead of the usual sanding paper, and the checkout old hag paid me out and laughed at me for being a princess and buying such "exclusive" toilet paper.

Probably on that trip [I was most annoyed] by the difference in the customer service, which was quite noticeable at that time still in Poland [compared to Australia], despite the fact that, yes, Poland was supposed to be democratic and pro-western, but nonetheless there was, and to an extent there's still ... that mentality specific to
that region of Europe ... customer service was lousy, to the effect that in a small confined space there were shop assistants—you could see five of them, and you were clearly looking in distress as requiring assistance, yet none of them would actually offer it to you. And when you actually approached them and asked a question they would just look at you in not only surprise but with arrogance, as in 'what do you want from me?’, despite the fact that they were there for you. Whereas in the western world you’ve got the opposite—you don’t want the help, and they’re already upon you. Five of them. So that was probably the most noticeable. I was least fond of the overall coldness and the hours and hours of walking and sightseeing I had to endure with my brother and his friend [another returnee from Australia].

I spent too much time with my family. With family it can be difficult sometimes. I suppose I was getting a little tired of them, and I was getting a little bored, coming back to that place all the time. It was bad organisation in terms of the structure of that trip ... Yes, I guess that’s the only downside—although it wasn’t a major downside at all.

There were many things, looking at this country and its people from an Australian perspective, that I could easily criticise. And in a similar way I use my Polish background to assess Australia, in a way—in the light of Europe, in a sense, and in the light of Europe I assess Poland, and Poland and Europe in the light of the New World, Australia being part of the New World ... There were ... things about them that I did not identify with in any way. You know, they can be harsh, rude, what have you, there was this whole cynical streak running through, through that society. The way they relate to each other—all of these things are very much noticeable, even more for my sister for example, who’s far more Australian than she is Polish. These things are noticeable, they do not make a very favourable impression on—especially on somebody who can understand the language and can see and understand what’s going on. A tourist may not pick up all of these things.

I think just going to my dad’s friends’ places, stuff like that, because it was all the same conversations, everything, like eating and ... I think ... I mean it was fine at the start but after about three or four weeks it was just—I had enough of that and ...

Yeah, probably that’s it.

What were seen as positive and negative elements of the return experience tended to change slightly as each trip progressed, and also on subsequent trips. Sometimes more flaws were observed, and with a more critical eye, as more time was spent in Poland, while at other times returnees grew accustomed to what they initially viewed very critically. Following return to Australia the way the trip was viewed may also have changed. What seemed like less than exciting experiences at the time might have, with the help of hindsight, become a lot more positive once back in Australia, when the trip
was recalled and nostalgia again began to set in (this time not so much for the homeland of youth, but the one just encountered). The way in which aspects of the trip were experienced and evaluated was probably tied to feelings of identity and belonging, which themselves changed over time. They may also have been a function of such variables as the returnee’s age at migration. These correlations will be discussed at length in Chapter Six.

**Conclusion**

The return journey home constitutes a key event in the post-migration histories of numerous immigrants and their descendants. Yet, traditionally social research on migration has tended to ignore or downplay such travels back to the homeland, despite their popularity and their importance to returnees and their communities alike. Only relatively recently, chiefly in writings on transnationalism, diaspora and identity has this phenomenon begun to receive some of the attention it deserves. This chapter has provided an account of the way in which homeland return is experienced by young Solidarity-wave migrants to Australia.

The homeland is rarely simply forgotten, no matter how painful one’s experiences with it or the circumstances of departure from it. The homeland (or at least a simplified, often romanticised, version) remains for the most part a permanent fixture in the mind. Often it also acts as the foci of identity, even activity, in the migrant’s ‘new homeland’, where the immigrant has settled, but not without a lot of assorted baggage from the ‘old country’. Many of these migrants are homesick and pine for the country they—or their ancestors—left behind, reliving it in their minds, through photographs, films, letters, emails and friends. It was shown how the very word ‘nostalgia’ is tied closely to this longing for the home country, and for eventual return to it—a longing, it is alleged, alleviated only by nostos, the return home, the return to one’s youth and roots, and the people and places associated with both.

Trips back to Poland among young Polish-born adults were probably somewhat linked to the ‘coming of age’ overseas trip popular among young Australians; in the past such trips traditionally had London or other well-trodden locales of Western Europe as their destinations, but for the increasing numbers of Australians of migrant heritage, travel to the home country, where strong kin networks were still present, made more sense. Especially on initial independent visits, returnees chiefly travelled in the northern winter, this period corresponding with school and university summer vacations in Australia. Those fewer that went in summer usually travelled for shorter periods. The return experiences of those that travelled in the warm and the cool seasons were quite different, with summer affording more travel and outdoor recreation, whereas
wintertime returns included a great deal of time spent indoors with family. The first return journey often took place immediately following the completion of high school, or the first year of university. In many instances the returnee was the first member of the immediate family to make the return journey, acting in effect as the family 'ambassador'. In some other cases respondents travelled back previously as children, accompanied by one of their parents and sometimes a sibling. However, such individuals usually journeyed back again as young adults, with these latter trips being radically different from the initial ones. It is these later, independent trips, where the returnee had greater maturity and agency, which were the main focus of this particular chapter.

Subsequent sections of this chapter focused on specific aspects of the experience of return, particularly the initial independent return. Family more often than not determined the course of the trip, both overtly—through organisation and provision of transport—or more covertly—through the pervasive system of family obligation and guilt. Family thus became central to both the most positive and most negative aspects of the return experience. Interviewees spoke enthusiastically of being able to catch up and spend a lot of time with relatives again after such a long absence. They enjoyed being taken out to various tourist sites or restaurants by them, or just the drinking and the eating in the home. However, family was also a source of significant tension and dissatisfaction, especially as more time was spent in the country.

All respondents generally found returning to Poland to be an overwhelmingly positive experience. There were, however, significant differences, with some returnees enjoying, and speaking more highly of, their journey/s compared with others. When I originally began the research I had expected that participants' age at migration would be a fairly straightforward determinant of the trip's enjoyability and the ease at which the returnees felt on travelling to Poland. It was anticipated that those who emigrated out of Poland at a relatively young age, and who were not entirely fluent in the Polish language, would find the experience of return more difficult, and less fun, than those who migrated at an older age, and who possessed more memories of Poland and superior Polish language skills. I also thought that gender might be an important contributing factor to experience because of the prevalence in the Polish mainstream of gender roles and stereotyping disadvantageous to women, such as that outlined previously. Faced with empirical data, however, these expectations proved ill-founded and, in a way, overly simplistic. Reality was a lot more complicated and not at all linear. If anything, results hinted at trends the opposite of those anticipated.
Though it is difficult to say with certainty, because respondents' accounts of their return journeys may have been selective (the passage of time might have eroded what were at the time less pleasant experiences in favour of more positive ones, or alternatively interviewees may have consciously self-edited what they told the interviewer), there seemed little correlation between age at migration and gender, and the way in which the experience of return was recalled. Two returnees, both female, did not appear to have had a particularly positive experience. Even though both said they enjoyed it, this was a retrospective view and appeared at odds with their descriptions of events that had taken place and the way in which they felt at the time. Following the initial trip, neither had returned a second time. One of them even cut her trip a few weeks short while there because she had enough of the place and missed Australia and, especially, her boyfriend. That both of these returnees were comparatively young at migration (one was six, the other seven) might imply that age was a factor. Since both returnees were female, and both brought up gender as an issue, this may have been a key factor. Both gender and age may well have been factors, although the experiences of these two returnees were cancelled out by others who did not fit this mould. All the other women appeared to have a great time on their return journeys, as did those returnees who migrated at a similar or younger age as did these two women. Conversely, some males found return problematic, as did many of those who were older at migration.

Two of the respondents were identical twins. One might expect that their experiences of return, and general to Poland and 'Polishness' might be similar due to identical age at migration, and very similar socio-economic background and upbringing, yet nothing could be further from the truth. The two were as different as two people could be, with one, Jasiek, absolutely committed to a Polish identity and to Poland, and the other, Jarek, devoted to Australia and to being above all an 'Australian'. Jasiek had returned to Poland multiple times, thoroughly enjoyed the trips, and was enthusiastic about one day returning to Poland to live permanently. His brother, on the other hand, had been back only once, as a teenager, and had no plans to return again let alone to reside there for an extended period of time. The case of the two brothers, superficially so similar, yet in experience and outlook so dramatically different, infers that perhaps trying to account for factors potentially behind the experience of return, whether age at migration or socio-economic background, may ultimately be a futile exercise. Experience and the way in which return is evaluated and identity negotiated is more likely driven by a complex web of interlocking factors, many of them (for example, personality) notoriously difficult to gauge let alone account for.
If there is any correlation between age at migration and the experience of return, the correlation appeared the inverse of what might have been expected. Contrary to anticipation, those returnees who had not lived in Poland very long prior to emigration did not have a bad time upon return, despite facing more language difficulties and culture shock. On the other hand, those who migrated at an older age, despite minimal difficulties when it came to communication, did not necessarily assess Poland, and their experiences, uncritically. They were not as enamoured with the country and its people as I had originally assumed. They may once have been, prior to returning for the first time, but what illusions they might have held disappeared when confronted with the physical reality (as opposed to romanticised memories and other images) of Poland and their interaction with it. The more time they spent in Poland on the return journeys, the less positive they were about the country, and the more they yearned for Australia, with which they—almost paradoxically—increasingly identified.

The most likely explanation for an inverse age at migration-return relationship is that greater Polish language proficiency, and general familiarity with Poland and Polish culture, ensured that all that was encountered on the return visit was scrutinised with a fairly critical eye. Understanding language and custom permitted more flaws to be spotted by the returnee. Further, growing up in Australia meant that respondents who migrated in, say, their teenage years tended to identify quite strongly as 'Polish', and/or were marked as such by others because of, among other things, their accents when speaking English. Returning to Poland, the country with which they were supposed to identify, proved problematic simply because they did not necessarily feel as familiar there as they thought they might. It was not always the country they recalled, or that their parents spoke about, and there was much that they did not like. Also, just like in Australia they were labelled by others as 'outsiders', so too in Poland that is how those who encountered them usually identified them. Return was, therefore, fraught with emotion and much introspection. 'Who exactly was I?' some would ask themselves. They thought they were Polish but gradually they began to come to the conclusion that they were not, but that perhaps they were Australian after all.

This chapter has demonstrated the uncertainty, variability, and ambivalence of return to homeland. It has shown the powerful role of relatives, hometowns, memory and nostalgia in the experience of return, as well as how the experience changes over time. As more time was spent in Poland, nostalgia and eager anticipation wore off as the places visited became more familiar, and reality and criticism began to seep through. In the long run, by being exposed to 'local' (rather than diasporic) Polishness, most returnees became in effect more awakened to their Australianness. They began to
recognise that their 'real' home was no longer the homeland left behind at migration, but the land where they now lived, Australia.

The following chapter will focus on two important elements of the return experience: respondent photography, and landscape. The sections on photography will look at the kinds of images that were captured, why particular scenes were captured and others not, how these communicate the experience of return, and how photograph taking may have changed over time—over the course of the trip, and on subsequent journeys. The section on landscape will focus on the nostalgic landscapes of the Polish homeland, once left behind, now returned into, and the way in which these are conceptualised and visualised by returnees through, among other things, their photography.
Photography and Landscape

The previous chapter looked at the way in which return to the homeland was experienced—and remembered—by the respondents of this thesis, with a particular emphasis on the first return journey 'home' since emigration. This chapter focuses on one element of homecoming, the photographs taken by returnees on their trips back to Poland. But the photos that respondents took are more than an element of individual experiences; they are also important in how the trip, and Poland, are communicated to others, as well as in how these are remembered. Thus photography is not merely an element of the experience, to be studied as such, but is also capable of providing insight into other aspects of the experience of return (and, in a way, migration itself). It is capable of complementing verbal accounts, providing the researcher with a richer, more detailed—and illustrated—understanding of the issues. Further, respondents' photography may unearth and initiate discussion of topics, events, places or memories ordinarily invisible in orthodox interviewing practice.

The chapter begins with an observation of general trends in interviewee photography, and discussion of some of the factors driving this photography. This is followed by an examination of photographic themes and genres. Photographs taken by returnees can be described as containing various themes, and as falling into different—if often overlapping—categories or genres. The chapter explores such themes as family and celebration, hometowns revisited, tourist snaps and landscape, and the way in which these aid understanding of various elements of homeland return, as experienced by respondents. This is in part accomplished through the analysis of selected returnee photographs.

Through this focus on photographs taken on homecoming journeys, one of the things this chapter hopes to show is the crucial role played by nostalgia in the appreciation of place, as conveyed by photographic depiction. As will be demonstrated below, often what is captured does not adhere to a conventional aesthetic (local or tourist), but is
instead profoundly influenced by residual memories of sites associated with childhood or family, and the excitement of returning to these after a prolonged absence. This appears to extend also to landscape. The latter parts of this chapter will focus on depictions of the landscape in respondent photography, and what these might tell us about how returnees feel about the Polish landscape, or more specifically the nostalgic landscapes associated with their youth and/or family history.

photos taken

Photographs arguably play a key role in contemporary travel experience. So-called 'travel snaps' are an integral component of tourism, acting as memory-triggering memorabilia for the traveller/s, as well as helping to communicate the trip (at least its more photogenic aspects) to family and friends back home. As this chapter will show, for immigrants returning to the homeland, photography, can be a significant contributor to the experience of return. All of the returnees took photographs on their trips back to Poland. Indeed, most of them admitted taking large numbers of photos—a fact many were, especially when faced with the photographic evidence of their journeys, rather embarrassed to acknowledge at interview. There is a kind of stigma attached to being 'snap-happy', to taking lots of photographs, and through their embarrassment respondents made clear that they were aware of this stigma. A particularly large number of photographs tended to be taken during the initial stages of the trip, when the surroundings the respondent had travelled into seemed freshest and most exotic. Almost everything was deemed photo-worthy and captured on film. Similarly, more photographs tended to be taken on the first than subsequent trips, and the types of photographs taken changed as the trip progressed, and on subsequent trips. This in part reflected changed experiences and priorities as the returnee spent more time in Poland, a theme that will be discussed in Chapter Six.

One respondent, Bogdan, reflected on the number and kind of photos he had taken on the first trip thus:

As you'll see later on, I think the attitude was that—we did not know at the time when or if anybody would be going there again—from over here, from my family. The idea was to photograph everybody, and everything, to the extent of photographing streets, buildings, just so that the people back here—back in Australia—I use home in a dual sense—home is here when you’re over there, over there is home when you’re here—so that they could see how things look at the moment, how they’ve changed. So they could even reminisce ... how these people now look, etc., so everything was photographed fairly comprehensively. Every little nook and cranny. It seems ridiculous right now, having gone back so many times—but at the time I didn’t know that—I didn’t know that I would be going back, or that
anybody would be going back. So that I suppose was the objective of taking all those photographs—not so much for myself, but for the people back in Australia.

When asked about later trips, this same respondent noted a much smaller number of photographs:

Less. Far less. Certainly, I couldn’t be bothered taking pictures of places anymore ... it was just silly, to tell you the truth, I thought. I took pictures not only of people but with people more often, as well. I just wasn’t so trigger happy anymore with the camera. I guess on the second trip—probably the number of photos reduced with every single trip. On the second trip you’d still want to show the differences that had taken place—over those two years. But then ... as I went back again and again—I didn’t feel the need to ... Subsequently my sister went to Poland, in 99, then my father, so the need to show what was over there was no longer there ... it’s more for your own memory, for your own albums, which you’ll go back to in decades, that I took those photos—the need to show the people back in Australia what’s over there was no longer present.

**photographing for others**

As well as showing how photograph-taking tended to decline and be more discriminating on later trips, the account above hints at an important driving factor behind choosing which scenes and moments to capture: being mindful of the future audience and photographing not just for the self, but for others, notably the parents. This seemed especially the case where respondents’ parents had not yet themselves been back to Poland and the returnees were keen to document for their parents (and sometimes siblings) how various, once immediate, people and places now look, and how they may have changed from the period prior to migration. These photographs, together with the returnees’ accounts, became the parents’ window to Poland, to what the world they left behind looked like now. As Bogdan pointed out above, this function diminished with time, at least if parents and siblings themselves eventually returned to Poland. This, it should however be stressed, often did not occur: many of the respondents’ parents were hesitant to journey back to Poland and had not done so by the time of interview. For them, their returning children, and photographs, continued to act as an important link to Poland, and to those family members still resident there.

Figures 5.1 to 5.8 are examples of photographs in which future audience reception was a dominant motive driving photography. In Figure 5.1 we see the high school which the respondent’s mother once attended. This reading is made clear by the inscription below the photograph, which translated reads ‘Mum’s high school number 2’ (with the
number referring to the school’s official name, rather than suggesting this was the second high school the mother attended). Along with some relatives the returnee was exploring the city where his mother had grown up, and it was pointed out to him that this was his mother’s old school. He mentioned taking the photo specifically for his parents rather than himself, though, whatever the professed initial motivation, the image came to document his own trip and the memories it left behind.

The photograph indicates not only that the photographer’s parents were an important consideration when capturing certain images, but that his parents’ history in Poland was a relevant motivating factor determining the places and people visited. Now the image stands as an illustration of one among the many sites the returnee visited—and deemed worthy of capture—and why. Divorced from the (retrospectively) stated intention (which may differ from actual intention/motivation), the image acts to co-define the trip. It doesn’t merely reveal to us that this photo was taken for this person or that reason. It tells us that its author was there, reliving family history. However, divorced from context—for example if the caption and respondent’s spoken words are removed—the image becomes an illustration of the trip, and of Poland. Removed from all context—if nothing of the photo’s or its author’s history at all were known—the image becomes generic. An external observer, without any additional information, might guess that it depicts a street in an anonymous Eastern European city, but little more than this. For the returnee looking back at travel photos, the image helps to remember the trip, or at least influences the way in which the trip is remembered.

Figure 5.2 (actually two photographs) comes from the same respondent as the previous image. The description translates as ‘Uncle Heniek’s farm’; the description written next to the two images in the photo album was penned, as with all such inscriptions, not by the respondent but by his mother. She put the album together once he came back to Australia, writing in all the descriptions. That this was the case speaks volumes of the attachment not just of the returnee-photographer to the photographs, but the immediate family also. Through these images the parents, and in many cases siblings, were able to return to the homeland themselves, to see what it was like, to see what their family and neighbourhoods of old looked like now, without actually making the physical journey there. In this particular case the respondent himself spoke of how his mother continues to treasure the many photos he, and later his sister, brought back from trips back to Poland. In part her affinity for these images may stem from the fact that she had not made the return journey home herself, and does not appear to plan to. The photographs, and her children’s and husband’s accounts of their respective journeys, remain for her an important link with Poland, providing her with images of
Gospodarstwo

Figure 5.2
her family and familiar landscapes more up-to-date than the ones she retains from before emigration. Unlike with the preceding image (Figure 5.1), it is not entirely clear that the two photographs in Figure 5.2 were taken primarily for the parents’ benefit, though this was probably an important motivating factor. The two photos portray the present appearance of the farm belonging to the respondent’s mother’s brother, showing to the intended audience back in Australia how it has changed—or, perhaps, how it has not changed—since the last time they had seen it, prior to emigration.

In Figure 5.3 a respondent’s grandmother is standing in front of a view of a small Polish town’s periphery. The respondent took this photo and some others similar to it to show his parents what Poland, and specific relatives in particular, looked like at the moment. Pictures of grandparents (where they were still alive) were quite common among many respondents. They were especially popular among those whose parents had not at the time of their journeys returned to Poland. By contrast, those returnees whose parents had preceded them seemed to take a lot less portrait-like images of grandparents. This suggests that photographing surviving grandparents for parents back in Australia was an important consideration that guided photographing behaviour. The returnee may have wanted to document for the parents how the grandparent/s and their living circumstances had changed, and also to just capture them while they were still alive, while they still could. There was often the sense that the returnee, or their parents, might never see a particular grandparent again. Sadly, for many interviewees, this turned out to be the case.

Because of some of the reasons outlined above, including the need to document due to perceived limited time, and also because of the nostalgic memories often associated with them, grandparents often received different photographic treatment than other relatives, being more likely than the latter to be photographed individually, not next to other individuals, in front of various props, or as part of tourism activity or family celebrations. They were deemed worthy of portraiture in their own right, for both the returnee and his or her parents and siblings to look back on. Certainly, in my own experience, my family looks back with incredible eagerness and fondness at images I have taken on my trips back to the homeland of my surviving grandparents (e.g. Figures 5.4 and 5.5). They want to see what they look like, how they have changed, no doubt wondering the whole time whether this image might be the last ever they will see of them. With other, younger relatives, there is still interest, but not the same level of impending urgency.
Behind the grandmother in figure 5.3 stretches a vista encompassing the outskirts of Golczewo, a tiny town in far northwestern Poland, near Szczecin, where the grandmother had lived since the late 1940s. It is also the town where the respondent's father, the grandmother's son, had grown up, and as such has significant emotional ties to it. The respondent too, though he never lived there, knows the town well and recalls it often and fondly—as a child, prior to migration, he visited his grandparents and uncle there often; on return journeys, too, he made an effort to spend as much time there as he could, despite the town's small size and remoteness. Indeed, this was the one place linked with his family that the returnee regretted not spending more time in.

This photograph is one of a series taken on walks with his grandmother through the small town. In each the grandmother poses in front of unassuming—but one might guess representative—street scenes, town vistas (Figures 5.6 and 5.7), or the few notable landmarks, such as the medieval tower visible in Figures 5.7 and 5.8). The photos effectively locate her in the landscape—her landscape, the landscape she has lived for the past fifty plus years. She has become part of it, at least for him, for it is with it that he associates her, and vice versa. Without her, without the family link, he would have no reason to be there, and these photographs would not have been taken. The photographs thus operate on a personal level—symbolic of and documenting a relationship between photographer, subject and place. At the same time, however, they were created in part for someone not immediately implicit in the picture: the father. One of their main aims was to act as a window into the people and places left behind, in this case the father's mother and hometown, neither of which he had seen (in person) between emigration and when these images were captured. The photos thus visualize both the grandmother and her surroundings, the town, demonstrating to interested observers in Australia what both look like now, how things may have changed since departure—or, as with a small town like this, how things may have scarcely changed much at all.

**documenting change**

Many photographs appear to have been taken with the primary aim of documenting transformations observed or assumed to have occurred since emigration, or sometimes since the last return journey. Such images can include previously familiar people, as well as places—capturing, for oneself, and relatives in Australia, how family members and friends, hometowns, even Poland itself, had changed since they were last glimpsed.

The previous figures (5.3 to 5.8), dealing with returnees' grandparents, all also function as documentary evidence of change. Other examples of photographs taken at least
Figure 5.10

Figure 5.11
partly with documenting—and communicating, to those back in Australia—how people once immediate have (or have not) changed can be seen in Figures 5.9 to 5.11. The individuals captured in these images are all young people: in the first two figures, cousins; in the latter, children of family friends, here seen posing with the returnee/photographer. The individuals involved were all much younger upon the returnees’ emigration, and had changed a lot since that time. The photographs document this change, and communicate to the returnees’ family in Australia how those they had last seen as little children look like now.

Figures 5.12 to 5.14 are examples of photographs taken with the explicit purpose of documenting changes in the landscape of Poland. The first three of these images involve places which would have been very familiar to the photographer’s family prior to migration—they were taken in or around the ‘hometown’ being rediscovered, or other sites associated with childhood, such as where the grandparents resided. In Figure 5.12 standing behind the posing returnee is a brand new building undergoing construction in the old quarter (stare miasto) of Wroclaw, this returnee’s hometown. Though new, the building is designed to look old, to blend into the existing urban fabric surrounding it. These kinds of buildings, inserted into gaps between standing older buildings, which they are designed to mimic or complement, have recently been given the nickname of plomby (literally: dental fillings). They have in the post-communist period become a relatively common phenomenon, especially in those cities which during World War II had undergone considerable destruction. The older parts of Wroclaw in particular are well-known for these urban fillings, as the post-war reconstruction of the city left many gaps and holes even in central areas. The influx of capital and rise in well-located real-estate prices in the aftermath of 1989 finally facilitated the filling of these gaps, often with impressive, or at least considerate and complementary, architecture.

The photograph thus effectively captures not only the phenomenon of plomby, but the rapid transformation of Poland more broadly, especially the built environment of its more well-off cities. It illustrates to family members in Australia Poland’s post-migration transformation on a tangible, local scale, providing an example of how once-familiar city streets are fast becoming increasingly foreign.

Figure 5.13 shows another building undergoing construction, this time out in the midst of agricultural fields: another facet of change sweeping familiar corners of the country. Sights such as this are common on the outskirts of Poland’s major cities, where apartment developments and shopping mall complexes suddenly emerge where previously there were only traditionally farmed fields. To someone travelling into such
Figure 5.13

Figure 5.14
a landscape after a prolonged absence—or viewing it via a returnee's photography—such rapid and dramatic change might come as a shock. Also worth commenting on is the appearance of the building being constructed, ignoring the scaffolding. The building's design is very different from the kinds of prefabricated apartment buildings commonly constructed in the communist period. Certainly, the respondent and his family lived in precisely such an estate in Krakow. The photograph represents a change not only from rural to urban, but from the previous, gargantuan, homogeneous and unimaginative housing estates of the communist period, to the more architecturally individualistic and creative developments which followed the collapse of communism. To Western eyes, not used to seeing tall buildings growing in the middle of farmland, the scene portrayed in the image may still look incongruous, even grotesque. However, for someone from Poland used to the endless and bleak blokowiska (huge estates of almost identical concrete apartment blocks built in the communist era) of old, encountering apartment buildings like these might come as a revelation of sorts.

Another kind of new development on the urban periphery is evident in Figure 5.14. This photograph was taken by a respondent as he walked through the newly-constructed parts of his hometown. He had been visiting old family friends, who had built for themselves the brand new house visible in the central middleground of the image. He took the photo to show—especially to his parents—how their town (as well the living circumstances of their friends) had changed since their departure. Well-designed, clearly expensive houses such as this were all but unheard of prior to 1989. Since then, however, they have become relatively common—for those few who could afford them. The image is suggestive of change in another way: the family friends became wealthy only after a free market economy was established in Poland. Previously they were in the same position as most, including the respondent's family. Their success was enmeshed with changes in the Polish government and economy. But in conveying this success the photo seems to contain also a certain pathos, at least if the intended audience—the returnee's family in Australia—is considered. The photo implies: 'you too could have had this, if you did not migrate'. Given that the respondent's father was a judge in Poland, and a well-known Solidarity activist (with connections that landed him in prison in the 1980s, but which would have benefited him immensely post-1989), such a view is not ill-founded. As the interviewee, Marek, put it:

When I went back to Poland people were telling me he could have been a senator ... or a judge of the Supreme Court. In the initial years after communism people who were part of Solidarity, and part of the opposition were elevated very quickly ... and God knows where he would have ended up.
According to Marek, his father, who now works in a factory, has deep regrets about coming to Australia, of not re-migrating back to Poland once communism crumbled. He dreams of what could have been:

For my father ... it's the thing that broke him, in a sense—he lost everything. He lost his world. His intellectual, professional, cultural world was left behind and he had to adjust to being nothing, in a sense. To being nothing here.

Reception of photographs by others in Australia, such as the parents can, then, be met with a sense of pathos or regret as well as excitement, for they represent a reminder of what could have been, what they have missed out on because of migration. In this case, photos depicting the success of the father’s peers, may only fuel regret and speculation on what could have been had the family chosen not to emigrate, or if they re-migrated back to Poland.

**photographic themes and genres**

At interview, respondents were asked what kind of photographs they generally took. Most described their photography as being primarily about people—family, old friends, etc. Others spoke of being ‘snap happy’ and taking pictures of ‘everything’. However, browsing through respondents’ photographs revealed a more complex, multi-dimensional story. Even among those who claimed to mostly capture only people, photographs involving people as core subject matter were not necessarily the most common type of image. Further, images of people are rarely only about people. Usually there are other things going on in the photo; sometimes these have been captured inadvertently, without much thought, though more often these other contexts and elements were probably the intended target, or at least provided the motivation. Thus images where friends or relatives stand in front of landscapes, tourist sites, or their houses and cities, can hardly be thought of as people photographs alone. The background, and context leading to the scene and moment being captured, are just as important. Indeed, sometimes even more so, and the people in the image act as mere decoration, added as an afterthought to add focus, a personal touch, or human element to a scene. Adding human subjects also permits the photographer to escape the label of indiscriminate happy snapper, as the inclusion of human subjects makes it hard for relatives viewing the photographs to dismiss them as boring and the photographer as excessively ‘trigger-happy’.

Although some of the returnees spoke (usually negatively) of ‘happy snapping’, of taking pictures of ‘everything’, especially during the early stages of the first journey, the images they created should by no means be dismissed as lightweight or of little
interest. The body of work created was often formidable, with every image capable of telling a story, of providing insight into the way the respondent experienced the trip, and Poland itself, as well as into how these experiences were subsequently communicated photographically to family and friends in Australia.

The following sections divide the images taken by returnees into rough genres. I will not dwell on these too much as the photographic genres into which respondents’ images fall are fairly malleable, with a high degree of overlap. The subject matter of some photographs, for instance, can stretch over several genres. Figures 5.15 and 5.16 are examples of this: they can be categorised as being simultaneously part of the family, places visited, tourist snaps and landscape genres. For this reason, perhaps it is better to speak of photographs as containing (or depicting) particular themes rather than falling into genres.

**family & celebration**

The photographic category/genre into which the largest number of images fell is family; this category includes also portrayals of celebration, such as Christmas and other holiday and/or family gatherings, as these usually involve the extended family. The sheer number, and relative homogeneity, of photos focusing on celebration in a way makes this a separate genre of its own, but given the difficulty in separating family from celebration photographs—the two types are intricately enmeshed, implicating one another—they are both treated under a larger category.

Examples of photographs falling into the family genre include Figures 5.17 to 5.21. In Figure 5.17 members of the respondent’s extended family gather on the verdant shores of a lake which is the family’s traditional holidaying ground. Prior to emigration the respondent, Kasia, recalled spending countless endless summers there, surrounded not only by nature, but by cousins, aunts, uncles and grandparents. Of all the areas of Poland, this area was the place Kasia spoke of the most fondly, and which she, while in Australia, missed the most. This image sees her returning to this magical place, along with the family members, in her mind linked with it forever. Similarly, in Figure 5.18 another returnee, Joanna, enjoys a family picnic on the outskirts of Lublin, the city of her upbringing as a child. The site at which they picnic is also one associated with the extended family, as members of it own a property there, as well as with childhood memories.

Figure 5.19 is one of many photographs depicting Christmas celebrations. Some of these were already shown earlier in this chapter. The high number of Christmas images alludes to the importance of the event, and to the fact that many respondents’
Figure 5.20

Figure 5.21

In Annilotsen family with landscape imagery, Figures 5.21 and 5.22 illustrate how integrated various photographic genres could be. Family photos might only depict family landscape themes, but they are not only about the landscape itself. The photos resemble a past of remembered subject as in the foreground. Nevertheless, the landscape and people are not considered parts of a particular background, but are considered more a part of the whole. However, although the unknown of a particular background, and whether the landscape is part of a particular background, but are considered to be part of the whole image. It is part of the photograph to an important part of it, and not that it comes
return travels coincided with Christmas. As mentioned in the previous chapter, for those returnees able to enjoy a traditional Polish Christmas, often amidst a snowy landscape and surrounded by a large number of rarely seen relatives, was a revelation. Certainly, it represented a big change from Australia where there were few if any relatives beyond the immediate nuclear unit with whom to celebrate Christmas or other special occasions.

Another, this time less formal, gathering of members of extended family is visible in Figure 5.20. The returnee’s grandmother, cousins, and cousin’s family gather over the ubiquitous Polish supper: bread, cold meats, bean salad, and tea. Images of this type are also very common. Gatherings like this were probably more common still—it’s just that on most occasions they were not documented photographically, probably because they occurred so frequently. Wherever in Poland each respondent travelled, wherever he or she visited family or friends, scenes such as this would be repeated—almost nightly. Respite came only during independent travel, where the returnee travelled to places where there were no family.

In Figure 5.21, a respondent poses with her uncle atop a castle ramparts, or a tower, overlooking an undulating western Polish landscape of lake and forest. This is one of the many photographs combining posing family members, and often the returnee also, with shots of the landscape or various tourist attractions visited. Images like this point to the fact that the family element of the return journey to Poland was not necessarily confined to sitting around family members’ homes, or walking around their cities or towns. Often it involved also being taken by those family members further afield, to places they considered tourist-worthy. Castles, such as the one being visited here, as well as the kind of picturesque landscapes seen stretching behind the castle, are examples of places relatives deemed worthy of taking their visitors to, when they could spare the time. Showing their ‘Australian’ guests around the country like this was thought to be an important part of being ‘a good guest’, and for those who could afford it no effort was spared to show the returnee a good time, and to acquaint them with regional attractions, and sites associated with family history.

In combining family with landscape imagery, Figure 5.21 also demonstrates how entangled various photographic genres could be. Family photos rarely only depict family; landscape photos often are not only about the landscape, indeed sometimes the chief intended subject is in the foreground. Nevertheless, the landscape still plays an important part—it is never just an incidental background devoid of significant meaning. However accidental the inclusion of a particular backdrop may initially have been, once it is part of the photograph it is an important part of it, and one that is open
to reading by subsequent viewers, even those not familiar with context. An individual looking through the photographs of a returnee, even where all of the photographs are predominantly concerned with family members, would from the photos' backgrounds glean a fair idea of what the various places visited look like, and what Poland itself looks like now. The effect of such images would be especially profound where the viewer had not ever set foot in Poland, indeed knew little about the country. The importance of the backdrop landscape, whether in the media or snapshot photography, cannot be underestimated. As a separate category of respondent photography, landscape photography will be discussed further on in this section.

**Hometowns Revisited**

Another common and easily recognizable genre of returnee photography involves images dealing with return to, and rediscovery of, the returnee's old hometown. Such images tend to be especially common on the first trip back, with the initial (and most emotionally charged) return to the city or town most readily associated with pre-migration youth. Hometown images varied considerably, depending on whether the returnee had any family left in the hometown of old, or only more distant family friends.

Figure 5.22 is a photograph taken by myself. The photograph is the very first of many photographs captured on my first trip back to Poland, at the age of nineteen. Visible in the image is the view from the apartment in which I lived until the age of nine. At the time of my first and second visits to Poland I was able to revisit the old apartment, and to spend a lot of time in my hometown, the city of Plock, only because my grandparents lived there. They moved into the apartment following my parents' unauthorized departure from Poland (they went on a holiday to Italy, and never returned), to look after the grandchildren (my sister and me) until we were able to join our parents in Australia eighteen months later. Since then the apartment has been sold, and upon my third and fourth trips back I was unable to visit my old home, nor spend much time in Plock itself as no family members remained there, only old family friends. The view captured is one I can now visit only through photos like this one, and through memories of childhood and the more recent homecoming trips when my grandparents lived there still.

The view from the balcony facing our old street is probably to most eyes uneventful, even unaesthetic. A fresh cover of snow envelops a typical 1970s Polish apartment estate, a few trees and parked cars. Yet for me the excitement I felt on that day was feverish. I had just woken up, still recovering from jet lag, and this view was the first I saw of my old town in daylight. It was the same view I had enjoyed throughout the
Figure 5.22

Figure 5.23
first chapter of my life, and furthermore it was virtually unchanged. Only some of the
makes of car on the street below were different than in 1986, when I left Poland. That I
had awoken to a snowy landscape made the day, and the image, even more special.
This was actually the first time I had seen snow in the ten years since emigration, and it
seemed a magical world—even though, rationally, and in retrospect, it was hardly that.
Plock, despite some scenic, historic parts, is a polluted, nondescript kind of place, these
days famous not for its medieval exploits but for being home to the largest
petrochemical plant in Europe. This was actually visible from the balcony, taking up
most of the northern horizon (Figure 5.23). But nostalgia, and nostos, can be pretty
potent forces, transforming even the most mundane and everyday scenes into
‘mythical wonderlands’ awash with memory and emotion.

After that first photo on that very first day I walked the town every day for two weeks,
retracing past footsteps, reliving old memories, revisiting old playgrounds and friends,
and taking a very large number of some of the most mundane photos imaginable. It
must have bored those who saw the images subsequently, though for me the images
remain far from boring. Through them now I am able to revisit, and reminisce about,
not only the Poland—and Plock—I left behind all those years ago, but the times I
visited and how I enjoyed those visits.

Of course looking at images like this I now also remember the less positive aspects of
the trips: the cold weather, the inadequately short hours of daylight, the arguments
with grandparents (usually over whether or not I’d had enough to eat), the general
feeling of being housebound. All of these only became annoying after a while, after
spending too much time in the one place, when the novelty had worn off. Initially,
however, being in my old hometown, staying in what used to be my home, was quite a
revelation.

Figures 5.24 and 5.25 were taken by respondent Aleksandra when, upon her return to
her hometown of Wroclaw. The first of the two images is a view of her old
neighbourhood. Visible in the picture are the tops of a few trees and a wall of densely
packed apartment buildings, some of which appear to be in a severe state of disrepair.
To most external observers, in Australia, Poland or even elsewhere, the view is an
unexciting one few would ordinarily think to photograph. But to the photographer­
returnee the view is about more than the physicality or aesthetics of the view, or the
moment in which it was captured. Embedded in this view are memories, however
vague, of a time gone by. Revisiting these sites of childhood, photographing them—
and subsequently looking at these photographs—helps to trigger these hazy memories,
and to add to them a certain degree of tangibility.
Figure 5.25 depicts another aspect of Aleksandra's return to the hometown: a picture taken while visiting the Ostrow Tumski quarter of Wroclaw. Located on an island in the Odra river, this is the most ancient part of town and home to medieval churches, cathedrals and other ecclesiastical buildings. The two figures at the centre of the photo are the respondents' then boyfriend, another Polish-born visitor from Australia, and Aleksandra's cousin, who lives in Wroclaw and was showing the two visitors around. Revisiting the hometown, the photograph demonstrates, was not only about returning to areas where one grew up, or where family still lived, but included a lot of exploration where the respondent discovered (or, more accurately, rediscovered) much of the city or town. For many, such explorations involved constant comparison with the remembered pre-migration past. Sometimes this led to disappointment if the hometown sites encountered diverged from the way they were remembered:

My old apartment block suddenly had these new thermal insulation boards plastered all over the place. Instead of being a grey block, it was a block with these geometric designs or patterns on it—which I didn't like at all, it spoilt my image of what the place was like. My old playground was gone—it was levelled with the ground. A whole new line of more shops had come across the horizon in front of the football field. It wasn't the fact that these were shops that was important to me, but that the buildings were there, and therefore the visual ... scenery, had changed, markedly.

This returnee, as he visited the sites he remembered from his youth was disappointed by some of the changes he saw, even where (objectively speaking) the changes could be described as positive and beneficial to the community. Such transformed landscapes disturbed him only because they were at odds with the nostalgic landscapes he was so keen to revisit.

Figures 5.26 to 5.28 document another respondent's (Sylwia) journey back into her hometown and the sites of significance associated with it. In Figure 5.26 Sylwia has photographed the apartment estate in which she had grown up prior to emigration. The apartment blocks, to outsiders, look almost as bleak and dreary as the weather, but to the returnee her childhood memories and family stories, as well as the fact that vistas such as these have been well removed from her contemporary reality since migration, make the place special, full of meaning, and definitely worth photographing. Many Poles resident in Poland, for whom such estates represent mundane, everyday reality, as well as Australians for whom such scenes lack the history, memory or aesthetics required for photogeneity would, of course, disagree. But the unique experiences of Polish-Australian returnees make them follow a rather different aesthetic, as evidenced through their photography.
Figure 5.28
Figure 5.27 shows Sylwia standing outside her family’s old apartment. Unfortunately, she was unable to actually go inside the flat as complete strangers lived there now. But the very act of going right up to her old flat, and having her photo taken there, is suggestive of the importance to her of the site, and the excitement she felt when visiting it. Figure 5.28 also illustrates Sylwia’s journey as she revisited places associated with her family and youth, and relived the memories, for her, embedded in these places. In this image she poses for the camera wearing a judge’s clothes while sitting in a local courtroom. Sylwia’s father was a district judge, before his involvement in Solidarity in the early 1980s landed him in prison, and while presiding sat in this very seat while wearing clothes identical to these. Sylwia here visits her father’s old workplace (with the help of some of his colleagues, who still work there) and (presumably for the camera and an audience back home) inserts herself into his old role.

**places visited**

Browsing through collections of return photography, it is relatively easy to gauge the kind of places which were visited on each of a respondent’s journeys—or at least the places which were visited and also photographed, for of course it is easy for places and events to be omitted from the photographic record. All it takes is bad weather, unaesthetic or dangerous surroundings, even a stolen camera.

Photographs overtly documenting places other than the hometown visited can be described as another genre. Images falling into this category share a concern with photographing place, often by way of iconic landmarks or otherwise aesthetically sound or in other ways unusual elements. Nostalgia, specifically sites and sights recalling vestiges of pre-migration life (or harking back, perhaps, to family history more distant still) can be an important influence in such images.

Figures 5.29 to 5.36 track some of the places, other than hometowns, respondents visited. Places visited range from large cities to smaller towns to rural areas. Although respondents never lived in any of the places captured by these images, they are all somehow connected with them, through family and/or childhood experiences. Figure 5.29 shows Sylwia standing in the market square of the Old Town of Wroclaw. Unlike for Aleksandra, Wroclaw is not Sylwia’s hometown, and as such the visit to this city was of a markedly different character. Certainly, those of Sylwia’s photographs taken in Wroclaw differ from those she took in places she knew more intimately, such as her hometown or even her grandparents’ towns. Wroclaw was one of the many places Sylwia visited because she had relatives resident there. As with other places where she stayed with relatives, most of the sightseeing involved being shown around by family
Figure 5.29

Figure 5.31 to 5.37 are images with 72 respondents as they recollected to having grown up with their extended families and in which, although the respondents were young, they moved away from a lot of close friends or children. They generally associated these experiences with positive memories associated with their family and writing their names such as being more related to socioeconomic circumstances. Figure 5.38 shows a street in a small Polish city where a number of the respondents photographed a extended family's house. It is a typical regional small town area with which many people in Poland would be familiar. Similarly, Figure 5.32 is the same respondent's photo of a storefront in a village where his grandparents lived and which he would have been very familiar. Figure 5.33 is one of many images by different
members. Thus, places visited, seen and photographed were often places relatives wanted the returnee to see, or thought the visitor wanted to see. However, Sylwia’s experiences in places like Wroclaw were not entirely disembedded from past memories; since family members lived there, she had visited the place previously as a child.

Figure 5.30 is a view of a wintry Warsaw taken from its highest building, the Palace of Culture (a much maligned Stalinist ‘monstrosity’, it is said that it has the best view in town—but only because it is the only place from which the Palace itself can not be seen!). Warsaw was visited by all respondents at some stage, and most had also visited it prior to emigration. Although it was not the hometown of any of the respondents, most had some family or family friends resident there or near there, and these generally showed the returnee around the city. Warsaw was one of the primary destinations because of its size, central location, capital status, international airport, and associated centrality in Polish history and culture. However, for most respondents, it did not make a positive impression. Part of this was due to Warsaw’s almost total destruction in World War II; apart from the Old Town, which was painstakingly rebuilt as it once was, most of the postwar reconstruction was in a grand, modernist style: imposing and functional, but far from aesthetically pleasing. Another factor was Warsaw’s large size, which ensured that it lacked the small-scale charm of some other cities; at the same time, however, it lacked the attractiveness, cosmopolitanism, and friendliness of large cities, for example Sydney, that the returnees were used to. So it was the worst of both worlds, and worsened further by a lack of significant family connections to the city. Moreover there is a general bias among Poles against Warsaw, stemming largely from it being the capital and chief city, as well as its perceived unattractiveness. This discourse, repeated often by those from outside the Warsaw region, would no doubt have played a role in influencing the way returnees viewed Warsaw.

Figures 5.31 to 5.33 are images taken by respondents as they travelled to towns associated with their extended families and in which, although the respondents never lived, they nevertheless spent a lot of time there as children. They consequently possessed many—generally positive—memories associated with these places, and revisiting them after such a long absence was an emotional experience. Figure 5.31 shows a street in a small southeastern Polish city where a number of the respondent-photographer’s extended family live. It is a typical regional small town scene with which many people in Poland would be familiar. Similarly, Figure 5.32 is the same respondent’s photo of a scene in village where his grandparents lived, and with which he would have been very familiar. Figure 5.33 is one of many images by another
The frequency of cemetery visits and photographs among volunteers reflects also the

Figure 5.32

Figure 5.33
respondent in the small town where his grandmother and uncle live. He spent much
time there as a child, and also on each of his return trips, and remembers it and the
landscapes surrounding it fondly. Here we see his uncle and a cousin standing on a
pier in the middle of a lake, while around them stretches the kind of undulating semi-
rural scenery typical of the northwest of Poland. Once again, the fact that the returnees
were revisiting these places, rather than simply visiting or living there, provides these
sites (and photographs) additional, contextualising meaning. They are imbued with
nostalgia and the triumphant excitement of nostos.

A relatively common type of photograph is of cemeteries. Examples include Figures
5.34 to 5.36. Cemeteries, specifically the graves of deceased relatives, were visited by
many returnees. The fact that photographs were taken of the experience implies also
the importance of the experience to the returnee, and/or the perceived need to
document the trip, as well as the appearance of relevant graves, for family members in
Australia. This, for instance, is how a respondent described Figure 5.36:

    My grandmother’s grave—that’s a shot of me putting a candle on her grave, again so
    that my mum can see its state at the moment, whether anything’s changed.

The frequency of cemetery visits and photographs among returnees reflects also the
importance of cemeteries and visits to these in Polish culture. Cemeteries in Poland are
often the most immaculately maintained part of any town or city, with innumerable
visitors paying homage to deceased relatives and friends and helping to keep their
graves neat and adorned by candles and flowers. On All Soul’s Day (November 1st) in
particular, virtually the entire Polish nation descends on cemeteries throughout the
country to pay their respects to loved ones. Given this, the dutiful seriousness with
which returnees approached their cemetery visits is not surprising. Visiting relatives’
graves, as well as being a family duty offered a chance to reconnect with the past, and
the deceased relatives specifically, many of whom had not been seen since migration.
Adding to the emotion and personal importance of the occasion was the connection
such visits provided to what is a core element of Polish tradition, one most would have
remembered from childhood, yet one which had been missing from their lives in
Australia.

Interestingly, though perhaps understandably, mention of cemetery visits was missing
from the initial, verbal-only component of interview sessions with all respondents.
None of the interviewees brought them up, but in the sessions where interviewing was
based around the respondent’s own photographs, the significance of cemetery visits,
and images of these visits, quickly became clear. The photographs, and the discussion
Figure 5.36

Examples of typical marine photography. Outlines Figures 5.37 to 5.42, and 5.44 to 5.50, all of which depict major tourist attractions in Poland. The first two images capture parts of the well-preserved medieval town of the city of Toruń. Figure 5.37 is a view from the courtyard of the city's urban half onto its clock tower. The town of Figur 5.37 is a statue of Copernicus, who lived in Toruń. Visible in the background are some picturesque ancient buildings and quiet residential streets that help make the city a major tourism destination. Figure 5.38 is a photograph of the Gdańsk waterfront, while Figures 5.40 to 5.42 are of Klockow, a sea town, both of whose cities are rich in history and visitor attractions. The cityscapes of these coastal areas are
they initiated, represent a good example of the benefits of the use of respondent photography in social research. Their inclusion in interview sessions unearthed subject matter which would otherwise have remained untouched, and provides accounts which are more detailed, and more vividly and enthusiastically recalled, than they might have been in a primarily verbal interview environment.

**tourist snaps**

Some photographs bear minimal signs of nostalgic emotion, and re-acquaintance with family and place once left behind. Such images, superficially at least (that is, ignoring the contextualising commentary that goes with them) appear little different from the stereotypical tourist shot—the stylised or even clichéd shots of sites frequented by tourists, Polish and international alike. Returnees took photographs of such tourist places because everyone did this at popular tourist attractions. There is a reason such places are popular with tourists, just as there is a reason why so many images of such places are captured: they have significant aesthetic, historical or cultural value, or all of the above. In addition, once they are added to a 'must-see' tourist list, they necessitate a visit—and often copious photography—irrespective of any inherent values that originally placed them on that list.

Sometimes, perhaps inevitably, returnees too act as do other tourists. Returnees do not just revisit the landscapes of youth, and they don't just spend time in family members' homes. They also visit—either independently, or are taken there by relatives—places they have little direct knowledge of from childhood, but which are very much part of the discursive Poland. 'You haven't really seen Poland till you've seen ...' relatives and friends would say, inserting whatever popular tourist attraction associated with the Poland of the popular Polish imagination the returnee had not yet visited. Such destinations included Krakow, Zakopane and the Tatra Mountains, Warsaw, Gdansk, Czestochowa, Kazimierz Dolny, the Mazurian Lakes, and the Baltic Coast, in roughly that order.

Examples of typical tourist photography include Figures 5.37 to 5.42, and 5.44 to 5.50, all of which depict major tourist attractions in Poland. The first two images capture parts of the well preserved medieval heart of the city of Torun. Figure 5.37 is a view from the courtyard of the city's town hall onto its clock tower. The focus of Figure 5.38 is a statue of Copernicus, who lived in Torun. Visible in the background are some picturesque ancient buildings and quaint cobblestone streets that help make the city a major tourism drawcard, and also a UNESCO site. Figure 5.39 is a photograph of the Gdansk waterfront, while Figures 5.40 to 5.42 are of Krakow. Like Torun, both of these cities are rich in history and tourist attractions. The cityscapes of their central areas are
picturesque and appear to have changed little over the past three or more centuries. This makes them quite unlike the majority of urban Poland, which is considerably less historic or scenic. It also makes them well removed from the respondents' immediate experiences in Australia, where the kind of history on display in the urban fabric of cities like Krakow is noticeably absent.

Most respondents listed the cities mentioned above as among those places they visited they liked most. That these were classically picturesque places with plenty of attractions, and also distinct from the cities they knew more intimately (in Poland and Australia alike) played a part in this (these same features also helped to make these cities into popular attractions among Polish as well as international tourists). In particular, time and time again, the one city that was mentioned as the returnee's favourite place visited (other than sites associated with upbringing, which fall into a rather different category), was Krakow. The history, the architecture and atmosphere combined to make this former capital of Poland—and, importantly, one of the few major Polish cities to escape World War II relatively unscathed—a destination respondents recalled with great fondness. The fact that this enthusiasm for Krakow is evident among Poles generally, who commonly regard it as the cultural and spiritual heart of the nation, contributed to the returnees' opinions and experiences. The reputation of Krakow, relayed by relatives or history books and tourist guides, preceded and influenced the visit.

Figures 5.40 and 5.41 portray parts of the town square of Krakow, which dates from the middle ages and is reputedly the largest in Europe. The buildings visible in the square's centre are the iconic Sukiennice, or Cloth Halls. Figure 5.42 is a view from a courtyard of Wawel cathedral, seen here from the courtyard of the Wawel castle and cathedral complex, which sits on a high hill overlooking the Vistula River and the centre of the city. The complex is the oldest part of the city, and also the unofficial heart of the Polish nation. Past kings were crowned and buried here, and the castle was also the seat of government until the capital was moved to Warsaw in the 17th Century. Krakow's central role in the history of Poland is in part responsible for the iconic status the city enjoys today among Poles, including young returning Polish émigrés eager to find out more about their roots, Poland, and Polishness (Polskosc).

Interestingly, unlike photographs taken in sites associated with family or childhood, those taken in tourist cities like Krakow entirely ignore the less aesthetic and historic parts of town—i.e. the great bulk of any of these cities, which are ringed by prefabricated apartment estates as gigantic and bleak as those elsewhere. Even Krakow has more than its share of such blokowiska, as well as heavy industry. Such vistas were
heavily captured elsewhere, in part because of associations with the past, but in cities that were supposed to be more special than the ordinary Polish town in which respondents grew up, these were effectively blocked out. The only time among all the returnees’ photographs in which the non-central neighbourhoods of Krakow are on display, for instance, is among the images of the one interviewee for whom Krakow was not just a sightseeing destination, but also his hometown. Figure 5.43 is an example of these—it shows a typical building on the Krakow osiedle (estate/neighbourhood) this respondent once lived on, and to which he here returns.

Figure 5.44 Is a tourist shot taken at another iconic Polish site, the Jasna Gora monastery in Czestochowa. Unlike the tourist cities mentioned previously, Czestochowa has little relevance to foreign tourists, as its attractions are religious and specific to Polish Catholicism and mythology associated with it. The monastery-fortress houses the Black Madonna, an icon to which are ascribed miraculous powers, and which is often used as a symbol of the Polish nation. To this day Czestochowa remains an important destination of religious pilgrimages from across (and sometimes beyond) Poland. As such, it is reckoned to be a ‘must-see’ tourist destination by Poles, especially older and more religious ones. However, of the respondents of this study only a minority had ever travelled there. Those that did, though they documented their visit photographically, did not rate it particularly highly and most did not report encountering feelings of religious awakening.

Figures 5.45 to 5.47 are photographs taken in the Tatra Mountains, another ‘must-see’ tourist destination according to most Poles, a sentiment shared by those returnees who had traveled there. The Tatras, due south of Krakow on the Slovakian border, are the highest mountains in Poland. A range of the Carpathian Mountains, they are the most ‘alpine’ in appearance of Poland’s mountains. Their scenery, hiking opportunities, skiing and unique local Gorale culture combine to make them a very popular destination, so much so that at peak times they get impossibly crowded. Figure 5.45 captures the view—and tourists, including the respondent herself—from a lookout on Gobalowka mountain, with some of the peaks of the Tatra range visible in the background. Figure 5.46 shows another respondent (on the left) posing in front of one of the traditional-style wooden houses of Zakopane, the main town of the region. The snowy, mountainous landscapes visible in Figure 5.47 further help illustrate the picturesque scenery of the Tatra region. Again, for returnees (as for most Poles) the attraction of the Tatras lies in their singular uniqueness—they are quite unlike the rest of Poland, which is overwhelmingly flat or undulating. They seem to contradict the stereotype of Poland, especially the one held by outsiders. Anecdotally, many westerners, accustomed to rather different place-images of Poland, express surprise
that scenes like this exist there. For Poles too, though they are identified as an intrinsic part of the nation, they are well removed from the flat, urban Poland most commonly encounter. For returnees, the mountains are exotic, not really part of the Poland they left behind, but at the same an intrinsic part of the Polish national mythology they grew up with. Travel there is not quite the same as travel to more familiar parts of the country, where nostalgia, memory and family act as important factors, and the photographs taken reflect this.

The Baltic coastline is another example of an exotic landscape acting as a tourist attraction. Poland is predominantly an inland country and few Poles live on or near the coastline. Historically, until Poland's border shifted westwards following World War II the country has only ever had access to a relatively small stretch of coastline, around Gdansk. Nevertheless, the Baltic has over time become an integral part of the national psyche, if only because of the exotic scenery and holidaying opportunities it offers. Fewer respondents had visited the coast as visited Krakow or the mountains. Among those that did visit, while they enjoyed the experience, they tended not to rate it particularly highly compared to the other tourist sites visited. One explanation for this is that unlike Poles in Poland, Polish-Australians would not consider the Polish coastline to be especially special, as that was one thing—unlike old cities, snowy forests or high mountains—that they were exposed to in Australia. In addition, compared with Australian beaches, the Polish equivalent was rather underwhelming.

Figure 5.48 is an example of a photograph taken at the seaside. In it, a relative of the respondent, Joanna, poses for the camera in front of the Baltic on a pleasant—though by no means hot—summer's day. Compared with the other respondent photographs reproduced so far in this thesis, the Baltic coastline stands out starkly. Therein lies part of its attraction, at least for those who do not see the sea often.

A rather different, more somber, sort of tourist destination can be seen in Figures 5.49 and 5.50. The photos were taken in Auschwitz and Majdanek concentration camps, respectively. These photos recall another Poland, a pre-WWII Poland, home to a Jewish community several million strong—as well as even larger Ukrainian and Belarusian minorities—and the grisly way in which this multi-ethnic Poland came to an end. That returnees visited these Nazi concentration camps, and took these images, reminds us that in the contemporary period these too are tourist attractions, albeit more so for international than domestic Polish tourists. Sadly, many people around the world know Poland primarily because of the Holocaust. For many of those that travel to
Figure 5.50

A few examples of vintage landscapes photography include Figures 5.51 in 3.35. Poetry came next in the section dealing with modern landscapes. Figure 3.31 shows a man walking through the depths of a forest of smoke and mystery. Figure 1.12 shows a snowfield, surrounded by thick pine forest. Figure 1.43 pictures an...
Poland from the West, including on package tours, Auschwitz is considered the foremost 'must-see' destination. There are even packaged expeditions which concentrate exclusively on sites connected with the Holocaust.

The returnees' images of concentration camps can be read in two ways. They are an emotional reconnection with the past, and with a Poland they had never known and most likely can barely imagine. It is simply out of their realm of experience, and visits to places like this reacquaint them with it, and thus with an important but often ignored element of national history and identity. At the same time, the visits can be interpreted in the light of the returnees' life in Australia, where they came into contact with the dominant western discourse on the Holocaust, and Poland. In this discourse the concepts of the Holocaust, Poland and Auschwitz are effectively enmeshed, with mention of any one of these words conjuring up the others. It could be that when respondents visited concentration camps they were being western tourists, visiting a site connected not just to Polish history, but world history—and popular culture as well.

**landscape photographs**

Landscape photographs, or at least photographs that can be described as containing views of the landscape (whether or not there is another subject in the background), were one of the most common categories of imagery captured by the respondents. As well as images of landscapes of historic or scenic value, such as the tourist snapshots included above, returnees took a lot of photographs of ordinary, in some ways 'quintessentially Polish' landscapes they encountered. This was especially the case on the first trip, and early on each of the subsequent trips. Such photos were common when the returnee was visiting once familiar landscapes such as those surrounding the hometown, grandparents' place of residence, or places where the respondent's family vacationed. Such landscapes were considered exotic, at least by the visitors from Australia—unlike local Poles, they did not encounter such sights often. Further, they harked back to pre-migration youth, and family lore and photos and were, as such, awash in memory and emotion. They were not so much physical landscapes seen and lived daily, but had entered the realm of nostalgic landscapes, recalled with fondness and longing from afar, in diasporic dislocation. Upon return to the homeland these remembered or imagined landscapes encountered and merged with the real thing.

A few examples of returnee landscape photography include Figures 5.51 to 5.55. Further examples are provided in the section dealing with nostalgic landscapes below. In figure 5.51 a man walks through the depths of a forest of birch and spruce. Figure 5.52 shows a grassy field, surrounded by thick pine forest. Figure 5.53 pictures an
Figure 5.55
anonymous, generic landscape in central Poland. Much of Poland is like this: flat, covered by open fields, dotted by a few trees and, off in the distance, a wall of dark forest. Respondents generally expressed a great degree of affinity for such forest and field landscapes, mainly because it reminded them of their youth, but also because landscapes such as this were missing from their lives in Australia. Such nostalgic landscapes will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter.

In contrast to landscape photography focusing on everyday scenery harking back to youth, were various photographs of the exceptional or tourist landscape. Figure 5.54 and 5.55 are examples. Such images, unlike the former, follow a more universal landscape photography aesthetic, and are more in line with the kind of landscape images captured by local Poles and tourists alike. In this, they are similar to the ‘tourist snap’ type of respondent photography discussed above. Figure 5.54 shows a castle and cathedral complex on a high escarpment overlooking an ice-covered Vistula River. The landscape is cloaked in a deep cover of freshly-fallen snow. Figure 5.55 shows the rocky crags and coniferous forests of the Tatra Mountains, shrouded in mist and snow. Both photographs can be considered ‘scenic’, and under similar circumstances international tourists or local Poles may have taken similar photos. But as with the nostalgic landscapes such photographs also convey the way in which returnees' view Poland, and Polskosc—Polishness. Just as in their trips to and photos of places important to Polish national history and identity, such as Krakow and Czestochowa, returnees were in effect exploring what it means to be Polish, so photos of scenic landscapes act as visual representations of this Polishness. This is especially the case where the landscapes do not look like they could be replicated in Australia—as is the case in Figures 5.54 and 5.55. The photographs depict a Poland which is simultaneously beautiful and as different as can be from respondents' experiences of Australia.

**photographic voids and absences**

Of course, not all elements of the experience are ever documented photographically. Nobody photographs absolutely everything. Respondent photography in itself is not an accurate arbiter of experience or places visited. There are always gaps in the photographic record. However, the existence of such gaps is largely irrelevant to this thesis, as the key concern are the photographs taken, and why, and how photographing behaviour can help us understand the respondents' experience of return and their relationship to identity and the Polish homeland and its landscapes. What matters is why particular photos were taken, and others not; once taken, they are capable of influencing how a trip or specific places are remembered and
communicated to others. An absence of images of a place or event, however arbitrary
the reason for this absence, ultimately ensures that these are recalled differently than if
a photograph was taken. They may be remembered in less detail. They may even be
forgotten. Or they might even be remembered more fondly, because there is no
physical evidence to remind a person reminiscing what things were really like. The
mind is free to wander, to exaggerate, to remember the good while forgetting what at
the time seemed bad aspects. Further, memories not supported by photographs are not
likely to be supplanted by them. Over time photos, and the verbal explanatory
discourse that accompanies them, can become the de facto memory of a place or event.

So photographic voids and absences, too, are worthy of consideration—just as the
photographs themselves are, though clearly it is difficult to ascertain what precisely
was never photographed (the interviewees are unlikely to recall everything), let alone
why. The absence of photographs of a particular place might suggest that it was never
visited. Alternatively, the conditions may not have been right for photography: the
weather or light were poor, a location generally failed to impress or it was not a tourist
site and photography might raise eyebrows, or access to a camera may have at the time
been limited.

In terms of geographical areas of the country represented by respondents’
photographs, there were definite voids. I came across no (or in some cases only a
limited few) photos of the Katowice-Upper Silesia region, Lodz, or the Mazurian
region. All these places are far from peripheral to the Polish nation. The Katowice
conurbation, a massive, sprawling complex of interconnected urban and industrial
areas that is home to over 4 million people, is in effect the largest city in Poland. Lodz
is similarly important, among the cities of Poland ranking just below Warsaw in terms
of population. Images of these places were missing because none of the returnees lived
in these regions, and neither did any of their close relations. Nor were these places
particularly historic, picturesque or with other tourist attractions. Upper Silesia and
Lodz are in Poland popularly associated with industry and urban blight.

No photographs exist of the Mazurian region for a rather different reason. The
Mazurian Lakes district, in the northeast of the country, is very picturesque and
frequently described by Poles as a 'must-see' destination. It is one of the country's
premier holidaying areas. However, none of the respondents spent significant time
there (though some passed through it, en route to somewhere else). In part this can be
explained by the area's remoteness and the fact that none of the respondent's
possessed relatives living in or near the region. That much respondent travel took
place in winter was also a factor; Mazuria is predominantly a summer destination.
Further, for respondents concerned with acquainting themselves with Polish history, and with reconnecting with the Polish side of their identity, the potential contribution of Mazuria would be marginal. Pre-World War II, Mazuria’s history is largely Prussian (though it was home to the Mazurs, a Polish-speaking or bilingual minority that nevertheless identified with Germany). Mazuria’s contemporary significance is based around its scenic and recreational exceptionality, though over time it has through this exceptionality become an integral and much visited part of Poland, except by returnees.

**landscape, nostalgia and memory**

When asked about his favourite parts of Poland, one of the thesis respondents, Marek, replied:

I’d have to say that there are favourite parts from a tourist perspective, and there are favourite parts from an emotional or nostalgic perspective. I mean [my hometown] is a favourite of mine ... [also] where my grandmother lives, simply because these are places that I associate with my childhood, and because that’s where many people close to me reside. It would be similar with Poznan, for example, or Zielona Góra ... they’re dear to my heart not because of the way they look or anything else, but simply because my life is closely linked to them. But in terms of natural beauty spots in Poland, I mean I have seen a lot of the country. ... Kraków is very nice, Wrocław, some towns ... the mountains—the mountains are beautiful, places like Zakopane. There are certain stretches of the Baltic coast, the wild stretches, which are quite nice as well ... And then generally of course the forests—forest anywhere in Europe. The forest is beautiful for walks and mushroom picking, etc. You might have lakes—there’s a lot of lakes in my area. We in Australia are used to beaches and pools ... rivers, perhaps. Most of Poland goes swimming in the summer in lakes ... So that’s another thing that one becomes nostalgic about, lakes ... So yeah, those would be my ... favourite places.

Clearly, landscape features prominently in Marek’s account. He also makes a clear distinction between two distinct categories of place and landscape, or at least two different ways in which these can be approached: the emotional/nostalgic, and touristic. As was shown earlier in the chapter, this distinction is also evident in the respondents’ photography, with there being a clear demarcation line between images capturing family and places associated with family and upbringing, and more tourist-style photographs associated with mainstream attractions rather than sites imbued with personal memory. This is especially the case with images featuring the landscape. Many of the returnees’ images, especially those taken early on, were taken because the landscape they depict has personal significance—it reminds them of pre-migration
youth, and/or, perhaps, is just so radically different from their Australian experience. As will be demonstrated throughout this chapter, such images, and landscapes, are ones that returnees most readily associate with Poland, and the ones they miss and reminisce about while in Australia. They may not seem particularly special, or even aesthetically pleasing, to the outside observer, but the nostalgia inherent in them, and the excitement of rediscovering them often make them, to the returnee, special and among the highlights of the experience.

The kind of nostalgic landscapes Marek reminisces about, and enjoyed travelling back into are illustrated in figure 5.56 to 5.58. All three are winter scenes taken on a frozen lake on the outskirts of Marek’s hometown. He was taken there by old family friends from the town, who are visible alongside him in the first two photos. Marek stands in a snowy landscape foreign to his experiences in Australia, yet it is a landscape that is very familiar—the landscape of Marek’s youth. As a boy he swam in or skated on the lake, or relaxed on its shores. It possesses potent nostalgia value, which is only heightened by Marek’s removal, via migration, from this landscape, and even landscapes similar to it.

Nostalgic landscapes were by no means, however, confined to the returnee’s hometown and its surrounds. They also included sites connected with the extended family, especially places where many weekends and vacation were spent. Notable among these were where respondents’ grandparents resided. The following quote, from Jasiek, accompanies figure 5.59:

This is taken in Stawiszyn, where she [his grandmother] lives ... [The photo] reminds me of the good times also—when I lived in Poland permanently I spent a lot of summers in Stawiszyn, particularly there—it’s near a small town yet it’s sort of more of a country type property, it’s removed from the town itself.

Landscapes where most of the respondents’ spent much vacation time as children, including grandparents’ homes, were usually more rural or smaller towns within close proximity to rural areas. Prior to emigration all respondents lived in urban areas, though most were also well acquainted with village or small town life through family connections. Time spent in such areas seems to have made a big impression on many respondents—not only because these places were associated with grandparents and vacation time, but because they represented a respite from the urban neighbourhoods where they lived their ordinary lives. Respondents were likely to recall these kind of landscapes extremely fondly, often more so even than the landscapes of the immediate hometown. When in Australia, respondents were nostalgic about Poland, and these
Figure 5.59
were among the landscapes they were most likely to miss. When travelling back to Poland, visits to such areas were among the highlights. They brought memories flooding back, and in turn spawned new memories—of the newest visit—which, together with new photographs, could be taken back to the other, new homeland.

Figure 5.59 to 5.62 are photos taken at the kind of, chiefly rural, locations described above. Figure 5.60 to 5.62 were taken by Janusz in and around the village where two of his grandparents are from. The village and surrounding landscape, though he never lived there, were very familiar to him and he continues travelling there. The location is southeastern Poland, though the landscape could be anywhere in Poland: much of the Polish countryside is made up of the kind of patchwork of villages, fields and forests visible in these images. Figure 5.60 seems to dwell on the rusticity of the scene. This is quaint, rural Poland. The respondent spent much time during his formative years there, and also saw scenes like this elsewhere in the country. While in Australia, however, he would not have encountered anything like it. It is an image beaming with nostalgia for youth, as well as with Polishness, for the scene is quintessentially Polish.

Much the same could be said of figures 5.61 and 5.62. The former is a simple vista of flat fields, distant forests, orchard trees, and the clear sky and crisp snow of a cold winter’s day. There is even a hint of powerlines. Yet it is a powerful, almost emotional image. The monochrome hues and the gnarled, stark tree limbs fuel this reading, as does the knowledge that what is being captured is ‘home’ territory from which the photographer had been dislocated for a decade. The bitter cold, snow and light, so instrumental in the visual power of the image, was deemed by the respondent to be photogenic only because it wasn’t part of his everyday reality—it was part of memory, here revisited, but while in Australia such vistas, however simple, seemed a world away, exotic. It is doubtful that if the respondent had never migrated he would have ever taken a photograph like this: in Poland such conditions are common and to a Pole the scene would lack the exceptionality that snapshot photography generally requires.

In figure 5.61, a kulig winds its way through a forest in the same area. A kulig is a series of sleds, hooked up in a line, and pulled behind a car. It is a popular activity among children throughout the emptier roads of Poland, whenever snow cover is sufficient and a sufficiently willing adult can be found to pull the convoy. The image harks back to the respondent’s pre-migration youth, when the kulig was an inseparable part of the winter forest landscape experienced. Again, inherent to the image is, for the photographer, the singularity of the scene. It represents something not seen since emigration, pointing to what had been lost through emigration. At the same time, without emigration there would have been no loss, but there also would not have been
Figure 5.60
Figure 5.61
Figure 5.62
the excitement of reunion. There may not even have been this photo. The separation and reunion make this landscape, and others like it, special, ensuring that the observer-photographer notices and sees beauty—or at least photogeneity—in what others might consider to be pretty ordinary scenes. Separation and reunion are, then, implicit in this image, as they are in many of the images reproduced throughout this thesis.

But nostalgic landscapes are not necessarily those confined to districts associated with family, youth and recreation. As some of the previous images have shown, the kind of landscapes respondents were familiar with while children look remarkably similar, with similar flat or rolling vistas, and, in urban areas, the almost identical apartment estates. There are exceptions—the mountains, coast, Mazurian Lakes or the city centres of historic cities—but none of these was familiar territory for any of the respondents. Because of this, scenes reminiscent of where the returnee grew up or vacationed could be encountered right across the country, ensuring that the influence of nostalgia extended into landscapes far beyond those once immediately known.

Figures 5.63 and 5.64 are examples of how, thanks to past memories and years spent in an entirely different environment, the unfamiliar becomes the familiar, or at least a proxy for that which has been a focus of a migrant's nostalgia. The following quote is the photographer's account of why he took the first of these two pictures:

I really wanted to take that picture because of the Christmas tree and just to show a Polish forest... I used to visit those forests—well, similar forests—quite a lot, when I lived in Poland, and it's just a beautiful view, to see all that snow, and the trees... This was my first opportunity to see specifically Christmas-type trees, with that much snow on them, and it just looked—very nice. Very Poland—the Poland that I remember—and especially those young trees, of which there weren't many in the area that I lived in, it just looked so spectacular, that's why the photograph was taken.

Next is his response to figure 5.64:

And this is more like the forest that I would know around my area... big trees... around my area there was probably more mixed, more mixed forest, but... it sort of reminds me. Very much so, yeah. I also think of different varieties of weather, when it was winter and it was snowing, you know, when it was sunny and snowy, different varieties, and how the landscape would change according to that... and the fun that we had in the snow... yeah, and I wish I was there... But I do recall Poland now, I do wish I was there now, to see the snow, and, you know... enjoy the climate...
Figure 5.63

Figure 5.64
According to the respondent, not only does an anonymous snowy forest at the side of a road (where he got his uncle to stop the car to take both pictures) cause excitement, due to its resemblance to familiar sites of the past, so does even the weather. Cloudy, windy, cold weather—which local Poles loathe—is for the returnee a source of wonder. Everything in the landscape, it seems, is viewed through a filter, itself an amalgam of (to Australian eyes) exoticism, (for Poles) familiarity, and nostalgia and dislocation (the migrant's perspective).

Figures 5.63 to 5.65 convey much the same ethos. Though each was taken away from familiar childhood stomping grounds, they are all driven by nostalgia and onetime dislocation from the homeland, from once familiar but lately all but foreign scenes such as these. In Figure 5.65 a small wooden barn set is amongst a snow-clad forest. Figure 5.66 features a rustic village, fronted by a lake or river partly covered by ice floes. In 5.67 a probably disused railway line runs through an encroaching deciduous forest, with fallen leaves littering the ground. The three images are in a way generic—they could be from anywhere in non-urban Poland. But it is these images' placelessness that makes them special—they would have meaning for anyone familiar with Poland, for no doubt they would have come across scenes such as these. They would have even meaning, I would argue, for those for whom common scenes such as these would have been removed from everyday experience, as with émigrés. For them the images would appear to be quintessentially 'Polish', not only because they are typical scenes from Poland, but because they stand in direct opposition to (and are thus defined by) everyday experience in the new country. For migrants to Australia the contrast is particularly stark; for migrants to countries with similar landscapes and climates, such as eastern Canada or Germany, the contrast would be lesser, and such scenes might not be identified as typically or nostalgically 'Polish' to the same extent. In Australia, scenes comparable to these are wholly absent.

The landscape respondents repeatedly described as being quintessentially 'Polish', and the kind of landscape many responded to most favourably, was the pole, the field or meadow, often partly bordered by encroaching forests or the occasional village (indeed, the very origins of the name Poland (Polska) lie in this word. The Polish word for Poles—Polacy, originally Polanie—literally means people of the fields). Again, not just specific fields associated with youth are remembered fondly, but the nostalgia for the pole extends to similar landscapes as well, found throughout Poland. Figure 5.68 is an example. Four young people (three of whom lived in Australia for at least a few years) pose in a typical field in the summertime. They are surrounded by ripening grass and forest. The place is not familiar, but the landscape certainly is, and
Figure 5.66
respondent Pawel (on the right) expressed for pole landscapes such as this. They generally reminded him of his pre-migration youth:

The second place where we lived was ... just behind it, we had wheat fields and ... it was a good place to be growing up in. I remember running through those fields and just ... [laugh] we had lots of fun. ... We kind of got chased a few times by the farmers ... [laugh] but it was a lot of fun because there were a lot of kids in that area.

So far the landscape images illustrated have been rural ones and, if not portraying the exceptional, they reflected aesthetically pleasing scenery. But of course returnees took great volumes of landscape-type photos in urban areas as well. These were areas after all they were most familiar with, and they too were imbued with a sense of the past, and nostalgia. Some of the resulting images do not follow general aesthetic principles, with photographs fondly taken of vistas which most people would consider to be very ordinary, or just plain ugly. Such is the power of dislocation from home territories and nostalgia for these: it can transform even the most hideous urban neighbourhoods into emotionally charged nostalgic landscapes, which the returnee is eager to revisit and photograph.

Figure 5.69 is a photo a respondent took of an estate where his aunts, uncles and cousins lived. It is not scenic by any stretch of the imagination, but bland and perhaps ugly. Yet the respondent said not a word of this being an ugly scene or place—only that his relatives lived there and he spent much time there as a child, and also on return visits to Poland. Similarly, Figures 5.70 to 5.72 are views from the apartments of relatives or family friends with whom returnees stayed for extended periods in their old hometowns. These are scenes fairly typical of urban Poland, where much of the population lives in communist-era estates (osiedla, or informally, blokowiska, literally blocklands). Figure 5.70 depicts a town of around 20,000, yet even here apartment blocks make an appearance. Figures 5.71 and 5.72 were taken in the midst of estates in much larger urban centres. The first of these images shows the grey, almost crumbling facades of tall apartment blocks, and, between them, empty open spaces, and also a retail building. This is pretty typical of estate design, with lots of open space and community infrastructure, including shops, schools and playgrounds, set among the tower blocks. Although the sight is not pretty, even places like this can be a source of nostalgia—again, the fact that the returnee was for a long time removed from such an environment plays a part. It is exotic—compared to Australia—yet at the same time recalls youth and its everyday landscapes. That the lives of children who lived there revolved around the estates, with schools close at hand and plenty of opportunities to play in the communal open spaces, was also important. Despite their unattractiveness or ordinariness, they were an important part of the Poland many respondents
In essence, what the filmmaker was photographing—and what looking at such photos meant—was that they saw Polesness what it meant to be Polish, and in Poland. Their notion of Polesness was worn through the prism of their experiences in Australia, the land of dreams which strained their attention ever clear which lasted back to a pre-emigration past, and in which were otherwise inferred from their lives in Australia. The kind of images represented made could be described as the every day, and normal—or at least that would be how most Poles in Poland, and many foreign visitors would see them. For many Poles, such scenes could be the uneventful, too close to everyday reality, to be deemed worthy of photographic. Similarly, for migrants to Poland, they would not have been seen as significant or novel enough. Not amongst Poles, especially those who migrated in a second or a third generation. Hence the Poles, especially those who migrated in a second or a third generation, tended to have strong memories of Poland that were also evocative and secondarily subservient to an entirely different aesthetic. For them, the patchy, worn and monotonous apartment blocks were special, and worthy of photographic capture. They represented something more than their part physicality. These represented home, and what was to be expected from which these migrants had been removed which for a long time existed only as disconnected childhood memories and supplementary stories and images, and in
remembered, and upon return visiting them formed an important part of the experience.

Conclusion

Returnees generally took a vast number of images, this being especially the case on the initial adult trip back, and during the initial stages of each of the trips. Photographic activity was intense during these stages of travel, because of the excitement inherent in being in a new place, so removed from everyday experience, yet a place that was (or should have been) simultaneously very familiar, imbued with personal memories and family stories or histories. This conflation of the nostalgically familiar and the ordinarily exotic led to intense periods of photography, where many things were photographed, particularly scenes reminiscent of, or otherwise tied to, pre-migration life. These included scenes not necessarily specifically, but often quite generically, linked to personal or family memories of the pre-migration period, as well as to notions of Poland and 'Polishness', as perceived by the returnee. Thus photographed were (with a mixture of nostalgia and exoticism) high rise housing estates, fields and forests that, while not directly experienced previously, reminded returnees of similar scenes which had been experienced first hand, and which were often recalled fondly.

In essence, what the returnees were photographing—and what looking at such photos reveals—was the way they saw Polishness, what it meant to be Polish, and in Poland. Their version of Polishness was seen through the prism of their experiences in Australia; thus the kind of scenes which attracted their attention were those which harked back to a pre-migration past, and/or which were otherwise missing from their lives in Australia. The kind of images respondents took could be described as the everyday and banal—or at least that would be how most Poles in Poland, and many foreign tourists would see them. Few local Poles would ordinarily take some of the images respondents captured: muddy streets, patchy snow, cloudy skies, a flat countryside, grey, endless estates. For many Poles such scenes would be too unexceptional, too close to everyday reality, to be deemed worthy of photography. Similarly, for tourists to Poland, they would not have been seen as attractive or historical enough. But émigré Poles, especially those who emigrated at a young age (and thus for whom memories of Poland were also childhood memories) subscribed to an entirely different aesthetic. For them, the patchy snow and anonymous apartment blocks were special, and worthy of photographic capture—they represented something more than their pure physicality. They represented formidable visual ties to a world from which these migrants had been removed, which for a long time existed only as disconnected childhood memories and supplementary stories and images, and to
which they only now returned. There is no such thing as an ugly scene or image when it is associated with memories of childhood, and where it or nothing like it has been seen for a long time, except by way of nostalgic longing.

Both Schama (1995) and Cosgrove (1984) argue that the landscape is essentially a human construct, meaning that there is no such thing as a natural landscape, but that it is all filtered through our shaping perception, which 'makes the difference between raw matter and landscape' (Schama 1995: 10). As Rene Magritte pointed out in a 1937 lecture, 'We see it [the landscape] as being outside ourselves even though it is only a mental representation of what we experience on the inside' (Magritte, cited in Schama 1995: 12). Thus it could be argued that landscapes, and nations, can be best gauged through the study of the opinions, history and cultural products of people interacting with, and dreaming about, them. By turning to the photography of young Polish-Australians returning 'home' to Poland, this thesis has effectively gained insight into how these returnees view the landscapes left behind at migration, when encountering them again. In effect they view the landscapes the same way they see Polishness—through part-Australian eyes.
Backwards, forwards and in-between

In the previous two chapters this thesis dealt with the study participants' return journeys into the homeland and its landscapes, and some of the themes, emotions, and also photographs, these trips conjured up. The focus was on individual journeys back, in particular the first journey in adulthood, the photographs taken on the trips, and the way in which respondents conceptualised, thought about and—ultimately—imaged the Polish 'homelandscape' and 'nostalgic landscapes' once left behind, but eventually returned to. This chapter examines identity, sense of place and belonging, and how these have been influenced by 'toing and froing'—by travel not only to Poland but back to Australia and, in most cases, back to Poland again. It discusses the eventual return back to the respondent's other 'homeland', Australia; the ways in which life following the trip to Poland did or did not change their post-return life in Australia; and the effect of subsequent trips back to Poland again, where these occurred.

The chapter begins by looking at how respondents have negotiated their identity upon returning to Poland, and how the way in which they identify, and where they feel more at 'home', may have fluctuated over the course of the trip. The potential influence of age at migration, age at return and other factors on identity and belonging are also considered. Also discussed is respondents' sense of belonging—where is it that they feel they belong more, and where they are more comfortable—and whether this changes as there occurs travel between the two homelands, the old and the new. Throughout, there will be a particular focus on subsequent return journeys to Poland, where these occurred, and how these may have differed from the initial trip. Also discussed will be the transnational links between the respondents in the aftermath of return.

subsequent trips

Most of the respondents returned to Poland several times. Only two are yet to make a second return journey back (however, both would like to go back again at some stage in the future, but it had not been a priority in recent years; both these individuals' lack of subsequent return will be discussed in further detail later in this section). In general,
following the first trip the second trip was made as soon as finances permitted and the returnee had sufficient free time. In about half of the cases the second trip followed the first within two or three years. Eleven of the respondents returned a third time, of which five came back to Poland an additional fourth time.

The second and subsequent trips were described by the returnees as being very different from the first. The following is Marek's account of the experience:

Well, the second time ... it was summer 1997—June or July. I was going to Russia and spent six weeks in Poland before that. It was great, even though ... I lost two passports and a large amount of money, which put a dampener on the trip ... but it was summer, and it was a very warm summer by Polish standards. I went by the sea with some friends, I went to [my grandparents' town], where I swam in lakes, things like that. It was one big holiday. The people were already people that I knew—that I'd established contacts with. It was not so much the comeback anymore, it was a visit, and there were subsequent visits after that. So yeah, I had a great time [...] The shock value had gone. I was just visiting. I didn't have that adrenaline, etc. It was a totally different experience, to tell you the truth. Totally different [...] The quintessential difference between making a visit and making a comeback to your homeland after a very long absence. Nothing was shocking anymore, nothing was surprising. But it was catching up. Catching up after an absence of—two years and four months. I went to the various households again, but I felt very comfortable—I didn't have that anxiety, or that shock, or that overwhelming sensation, of visiting these people and places for the first time [...] On subsequent trips the number of people I saw narrowed—just to best friends and people I've spent time with. But during that first trip I really did see practically everybody.

He also observed how Poland had changed in the two and a half years since his first visit:

Poland had stabilised, from being in this stage of primitive capitalism—things had sort of slowed down, and the systems, the commercial and political systems, had taken on some kind of ... more stable structure, rigid structure ... [Though] the people were still complaining, as usual ...

While most respondents were fairly positive about how Poland was changing, being excited by its westernisation, others were more ambivalent, even antagonistic when discussing the transformations they witnessed:

I kind of didn't like that snobbery creeping in, because it was quite early into my concept of what Poland used to be ... In 2000 that started concerning me, that kind of level of foreign investment ... where you hear of companies in Poland and for the first ten years they don't have to pay any company tax. And then, after ten years they
change their name, and then once again they're not paying tax. So a lot of these companies are investing in Poland, but all of the money is going out [...] There's now a lot of German investment, but they just want to come in — you know, once Poland is in the EU, they want to reclaim a lot of the land and property and all of that. So even though it seems positive, to me it was quite frightening that the Poland that I knew would cease to exist because it would just get swallowed up by the greater Europe and ... would get swallowed up by just the greed of international companies, and some of our neighbours I guess [laugh].

The second trip was usually similar to or shorter in duration than the first. Winter trips averaged two to three months, and summer trips three to four weeks. For about half of the respondents who made subsequent return trips these got progressively shorter, while for the other half they remained about similar in length. Especially with the second trip, returnees attempted to replicate what they thought to be the success of the first, and hence tried to keep the length the same, thinking that this was the minimum required to see everything and everyone, and fulfil all family obligations. However, this was not always possible, as the availability of money and, more importantly, time placed downward pressure on length. This was especially the case once respondents entered employment, the potential for longer trips being very limited while working full time.

One returnee, Tomek, stood out from all the others because of the comparatively short duration of his visits, particularly subsequent ones. His first visit lasted just under two weeks, while the second and third trips between three days and a week. The latter trips were short because at the time he was a busy IT professional, and could not afford to spend much time there, while not considering short trips uneconomical. Further, that his first trip was quite short might also have been a factor. The only way Tomek was able to keep his last trip so short was by entirely circumventing the family obligations system: he simply didn't inform any relatives he was coming and stayed in hotels instead of with family. In doing this Tomek was, however, among all respondents the lone exception. Others entertained the thought of skipping family, but such ideas were just never successfully realised:

In a way you can't avoid those ties to people. Last time I was going [back to Poland] I told my parents that I wasn't going to see anyone, so that I could see other parts of Poland, but my parents wouldn't have any of it. They were like 'If they ever found out that you didn't see them, because one person might see you and then word gets around'. You know, I just had to. So you're just stuck.
Family obligations simply proved too strong. Parents were instrumental in ensuring that the returnee did not neglect the extended family, and family friends when visiting Poland.

Subsequent visits tended to be characterised by the returnee being more relaxed and more comfortable with the surroundings. For most it also involved a lot more travelling—both within Poland and internationally—outside the family context. Such travel was often independent, while at other times involved meeting up with friends in Poland, or siblings, friends or partners from Australia and travelling with them for varying lengths of time. In all cases travel made up a higher proportion of total trip time than on the first trip, which was more focused on spending time with family and being shown around by them. This greater degree of freedom appears to have been a key contributor to the perceived success of subsequent trips. This is how Agnieszka described the experience:

Much better than the first time, mainly because I was by myself and free to make my own judgments. My friend organized theatre tickets for almost every second day of my stay in Warsaw and I did not have the obligation of visiting the whole family, because I was there only for a short time ... I was much less scared of Poland, I knew already what to expect so I enjoyed myself more. I probably missed Poland more after that trip, but I also realised that it is not so difficult to return there and I could go back for another holiday soon, if I made it a priority ... [My family] was happy I came and as well, I think they realised I will be coming more often now. I also told them my parents would be coming soon and my visit there made it seem more realistic to them.

As with all other respondents who went back more than once, family for Agnieszka was now less important though, according to her, the family did not appear to mind:

Of course I did not visit everyone this time and the family I did visit were more relaxed. It was 'less of a deal' that I was there and possibly my grandmother was even a bit sad that I came back instead of my parents.

However, not everyone thought that all of their subsequent journeys were successful. Where such a trip involved a lot of time spent indoors being entertained by others, it is described in less positive terms than the others. Take for example Aleksandra:

When I went back [the second time] in 1993, I didn't go back with my parents, I went to visit my boyfriend and his family ... and then my third trip, in 1996, was when my parents and I went around Europe. We went to Italy and France, and we also went to Poland. So Poland was only—maybe two or three weeks. And then I went back in 2000, and that was travelling with a friend of mine ... we travelled through Europe
for three months, and then ended up in Poland for the last few weeks, also without my parents. But the second time I went, because I was visiting my friend, I had different expectations, so I wasn’t really going to explore, and I had my preconceptions about what I was going to experience there, and what could happen to me there. And because I didn’t travel around that much outside Poznan—I did go to Wrocław for a while, probably for a few days, to see a couple of people, it didn’t make such of an impression on me, that second time.

The one trip Aleksandra described as being less successful than the others was the one that did not involve a lot of travel. But in general she saw all her subsequent trips as making less of an impression on her than the first, which took place in 1990, when she was 16. Aleksandra explains that this may have had to do with the fact that she, as well as Poland, had changed throughout this time:

Well, I think the process was twofold, because I’ve been changing, and Poland has also been changing. And so—we’d meet at different points, and sometimes the meetings were more favourable than others […] And I think it’s got a lot to do with the people you meet as well. [The second trip] wasn’t so much of a shock this time—like, oh wow, this such as a great place. Things started already appearing in shops. People were more concerned with … the changes happening within Poland, and that kind of cohesion between people, I don’t think I was so aware of it then, but it started to fall apart a little bit, because people saw that … if they get some money they can buy all these goods, and so—that kind of craziness, that fever, was already starting to take hold of the country.

Aleksandra tended to see many of the changes sweeping Polish society in the post-communist period in a negative light. Everything was compared to the Poland she encountered in 1990, as well as prior to emigration. She was especially critical of what she saw as the fragmentation of a previously egalitarian and values-focused society:

They [shopkeepers in new exclusive stores and restaurants] would be quite rude to you, and keep you waiting for half an hour while they are serving someone else who’s better dressed. I kind of didn’t like that snobbery creeping in, because it was quite alien to my concept of what Poland used to be […] The national character is going to cease to exist, in that powerful way that it has existed up until now, where we did have to struggle to identify what makes us Polish, and stand up for it—because that’s all we had. I feel like now Poland is selling out just because they can get all these material goods, and that Polishness has almost become secondary now.

Aleksandra’s fears were shared by two other respondents, Jarek and Pawel, who, while being fiercely anti-communist, also bemoaned the direction in which contemporary Poland was heading, and were highly sceptical of or even antagonistic towards
Poland’s EU membership. However, none of the other interviewees expressed such views. The remainder either spoke chiefly enthusiastically of the transformations sweeping Poland (for two in particular, Tomek and Marek, these did not come fast enough) or were largely silent on the issue.

Aleksandra’s accounts above are also indicative of another trend among returnees on subsequent trips: an increasingly critical outlook, with a greater willingness to see faults in various aspects of life in Poland. Many accounts also appear characterised by increasing pessimism, but they are better explained as realism, a counter to the enthusiastic optimism of the first journey, and especially its initial stages. The criticism comes from two sources: inability to replicate the first journey, the one that is often so enthusiastically remembered; or critiques from an Australian point of view. See for example the experiences of Iłona (1st quote) and Leszek (2nd):

[On the second trip] I was very irritated by the rudeness of many people I saw on the streets, by their manners, swearing, spitting, racism...

Probably from that trip it would be the difference in the customer service, which was quite noticeable at that time still in Poland, despite the fact that, yes, Poland was supposed to be democratic and pro-western, but nonetheless there was, and to an extent there’s still ... that mentality specific to that region of Europe ... customer service was lousy, to the effect that in a small confined space there were shop assistants—you could see five of them, and you were clearly looking in distress as requiring assistance, yet none of them would actually offer it to you. And when you actually approached them and asked a question they would just look at you in not only surprise but with arrogance, as in ‘what do you want from me?’, despite the fact that they were there for you. Whereas in the Western world you’ve got the opposite—you don’t want the help, and they’re already upon you.

This criticism/pessimism extended also to family. Returnees were more likely to be critical or tired of members of the extended family they visited on subsequent visits, and were less keen on spending as much time with them as they did on the first trip. This is how Grzegorz saw the situation:

It was more coming back to something that I already knew, just to note how things had changed and developed, progressed. And it would be more so with each subsequent visit, like that, to the extent that during my last visit it was basically just me popping in again. I spent a lot more time travelling than I did visiting family ... because it was not necessary anymore. It would be a waste of time to spend so much time amongst friends and family that I’d think—I just won’t do it.
On later journeys travelling was, according to Grzegorz’s account, more of a priority than spending time with family. The priorities of the other respondents changed in a similar manner. This interest in travelling included travel to international destinations.

**international destinations**

Although many returnees combined their first trip to Poland with at least some time spent at other destinations, with each subsequent trip the proportion of time spent at destinations outside Poland compared with total trip length tended to increase. The trips were increasingly becoming about visiting not just Poland, but using the opportunity to see the rest of Europe. Third countries were either visited from within Poland, by car or rail, or as part of stopover airfare packages at the beginning or end of a trip. In some instances stopover destinations were outside Europe, in South East Asia and even the United States and Canada.

On some trips Poland was a relatively minor component of an overall overseas journey—it was not the chief intended destination, but a familiar place visited because the traveller was in the vicinity, that is anywhere in or near Europe. For instance, following her first visit, Joanna visited Poland as part of much larger holidays. On one such trip she went to Poland after an extended working holiday in Greece, followed by extensive travel throughout Europe with a friend from Australia. On another trip she dropped into Poland as part of a much longer trip that took her around the world, including North America. On his last trip, Tomek visited Poland mainly because his work had taken him to Berlin. That trip also involved a stopover holiday in Hong Kong, where he spent more time than he actually did in Poland. Meanwhile, Agnieszka’s third and fourth trips to Poland were both combined with extensive periods of time spent travelling around Europe. Between his second and third trips to Poland, Marek spent six months studying on exchange at a Russian university.

**doubt, critique and instability**

Subsequent return trips were, as was outlined above, marked by assessing the Poland encountered in increasingly critical and pessimistic terms. This criticism was in particular extended to the experience of spending a lot of time with family, and various elements of Polish culture or the physical environment were viewed in unfavourable terms, especially when compared with the respondent’s experiences in Australia, and when travelling in third countries. Another element of the experience of return to undergo intense critique was the returnee’s own sense of identity and belonging. As more time was spent in Poland, and more travelling both within and outside Poland undertaken, the way in which returnees thought about self-identity changed. Previous
assumptions were questioned. Many faced an identity crisis of sorts, not really being sure where they belonged more: in Poland, Australia, both equally, or perhaps even neither. The instability in identity brought about or accelerated by the first return trip, and how this changed following subsequent journeys, will be dealt with at length below.

lack of subsequent return

Two respondents, Karolina and Sylwia, travelled back to Poland only once. Both said they would like to go again at some stage but remained uncommitted. The reasons they gave included a lack of time and money, and that they did not consider return a priority. Each of the two had travelled overseas since the first return trip, though not to Europe.

Interestingly, though their reasons for not returning largely concerned limited financial resources, Karolina also hinted at aspects of the experience they did not particularly enjoy:

I haven't been back due to lack of funding ... I can't afford the airfares ... I'll go back when I have more money, so I can stay in hotels and I don't have to stay at relatives houses and be obligated to do as they say and eat as they eat. We all know what five plus meals a day does to a person.

Both Sylwia and Karolina, of similar age at migration (six and seven, respectively), had enjoyed their first trip less than any of the other respondents. Sylwia even cut her trip short, returning to Australia over a week earlier than planned. Some of the reasons responsible for their lesser enjoyment were outlined in Chapter Four, and include the emphasis on family and eating, gender, language difficulties, and an unfixed sense of identity and belonging (the last two being in part a function of age at migration).

identity and belonging

As mentioned in Chapter Four, return journeys back into Poland had a profound effect on respondents' identity and feelings of belonging. Among most respondents the initial return journey initiated a realignment, a re-awakening of the Polish side of Polish-Australian identity, accompanied by increased interest in Poland itself. The contrast between the awakening precipitated by return, and the pre-return self-identity and interests of most interviewees (which, as Chapter Three showed, were oriented overwhelmingly towards Australia, except where migration was at an age of around twelve or more) was significant. However, as this section will demonstrate, changes brought about by return were far from static. As each returnee spent more time in
Poland, especially as he or she traveled back to Poland on subsequent occasions, identity fluctuated, being typified by instability and uncertainty. As shall also be demonstrated, the way the respondents felt about their identity was not uniform, though it did follow a rough trend. What variations existed can in part be ascribed to one factor: age at migration.

**hyphenation and fluctuation**

That return journeys to the homeland were emotional experiences with the potential to contribute, even shift, a returnee's self-identity and outlook is clear from many of the responses. For example, Zosia said:

I'd say the last time [when Zosia returned for the first time as an adult, as opposed to a youth] was really significant, definitely more than a holiday and ... Yeah, I definitely wouldn't say it was like a sightseeing thing ... I guess it was more about seeing where you were from and who you were, learning about your history and stuff like that.

Asked whether she felt more Polish after the trip, Zosia, who was the only respondent born in Australia (in the same year as her parents arrived), replied:

I think maybe a little bit, but I think that wore off pretty quickly. It's kind of hard to keep your Polishness, like to feel that here ... I mean being around mum and dad, but not much else.

This was a key theme for about half of the respondents—initial increased 'Polishness', which eventually subsided either as more time was spent in Poland, or when back in Australia. But others disagreed; among them was Agnieszka:

As to adjusting to Australia—if I had any problems adjusting, I overcame them completely after 10 years, when I visited Poland for the first time. I felt much more Australian after that visit and I was very glad to have the lifestyle and the freedom that I have here. Prior to that—I found it difficult to meet intelligent people [in Australia], not that there are none - I simply did not meet them, perhaps due to my poor English and natural shyness. Instead, I got involved with the 'Polish community' of young alcoholics who drank excessive amounts of vodka each weekend and on some weekdays. While I had no intellectual stimulation from those friendships—it was a nostalgic trip, [reminding me of] times in Poland—campfires in forests with people playing guitars and singing ... Yes, I felt much more Australian after the first trip.

Agnieszka arrived in Australia at the age of fourteen. Agnieszka and Zosia are at opposite extremes of the spectrum when it comes to time spent in Poland and
familiarity with language and culture. This may partially explain the different ways they felt about their identity. For Zosia return represented acquaintance with her roots. Poland, previously distant and nebulous, to her became real. But limited language skills and lack of previous experience also ensured that faults were less likely to be seen or criticisms made of various aspects of Polish culture. Agnieszka, well versed in the language, and travelling to Poland with a lot more expectations based on prior experience, was more likely to observe faults, be disappointed, and pick up on various nuances. When she was returning to Poland she also did so while identifying chiefly as Polish. But once she arrived Agnieszka, by virtue of having lived in Australia, felt like an outsider, just as in Australia she was marked as outsider by her accent and background:

In Australia I am forced to identify myself as Polish because everyone asks about my accent and they assume I am a visitor. I am tired of explaining to them that I am Australian. I feel Australian, but I am happy to have my ‘Polish background’.

Not everyone in Agnieszka’s age at migration group shared her experience. Leszek, who migrated at age thirteen, identified mainly as Polish, including following return visits home:

I mean a simple answer to that question would be more Polish ... but, as such ... I don’t really think too much on that subject anyway, whether I’m Polish or I’m Australian, but if I had to say, I’m probably more Polish than Australian, despite the fact that, you know, we’ve lived here for fifteen years now, I’d still say that I’m more Polish than Australian at the end of the day. I mean, yeah, coming back to Poland would make me even more Polish ... [The trip] didn’t really reinforce my devotion to Poland, I mean at the end of the day, as I mentioned earlier, I feel more Polish than Australian. So that’s already inscribed into my persona. As to having the urge to explore Polish history and culture, I did not really feel the need for it as in some sense that has already been to some extent satisfied by actually being there and being surrounded ... being encompassed by Poland, by Polish things, by being right in the thick of things ... everything is saturated by Polishness. So when you come back here, you get some welcome relief, because it’s a change. Because not everything that you see and experience in Poland, not all of them are good experiences ... Some things can be frustrating and some things can be good. And I guess once you come back you can start appreciating the differences, that some things are better here, and some things are better there, that sort of thing.

In saying that return journeys increased his Polishness, Leszek stands out. The only others who said this were those who migrated at a very young age, like Zosia. Leszek’s experience may have to do with the short duration of his return trips compared with
most other respondents. Less time in Poland may have limited disenchantment and criticism.

Karolina is more typical of the sample. She migrated at the age of seven and, like Agnieszka, also felt that the trip made her feel more Australian:

Yes, it made me like Australia even more, not because Poland was crap, but because I missed all the little things about Australia. Poland is OK now, not as grey as it was. But I think I'm an Australian now, I've been here too long to live anywhere else. It also made me realise how lucky Australians are to live in such a country ... I'm definitely more Australian these days. I don't think my identity changes depending who I'm with.

Bogdan migrated at the age of eleven. Asked whether he now feels more Polish or Australian, his reply was:

It's both, definitely both, and there's no other answer. There was—I think I mentioned this beforehand—there was a time when I went through some kind of identity crisis, in that respect. I remember I had a Czech friend in year six or seven—until year ten—and he went through something similar, where we'd go to the Liverpool City Library and look for anything—look up anything Polish—or in his case Czech—and it was like trying to—I don't know—establish a sense of roots or identity, answer the question 'Where am I? Who am I? Who should I be?' But as the years went by ... that question became less and less relevant. That dual identity—nationality, culture, language, became solidified for me when I went back, and I realised just how Polish I am. And at the same time, being over there [Poland], I realised—even more so—just how Australian I am. So, yeah, the answer is both.

The identity confusion mentioned by Bogdan is also a feature of many other respondents who migrated at an intermediate age, approximately between eight and twelve. As they were growing up in Australia they were not really sure of their place as they felt comfortable being both Polish and Australian. Throughout the teenage years Polishness—as measured by language, and interest in Poland and Polish culture—declined. As Bogdan suggests, following the first return Polish identity was re-discovered, only to decline not so much as more time was spent in Australia, but as more time was spent in Poland, on subsequent returns. Bogdan did not, however, think that his identity had much to do with how others saw him, in either Poland or Australia. But this could have been because, with excellent Polish as well as English skills, he was one of the few able to 'pass' in either culture:

I heard from others, when they went back to Poland, that they were sometimes treated as 'the Australian' ... who's come back. I didn't get a feeling of that—I don't
think that the Poles back in Poland thought of me as Australian, no they definitely thought of me as Polish. Although I made a point of saying that I’m both—that the country that I’ve been living in for the last seven years has changed me to a substantial extent. This didn’t stop me fully identifying with Poland, with the Poles over there, just like it didn’t stop me fully identifying as an ‘Australian’ Australian.

Bogdan was thus able to freely choose his identity according to circumstance, and not let others decide for him. He could, and did, identify as Polish or Australian, or both. For Ania, who migrated as a toddler, things were a little different:

I think I see myself as Australian, first and foremost ... But I definitely noticed, I mean just having all your cousins and people around, when you don’t usually, kind of explained a lot of things about your family and ... ‘so that’s why I’m like that ... so that’s why dad’s like that ...’. And, um, and yeah, so I kind of got to recognise my Polishness, and that I was quite Polish.

Ania started off identifying as mainly Australian. Visiting Poland, she would have been thought of by the locals as Australian, but instead of necessarily agreeing with how others saw her, she began to discover in her surroundings her roots and identity. By travelling to Poland, she became more Polish. This contrasts for example with Agnieszka, who as mentioned earlier said she became less Polish after travelling back, despite excellent Polish language skills and a pre-return identity she professed to be largely Polish.

**belonging**

Interviewees were also asked where they thought they belonged or felt most comfortable, Poland or Australia. All respondents stated a clear preference for Australia, although those who migrated at an older age also stated that they felt very comfortable in Poland when they were there: they just would never choose to live there. Some examples include:

I definitely feel like I belong here especially when I went to Poland, it only reinforced my feelings. I don’t think I could live there for more than three months, it’s too hard, mentally, although things are familiar they are not ingrained. A year or two would seem like a lifetime, three months felt like one year.

Well, at the moment I would have to say I feel more comfortable in Australia, simply because I live here, and ... in Poland, over the last several years I have been often but I’m usually just a visitor—not so much a tourist, but nevertheless I go there for holidays. I have not had experience of actually living there, in the sense of working, or studying, since I left that country. So I feel more at home here simply because I have a vast experience of living here, in terms of study, employment, ...
relationships, friends, etc., my entire life as well ... most of my life. But I think if I spent some time in Poland, I could be just as comfortable.

The two above extracts, the first from Ilona (age at migration: 7) and the second from Grzegorz (11), show that while both felt more at home in Australia than Poland, Grzegorz thought he could adapt to living in Poland easily enough, whereas Ilona thought she could not. Tomek migrated at age 14 and found few problems when visiting Poland:

I was pretty comfortable [in Poland]. I guess if I did not know Polish then maybe that would be a good reason to feel like an outsider, but being Polish, and remembering the environment quite well from my childhood years, remembering people, and knowing Polish ... you feel like part of the whole surroundings.

Such experiences suggest that age at migration is a good determinant of feeling comfortable or at home in Poland. Language plays a large part in this, as those who were older at migration spoke better Polish and encountered fewer problems expressing themselves, and otherwise fitting in. This fostered among many a sense of confidence and adaptability that was missing from the younger migrants. If they could function well in Australia and Poland, maybe they could do so anywhere around the world. Agnieszka:

[I feel at home] anywhere really... wherever I end up. I live in Australia now and I feel comfortable, but if tomorrow I had to travel to France or Brussels with the knowledge I would stay there, I would probably make myself belong there. And if I had to live in Poland—I would probably accept it and make myself belong there as well. I am good at adapting to new circumstances.

In mentioning belonging in an international world, outside either Poland or Australia, Agnieszka’s statement emphasises an interesting theme—one that was mentioned by several other respondents. They expressed the opinion that they felt just as comfortable, if not more so, at international destinations as they did in Poland or Australia. Being in both Poland and Australia brought a degree of uncertainty when it came to identity and feelings of belonging. There was a feeling that the migrant should belong in one country, or the other, or feel comfortable in both. In either place they professed feeling, to a degree, an outsider. But in third countries this was not an issue: the traveller knew they did not belong there, they knew their identities were not tied to this place. Therefore they could simply enjoy being tourists and outsiders, without identity politics and fluctuations coming into play at all.
back in Australia

This section discusses life in Australia following the respondents' first as well as subsequent journeys back to Poland, and examines the interviewees' response to return to Australia following the first as well as subsequent homecoming journeys to Poland.

Return travel to Poland had a profound effect on the outlook and identities of the respondents. This was especially the case after the first journey, which for most participants reignited interest in Poland and Polishness. But as more time was spent in Poland—especially on subsequent trips—in the long run this interest proved short-lived and gradually gave way to a greater commitment to the Australian end of the identity continuum.

As was shown earlier, interviewees responded to return in two general ways: for some the first trip aroused new interest in Poland and Polishness, while for others the experience, though described as positive, proved to them that they were now above all Australian, or at least that Australia was their true home (some also started off feeling one way and then the other, as more time was spent in Poland). Those in the former category tended to have migrated at a young to intermediate age, and those in the latter category above the age of around twelve. Initially the two groups reacted rather differently following their return to Australia.

Among members of the 'younger' group the first trip to Poland reignited their Polish identity. They wanted to know more about Poland and interact with more Polish-background peers locally. Five of the respondents became involved in the local Polish community, generally through clubs and friendship networks they established. It was a big contrast to pre-return life, in which Poland and in particular Polish peers did not feature prominently. Take for example Marek's experiences:

I knew a lot of Polish young people, my peers, if you like, in the immediate years following our arrival in Australia ... Then that seemed to drop off ... gradually ... towards the end of my school days ... So I started losing connection with all those kids who were the children of the parents [of my parents' friends]. When I started uni, that broke off completely, in a sense. My connection with Poland began to be far more real in the sense that I started going over there, started travelling to Poland. At the same time as I lost connection with the Polish community here, I regained connection with the mother country, if you like. It was curious, in that sense. My Polish picked up, you know, I speak Polish better today than I did five years after leaving the country—simply because I spent so much time over there—I've spent eight months in Poland in the last several years—since the end of high school. But
over here, during my first, second, third year of university ... there was practically nobody, I think, apart from Michal, that I was in touch with. And then sporadic contact with some of the children of Polish associates of my parents ... Sporadic contact, however. Until—until first semester 1998, when I returned to complete my undergraduate degree, and started the Polish club. And suddenly, you know, my contact with all things Polish, and Polish people in Australia, came to its highest level ever ... We had those fortnightly meetings, I made all sorts of acquaintances ... And for that year—for 1998—my contacts with Polish young people in Sydney, were actually ... very intense. In fact because I just came back from an eight month European trip, a lot of my old crowd fell off—people went off in different directions, etc., I was no longer in touch with previous friends and acquaintances, that Polish club, which we constructed, replaced my social life, in a sense, for the next several months. But [eventually] ... that also fell off.

As is suggested by Marek, attempts at greater participation in local community life were, if not unsuccessful, ultimately relatively short lived. The euphoria of the first trip, and nostalgia for it, could not be easily translated into increased local community activism. Its influence was more long lasting however when it came to interest in Poland itself, and increased transnational links with it—be it through correspondence with relatives, the reading of Polish magazines or websites from Poland, or continuing travel back to Poland. Once such transnational communication was put in motion by the first trip, it continued to thrive, with each subsequent trip effecting a further resurgence. The importance of transnational links like these among respondents will be examined in a separate section later on in this chapter.

Not everyone in the 'younger' group, however, appeared equally moved to further their links with the Polish community. A number of respondents, including Sylwia, Karolina, and Zosia did not appear, once back in Australia, to be interested in greater involvement in the local Polish community. This was partly because of their young age at migration—between one and seven—and relatively limited Polish language skills. However, for them return journeys still rekindled interest in Poland and increased transnational links with the homeland.

Homecoming trips had a rather different effect on respondents who had migrated at an older age. Five of the respondents migrated above the age of thirteen. They were adept at the Polish language and prior to return tended to see themselves as more Polish than Australian. Three of the five could also be described as, before the first return, being highly involved in the local Polish community, mainly through friendship networks to a large extent made up of Polish-background peers. Even prior to the return Poland was prominent in the lives of these individuals: they listened to Polish music, read
Polish books, and looked forward to visiting. But, following the first return visit to Poland, this seemed to change somewhat:

Shortly after my first trip back to Poland, I consciously decided to limit my contact with persons of Polish background. I was bored with and tired of my friendships with the Adelaide Polish mob. I realized that, apart from alcohol and teenage rebellion, there was not much we had in common. I think that many Polish friendships in Australia happen this way—you become friends, because you come from the same country, culture, and not necessarily because you like each other. In Sydney I decided to choose my friends for who they are, rather than where they come from.

Over time members of this older group became increasingly committed to the Australian aspect of their identities, and increasingly reported identifying Australia, rather than Poland, as 'home'. Spending time in Poland caused the replacement of a mythical, nostalgic Poland—the focus of their identity and actions in the period between migration and return—with a more realistic Poland. The more time they spent in this Poland, the more critical they were of it, and the more they appreciated Australia. By contrast, before returning, many were highly critical of Australia and saw Poland as some kind of panacea to which they longed to return. Following return to Australia they still missed Poland, or more accurately specific aspects of life in Poland, but in their everyday life in Australia they gradually moved away from predominantly Polish-background friendship networks and towards more heterogeneous ones. Whether this would have happened without return journeys to Poland is open to debate.

It could be argued that to a degree this group's preoccupation with Polishness was a phase grounded in the teenage and early adulthood years, that would have eventually ended with increased age and employment. While for the study group full-time employment did not decrease travel to Poland, it did decrease time spent in Poland. Those with steady jobs simply were not able to travel to Poland for a two or three month holiday the way they could as students. The effect of marriage and children on return journeys can not be ascertained here, as at the time of interview only one respondent was married and two were partnered, and none of the study participants had any children. One assumption that could be made is that settling down with non-Polish background partners might lessen contact with Poland, but here this cannot be proven due to the small numbers involved, and respondents' relative youth. Certainly, of the three partnered respondents, two had non-Polish partners, and one of these continued returning to Poland regularly (along with the non-Polish partner). Conversely, in the Polish couple only one of the partners returned to Poland since they
started living together. It would take a follow-up study, tracking the respondents as they settle down, to determine how precisely increased age and family life impacts on their identity, and contact with Poland.

Even though it has been argued that among all groups increased travel to Poland, almost paradoxically, has worked to decrease rather than increase a Polish self-identity, and that Poland was viewed with each visit more critically and Australia more favourably, this by no means meant that Poland had been eventually forgotten. While respondents shifted towards the Australian side of the identity continuum, they continued to miss and reminisce about Poland, which loomed large in their imagination and priorities still. Except this time around their homesickness was directed not primarily at a childhood period spent in Poland, but at the return journeys, specifically the more enjoyable aspects of those journeys, including features that were missing from everyday life in Australia.

**homesickness**

When asked what they missed about Poland, answers included generic ‘Polish’ landscapes, specific places, and various characteristics of Polish culture. About half of the respondents identified landscapes generally encountered throughout Poland. Forests were most frequently mentioned, followed by rural fields, and the old quarters of Polish cities. Half of the respondents also referred to specific places. These were primarily small towns or rural areas where they spent a lot of time as children, as well on the return journeys. These places were often associated with grandparents or other relatives.

Most commonly, however, returnees referred to general aspects of life in Poland which they assessed in positive terms when compared to their experiences in Australia. For instance, Ilona said: ‘I only miss the food [laugh]’. Bogdan offered a more detailed account:

> It’s not ... missing living there, but definitely missing aspects of what’s over there— not just about Poland, about Europe—but are not present here, and vice versa. So definitely I miss some members of my family, including my grandmother, my uncle, I miss my home town and friends. My experiences of going back to those places, and being with those people, are positive experiences—apart from the fact that these were all holidays and I was having a great time and ... I had money because of the ... favourable exchange rate and all that sort of stuff. You know, I love these places, I love these people, I remember them from my childhood, etc. That’s not something that I can have around. Also, all that Europe has to offer, in terms of—of its art,
culture, history, built environment—all of that is missing here, it's over there, so I also miss that, in that sense, yes. That's why I like to go back—on a regular basis.

Aleksandra missed the people and interactions between them:

I think the ... people's values are very different and the relationships between people are different ... just, there are so many things, but generally ... I love the fact that people had time for each other ... They didn’t have access to these things so ... they had time to build close relationships with people, they had time to enjoy walks in the woods, and they had time to develop interests like, you know, they read voraciously, their general knowledge was so amazing ... I was just appalled at my lack of knowledge and how great theirs was. They had so many skills—they had all this extra time that wasn’t consumed by entertainment—you know, it was normal for people to know three or four languages, to play two instruments, to be amazing at sports ... to have read so much literature, and to also paint on the side. And I felt these people generally were much better rounded as people ... So whoever you met you could have this amazing inspiring conversation with, whereas here in Australia ... here you can have conversations with people about maybe five topics, and anything outside of that, you really need to find the odd person that will know anything outside of these five things, which is sports, or general TV trivia knowledge, and a few other things people generally discuss. But there, learning is something to be treasured and ... people weren’t pulled down if they had a talent or if they wanted to be ambitious, people actually supported it, and invested time and energy. So they valued all the things that I always valued here but never really found that many people that valued the same things. So when I went there I just found, you know, eighty percent of people I met had maybe not exactly the same interests as myself, but at least they valued similar things, like learning and culture and appreciation of music and the arts ... And just, like little things, that really impressed me.

Agnieszka's account also implies comparisons to Australia:

I miss travel sometimes, the theatre, my friends, uni atmosphere, artistic events, buying nice stockings which you can't get in Australia. Oh, and of course going mushroom picking, going with my parents to “underground” activities like political concerts and meetings, the autumn and it's colourful leaves covering the ground, “Zaduszki” [All Soul's Day], camping in Polish forests near lakes and bushwalking through the hills. And of course theatre, art exhibitions, concerts, various artistic events.

Ania, meanwhile, professed missing 'having family around'. Growing up in Australia, Ania had no extended family. Returning to Poland provided a very effective contrast, with family members throughout the country. She especially missed her cousins:
It's such a shame that it's so rare to see them all. It's just like [...] It would have been nice to have grown up with them.

Interestingly, in identifying family as something she missed, Ania was in a small minority, one of only three respondents. The 'family overload' that many respondents described as typifying the trip may have been responsible for family not being listed among what was missed more often. Most returnees felt they had seen more than enough of family on their trips back. Another likely explanation is that family was missed, but not verbalised at interview—perhaps because of the criticism levelled at the family aspect of the return experience elsewhere in interviewees' accounts.

As well as being homesick for Poland while in Australia, some respondents admitted occasionally being homesick for Australia when in Poland. For instance Grzegorz:

I remember I was transfixed by a song by—who sings The Land Down Under? Is it Men at Work or something like that—having been outside of Australia for months, in a place so different, it was like living on a different planet. And, yeah, I became very nostalgic, and I thought 'my God, it is so much simpler, so much warmer, so much more comfortable over there,' ... this is a very easy place in many ways, it's an uncomplicated land, our problems on relative scale here are not real problems—not what most societies, what most nations, would call problems, so yeah.

Marek describes homesickness for both Australia and Poland thus:

I might sit here and I don't have a European forest where I can pick mushrooms by my doorstep. In Poland, I don't have my beaches full of surf, and I don't have the bush, and all that sort of stuff ... The things that are over there are missing here and things over here are missing there, and I'm quite happy to keep one foot in each place, that I can get the best of both worlds, in that sense ... When I'm over in Poland I miss certain things that we have over here. You can't have the two places at once, and there are aspects of Poland and what's over there that I'd like to have in my life, but I simply can't have them because ... it's 16 thousand kilometres away. And whilst over there I'd like to have aspects of what's here, that I've gotten used to, that I like, you know, the people, the climate, the environment, that easygoing, carefree thing that—that you can definitely feel in Australia. The rigid hierarchies of class, etc., they're much more keenly felt in Poland. Social relations are much more complicated, much more ... difficult, in many ways, and for someone like my sister, that immediately annoyed her, that's something that she didn't like from the very beginning. She—she missed being in a place like this, among people ... as free and easy as the Australians. There is more to negotiate in Europe in that respect.

Marek's account suggests he is caught in a fracture, sitting astride but at the same time caught in between two different worlds. In a process of constant negotiation, each
world is seen and assessed through the filter of the other. The following section will focus on the way in which memories of Poland influence the way in which the Australian landscape is viewed, and how, in a way, respondents re-create the Polish homeland in the Australian one.

**re-creating the 'homelandscape'**

When in Australia nostalgia for the homeland manifests itself in many ways. The power of nostalgia is not confined to memory and the past, but influences also the way the present is viewed. A prominent theme emerging from respondents’ accounts was how memories—and images—of homeland landscapes influenced their lives in Australia. Two common examples of this were cultural products depicting the Polish landscape, such as paintings hanging on walls, and seeing the local (Australian) landscapes through the filter of memories of the ‘homelandscape’. Respondents spoke for instance of intermittently seeing a scene in Australia that reminded them of Poland—not necessarily a particular scene in Poland, but just the look and feel of the home country in general.

This is how Ewa, Agnieszka and Sylwia described the ‘Polish’ things in their (or their parents’) homes:

[A] couple of paintings, many small ‘arty’ trivial things which are all now at my parent’s house such as Easter decoration I took from my aunt’s house, paintings (presents received in Poland), paintings and collages I bought.

My parents have some paintings which they received as gifts, but not many ... A small painting by Wyspianski, painting of Kazimierz [Dolny, a famously picturesque little town] by a local artist, painting of flowers by a local artist, painting/collage involving dried fruit and flowers and wheat in a frame.

My parents’ house has that kind of memorabilia, you know, er ... the sketches of town halls, the ... tapestries woven in Poland, a wooden plate ... a lot of the stuff I actually brought back as souvenirs from my journeys to Poland, or other people who visited us, or other members of my family. In fact the walls are plastered with Polish memorabilia ... curiously enough not our house, though.

But for most people, even more important than paintings in the home appeared to be food, as well as books and photographs:

Another thing is when dad makes some pierogi [dumplings] and stuff like that and it just like ‘Oooooh!’ I’d love to eat this every day—well, more often, because I love it ...
Books, photos, and films [remind me of Poland]. Books of course, photographs of course, films less because I don’t like Polish cinema that much (I like other European cinema, but I haven’t seen many good Polish films). Just memories of my past, I guess... whenever I reminisce.

Photos remind me of Poland and memories as well as books from Poland. In Australia not many things have reminded me of Poland, only places like ‘the snow’ or the plantation forests.

In the last quote, Karolina hints at the importance of landscapes encountered in Australia in triggering memories of the homeland. Places most often listed as reminding respondents of home included pine plantations and mountains, in particular the Snowy Mountains in winter. For Agnieszka and Bogdan, these included both urban and natural locations:

Some arcades in the cities, in Melbourne, in Adelaide, in Sydney. Narrow arched streets with facades on both sides, you know – the fake modern arcades that mimic in their appearance small cottages or clustered apartments. Also, in Melbourne especially – parks in the city – with their European trees and cool air. Melbourne’s weather– when it is freezing cold. You walk through the streets and sometimes it just feels like Poland. Forests around Adelaide and Sydney – the pine plantations.

The pine forest, the plantation forest here—that’s obviously a step back into Europe, if any. Yeah, people—not just myself, I also notice this in others—we will draw certain references, or comparisons, finding ourselves and saying ‘Oh, this is just like back in Poland’, or ‘This is just like—this looks like that’, etc. you yourself mentioned those—that those housing blocks in Redfern—that’s classic Poland in itself, you know, those grey monolithic big squares or rectangles. Yeah, that’s a classic reminder of Polish housing estates and most Poles ... lived in those and we identified with that readily. I mean there are Polish shops around here. When you walk into one of those butcher shops, delicatessens if you like, you’re suddenly surrounded by Polish products, so that’s like—again, a step back into that country. Occasionally you would drive ... or find yourself somewhere in Australia, where the scenery will look distinctly European. So, yeah ... there is an element of nostalgia about it.

Going mushroom picking in pine plantation forests – yes, definitely. But the mushroom variety is not limited and makes you remember you are in Australia. And the forests are a bit different, despite appearances. They don’t smell as nice and don’t have the same vegetation. Just like the sea does not smell like Polish sea. Mostly small streets reminding me of Polish small streets, sometimes you find a street or an arcade, which has a corner store and an Italian café and tables outside and you just get this overwhelming feeling of Poland. And specialty delicatessen with European products.
Skiing was also frequently mentioned, for instance by Zosia:

But, oh ... when we went skiing a couple of years ago, just the ... I don't know, just being in the woods, and having snow, and it being really cold, you know fresh and crisp, but, yeah, that reminded me a bit. Yeah, we don't have Alps or anything ...

Meanwhile, Ania talked about the importance of smell:

[laugh] Sometimes I smell something that's strange .... and sometimes a smell ... you know that cold smell? And that'd really remind me of Poland. It whacks me in the head with it definitely, I feel like I'm there.

Interestingly, all respondents mentioned pine forests and mushroompicking. Mushroom gathering is a very common recreational activity in Poland, and Poles throughout Australia attempt to recreate it wherever they can. For most, this means going to pine plantations in places like the highlands to the southwest and west of Sydney, where three species of mushroom not native to Australia, but familiar to Poles, grow. Autumn is the main mushroompicking season, and around Easter thousands of Poles from Sydney descend on pine plantations, often in cavalcades, and in more popular forests relatively close to Sydney, such as Belanglo State Forest, form large picnics. At that time of the year virtually the only recreational users of the forest are Polish-Australians (Kwiatkowski 2004). They go there for the wild mushrooms, the conviviality, and for the scenery—for forests which are about as close to forests in Poland as you can get in Australia.

This is how respondents described mushroompicking:

[Laugh] Well, this autumn, we only managed it once—which I'm really unhappy about, because I think last year [my partner] and I managed to go ... three times, even. This is a long ride, as you know, to go down there, towards Berrima—a two-hour trip. But, yeah, we like it, it brings back the memories, even though it's a pine plantation, it has a European feel about it ... And it is—and it is just a very leisurely, nice way to spend the day ... So I have been mushroom picking ... many times since coming to Australia, but nowhere near to the extent that some of the more ... avid mushroompickers go ...

Well, apart from being a similar attraction to bushwalking ... simply just taking a walk along ... amongst nature ... it is also a walk among nature that reminds you of home. So, one, there is simply an outdoor activity, two it's nostalgic—it brings back the memories, obviously—the nature here is very different—not better or worse—I don't consider, you know, European forests or Australian bush to be inferior or superior to one another—they're just different, and when you're here you don't have what's over there and when you're over there you don't have what's here. And, ...
and on top of that there are the mushrooms, the actual mushrooms, we love mushrooms. Australians by and large don't seem to be aware of the fact that there are wild mushrooms and that there are many varieties of them, although it seems that only two or three—that we found—are edible; in Poland it's probably about a dozen or more. They don't seem to realise that they are better, and you don't have to buy just that farm-grown stuff all the time. So, yes, I guess those would be the reasons.

Even respondents who arrived in Australia at a very young age, and did not have much contact with Polish-Australians outside of her own family, were very enthusiastic about the practice of going mushroompicking:

> We haven't gone for ages, but we used to go quite a bit, and just get like bucketloads of mushrooms ... I didn't realise how widespread it was [laughing] in the Polish community [...] I'm not sure what motivates them. I don't know, the fact that we used to always go when we were little and ... it's just something, you know, different and fun ...

This section has shown that returnees, when in Australia, have a powerful sense of nostalgia for the Polish landscape. This landscape is recreated in Australia via books, photographs, paintings, as well as pockets of the Australian landscape reminiscent of landscapes back home—landscapes remembered not only from childhood but more recent return journeys. This recreation of the 'homelandcape' within the Australian landscape is most prominent in the case of mushroompicking in pine plantations, which Polish-Australians engage in precisely because it allows them to engage in a typically 'Polish' activity in a setting that is about as 'Polish' as one can get in Australia.

**transnationalism**

One of the main lasting side effects of homecoming trips was a resurgence of transnational links with the Polish homeland. Prior to the first return such links were generally minimal, rapidly declining since the time of emigration. According to the respondents, even for their parents communication with family members back home decreased. As will be shown in this section, all this changed with the first return journey. Links were re-established not only between the returnee and Poland, but helped to rekindle contact between the parents and the home country, especially where they had not themselves yet made the return journey 'home'.

This is illustrated in the following experiences:

> So, yeah, becoming reacquainted with that world after being cut off from it—quite distinctively cut off from it. Our links with Poland were, for me, severed—for all
intents and purposes. Apart from letters that I received from [my cousin] Paulina, from Poland, I had not kept in touch with the world of the mother country. That really only restarted—rejuvenated—for me, during that first trip—and I've kept it up ever since. But I was coming back to something that I'd not known—that I'd lost—for a long time.

[My dad] has to watch crappy ... Australian television news, which was far more crappy back then [initial years following migration] than it is today, to see what's happening to get information—communication with Poland back then was very sparse—making a phone call to Poland could sometimes mean waiting for hours for an operator to get back to you ... When we look upon those times right now I describe them as the dark ages, you know—for my first seven years in Australia, before I went back to Poland the first time ... the links, the communication with back home, if you want to call it that, were ... scarce, they were ... tenuous at best.

[Originally migration seemed] very much a final thing. And even for years after communism collapsed ... we felt quite literally like we were on the other side of the world—it's become a very small world for us—and for everybody else—instead ... and, going to Poland is not a major exercise anymore. Nobody could have foreseen that at the time ... My connection with Poland began to be far more real in the sense that I started going over there, started travelling to Poland. At the same time as I lost connection with the Polish community here, I regained connection with the mother country, if you like. It was curious, in that sense. My Polish picked up, you know, I speak Polish better today than I did five years after leaving the country—simply because I spent so much time over there—I've spent eight months in Poland in the last several years—since the end of high school.

The homecoming trips themselves are of course an important aspect of diaspora transnationalism. They don't initiate transnational communication, but they enable its resurgence. For the respondents in particular the trips are the main way they know Poland, and to a lesser extent Polishness, theirs or otherwise. Prior to return these were centred on language, family stories and customs, and local community; post-return, the return trips heavily influenced the way Poland and Polishness were seen.

By the time they were interviewed, none of the respondents participated in Polish community life (external to the immediate family) in any major way. What involvement there once was—either immediately following migration and in the wake of initial return trips—had waned. Respondents were asked whether they participated in a number of activities that could be described as being external markers of 'Polishness'. These included attending Polish mass, participation in Polish community clubs and events, reading Polish-language books and magazines, browsing Polish websites, watch Polish films and television, looking at photographs from Poland, and
going mushroompicking in pine plantations. Responses varied. For those who migrated at an age of less than approximately eight, this was a typical response:

I don't read Polish books, only watch Polish movies if they are on SBS and it's not too late at night. [I] don't listen to Polish radio/music. I've looked at Polish websites but they don't really tickle my fancy. Used to attend Polish mass once a year when I lived at home but not anymore ... I go mushroompicking occasionally ... When I visit my mum I occasionally look at photos from Poland, just out of curiosity.

For the younger respondents reading in Polish, churchgoing and community events were all rarely if ever carried out. Polish websites were more likely to receive attention. Polish films—mostly on television—were occasionally seen. Mushroom picking was the only activity that elicited an affirmative and largely enthusiastic response from all. They also had no Polish-background friends or acquaintances, and spoke Polish not at all or only to parents, and even then it was heavily intertwined with English. Judging by these benchmarks alone, the respondents' Polishness was negligible. However, this was far from the case, and these individuals still expressed a lot of interest in Poland— as opposed to the local Polish community—especially after return visits to the country. Post-return trip, there was some communication with persons in Poland via mail or email. Plus of course there were the memories—not to mention the photographs, their own as well as those of others—which ensured that the homeland remained in the foreground, even from afar.

Those who migrated at above the age of about eight were more likely to read Polish books and magazines, to browse Polish websites. Interest in Poland was fairly intense among all members of this group, with these respondents being keen to know about Polish current affairs, history, literature and popular culture. Most also communicated with friends and relatives in Poland, though the extent of this communication varied significantly from person to person. All in this group occasionally watched Polish films and other TV programs on public or cable television channels. One of the interviewees also had access to TV Polonia, a cable television channel produced in Poland for the Polish diaspora. All had also at some stage seen a Polish film at one of the sporadic cinema screenings occasionally organized by the Polish community, or rented Polish films from Polish video rental outlets, which are generally attached to Polish smallgoods stores or clubs. Jarek's response below is fairly typical of others relating to Polish film and television:

It would be often I suppose. It was at least a lot more often ... when I was still living at home—the parental home—where we have TV Polonia—and on top of that my father regularly borrows movies from the video—the Polish video library. How
often? I’m not sure if I could quantify it. We would definitely watch Polish television, or Polish films, as often as two or three times a week. It is often, although not as often as it used to be. Sometimes I catch Polish Sydney if I happen to be at home, although I keep forgetting what its times are—I usually find it completely randomly by flicking through channels, I just happen upon it. But, yeah, it’s … relatively often.

The kind of interest in, and transnational communication with, Poland characteristic of this group is also effectively demonstrated by Pawel:

You watch current affairs shows, or you watch—even soaps, they give you a sense of what is going on in Polish life at the moment. And the best thing for that of course is to visit the place itself. In terms of the internet, I regularly, I suppose, check Polish sites, but—almost exclusively news—unlike my father I don’t buy papers—the actual paper papers—or magazines. So … I would go onto … one of the major papers there, or the Polish Press Agency, whatever, just to check what the day’s news is—are there any political scandals that have erupted in the last few days, or whatever. Also, for example … music sites, especially when I’m ordering—getting somebody to buy things for me, or whatever, to see what’s happening in the world of Polish music, that’s something that I have kept in touch with, at a cultural level. But yeah, basically news and music is something that I would use the internet for, and also to email people over there … occasionally.

Leszek, who migrated at age 13, is a bit different in this regard:

I haven’t read any Polish books since the time of Polish Saturday school. So that’s the short answer. The long answer is that I don’t get my information from reading books … I don’t spend my time … I’m not really in to reading books … maybe newspapers and the internet … I wouldn’t look at them [websites] quite often, but every so often I do come across Polish websites. It’s not like I’d be specifically looking for something there … that happens rather seldom. But every so often I come across something, or someone sends me a link … But generally it’s not too often … Occasionally I’d watch some Polish TV program which is on Channel 31 … every so often I would come across it, and have a look at it. Occasionally there are some Polish movies being shown on SBS television. Sometimes we would go to see a Polish movie when they’re being played here in the cinemas … at times I would switch on to hear radio … RNF FM being broadcast from Poland. So occasionally I would listen to that. But it’s not something frequent—it happens from time to time.

The group’s participation in transnational communication with Poland was in all cases at odds with involvement in the local Polish community. Though they read Polish books and newspapers, watched Polish films, communicated with relatives abroad often, and travelled to the home country regularly, those who migrated at an older age (like their younger counterparts) still had relatively limited—and declining contact
with the local Polish community, in which most just did not seem interested. Many had attended a Polish club in the past, but this generally had not occurred for a long time. Most had a small number of Polish-background friends and acquaintances, but most friends were from the wider population. While all of the respondents in this subcategory regularly attended Polish mass as children or teenagers, almost all admitted going either never or once or twice a year—for Christmas and/or Easter. Only one, Janusz, said that he attends Polish mass weekly. The only other contact these respondents had with the ‘organised’ Polish community was occasionally going to a Polish shop to acquire Polish bread, sausages or sweets, or to borrow a video. Even then only a minority of respondents in this group (four out of ten) declared carrying these activities out regularly.

Clear gender differences did not emerge in respect to the way respondents described their transnational links with the homeland, or participation in the local community. The only major way in which the accounts of men and women differed was that women were more likely to list the importance of food in triggering memories of home, while men were more likely than women to talk about the importance of television and the internet in maintaining links with Poland. There was slightly more difference by socio-economic status. As mentioned in Chapter Three, while respondents’ parents in Poland were from broadly similar socio-economic backgrounds, following migration some parents managed to secure professional employment, while the majority underwent professional downgrade and worked in unskilled or semi-skilled occupations. The latter lived in the main areas of Polish community concentration, in lower-income suburbs in the southwest or west of Sydney, while the former lived in more middle or even high income suburbs. While respondents who came from these two family types did not vary much in the way they experienced return (except that those from middle to high income homes tended to travel back to Poland earlier, because the family could afford it), there was more difference in community links. Those from the western and southwestern suburbs were more likely to have Polish friends and have contact with other Poles more generally. It is unclear whether the reason for this difference was family socio-economic background per se, for this increased community contact may simply stem from growing up and living near other Poles (though residence is itself a product of income and status). However, when it came to transnational links with, and interest in, Poland, there were no discernible differences between the two groups, except for the ability of members of higher income families to travel earlier, though not necessarily more often.
One of the things respondents were asked about—and sometimes they brought this up independently—was whether they would like to, or could see themselves, returning to Poland to live, either permanently or for a prolonged period.

Karolina rejected the idea outright:

I don’t think I would ever go to Poland to live. It would be too weird, and I’d possibly become depressed and want to go back to Australia. If my parents moved there I’d probably visit. But somehow I don’t think they would ever live there either. Things would be too different even for them.

Agnieszka was similarly uncomfortable with the proposition of moving back permanently, though she had no objection to going to live there for a year or two:

No, not unless I had to. I would miss the space, the fresh air, freedom of movement. Rude people would annoy me, I would be irritated by the small quick get rich people who think they are the center of the world and the constant fight for money. In Australia I don’t have to worry about money, even if I don’t have it... you still survive [...] [But for a year or two,] yes—It would be an interesting experience.

Kasia contemplated going to Poland to study:

I kind of considered doing a year in Krakow ... as, at uni, I thought about it. I don’t know, I certainly wouldn’t be adverse to spending a year or two over there at some stage, whether with work ... I don’t know, just living for a year.

Marek also thought about living in Poland for a prolonged period to study:

Absolutely. I intend to. I’ve been thinking of doing some studying in Kraków for ... for quite some time. And as I mentioned I’ve actually spent a semester studying in Russia. This is not so much about living in Poland as the experience of living somewhere else other than where you usually are. Living overseas—it’s a great experience, a great way of learning ... and Poland would be the natural country to do it in because it’s so much easier, knowing the language, having so many people around—friends, family, etc. So yeah, I would definitely temporarily live there.

He didn’t want to rule out moving back to Poland permanently either, if he liked it—though, interestingly, he admitted an attachment to Australia which was impossible to shake:

It just depends. I have no idea. If I went there to live for a while, who knows what might happen. But—there are no concrete plans, if that’s what you want to know ...
wouldn’t exclude the possibility, I wouldn’t exclude—staying for however long ... you know, I liked. But even if I moved there I would still be going back to Australia, just like I go back to Poland.

Jasiek, unlike any of the other respondents, spoke of always either wanting or expecting to return to Poland to live permanently:

I always thought that I would be coming back [...] I really felt like my stay would be a short one and that I would be coming back fairly soon and in view of that also, I kept and my mum took with her a number of [school] books for later years [she was a teacher], especially in Polish, so that I could keep learning the Polish language in later years in fifth and sixth year. Just to, sort of, catch up on that knowledge and then to, if necessary, to come back. And even after '89 I still very much wanted to—even though my parents probably gave it up and my brother gave it up—my idea was still very much to go back and even live there ... live with my grandmother in Poland. My intention was always at that stage [when at high school and university] to come back.

By the time of the interview Jasiek was working as a lawyer and had more or less given up on the idea of permanent return to Poland as preferable but not realistic. However, late last year (about two and a half years since he was interviewed), Jasiek moved to Poland permanently. He went there for a holiday, and never came back. I have been unable to contact Jasiek in Poland to discuss the reasons—other than the ones discussed abstractly at interview—for his departure.

As well as Jasiek, another respondent, Pawel, moved to Poland permanently last year, also well after the interviews were conducted. I was able to speak to him briefly after his relocation to Warsaw, where he found a job in the branch office of a British architectural firm. He moved there not because he did not like Australia or preferred Poland, but for love. He rekindled over email a relationship with a pre-migration childhood sweetheart and neighbour (a transnational romance if ever there was one), and made the move halfway round the world for her. They married in July 2006.

This section showed that, on the return journeys, and afterwards back in Australia, many respondents seriously thought about whether they would be able to live in Poland, either permanently or for a period of six months to a year. Most decided that they would not like to return to Poland to live permanently—there were too many things about Australia they would miss, and too many things in Poland they did not like. Some others, like Marek, were ambivalent, suggesting that they could see themselves living in either Poland or Australia—but only if they could keep a foot in one country while living in the other. Only one respondent, Jasiek, expressed a strong feeling for one day moving back—which he did—while another, Pawel, moved back
quite spontaneously, without expressing any interest in it prior to leaving Australia. Respondents were more likely to consider spending a year or two in Poland, though at the time of writing none had actually attempted this. For most respondents long-term return to Poland is something they conceivably can do—something that in a way comes with being Polish—but for the majority it remains but a choice or a vague dream, for they remain overwhelmingly attached to Australia. But as the two respondents who just packed up and left show, it can be done. While the choice is always there, the ultimate expression of Polishness, for most ambivalence or improbability dominate.

**Conclusion**

Whereas Chapter Four focused primarily on the respondents' first homecoming journeys, this chapter looked at the trips which followed the first, as well as the influence travels to Poland had on their sense of identity and belonging, community life in Australia, and links with the homeland.

Among many respondents subsequent trips differed from the first. The first trip was commonly described as being emotionally charged and nerve-wrecking. It re-acquainted the returnee with Poland and Polish culture and typically re-ignited interest in both. Family featured prominently. Subsequent trips were described as more relaxing, as being holidays rather than momentous events: 'I felt very comfortable, I didn't have that anxiety, or that shock, or that overwhelming sensation of visiting these people and places for the first time. It was a holiday. You know, essentially a holiday'. With each subsequent trip, time spent in Poland declined while travel beyond family destinations increased. Travel around Poland was also increasingly combined with journeys to international destinations. The trips became, then, not only about seeing family and rediscovering one's Polishness and Polish roots, but about seeing Poland and other parts of Europe.

With each trip, the way returnees' felt about their identities also tended to change. While in Australia, prior to the first return, respondents said they generally identified as 'Polish' or 'Polish-Australian', even if they knew little about and possessed only limited interest in Poland and Polish culture—which was the case with those who migrated at a young age and even some of those who arrived at an intermediate age. Although before the initial return, respondents' 'Polishness' was manifest locally, through the home, local family and friendship networks, church, and—for about half of the interviewees—Polish Saturday school. This was complemented by nostalgia for the homeland, though in some cases the notion of the Polish homeland was a hazy one. Physical—as opposed to nostalgic—transnational links with Poland were relatively
limited. What links existed—letters to relatives, viewing of Polish films—declined in the period between migration and return; they were also more significant the higher age at migration was.

The return trips to Poland led to a re-alignment of returnees’ ethnic identities, and their relationship to the homeland. Returnees were reacquainted with the real, physical Poland and the family resident there. Among those who migrated at a younger age the first trip resulted in a resurgence of interest in Poland. However, this did not necessarily lead to an increased sense of ‘Polishness’: faced with ‘real’ Poles, and not being able to communicate as effectively as they would have liked, these younger migrants felt like outsiders. The more time returnees spent in Poland, the more these feelings surfaced—despite increasing Polish language skills and familiarity with Poland. The more time they spent in Poland, the more Australian these young ‘Polish-Australians became’, and the more inclined they were to think that Australia, not Poland, was now ‘home’.

Those who migrated as teenagers expressed similar feelings, though they were more divided. Most in this age group also felt that increased travel to Poland made them feel more ‘Australian’, even though their familiarity with Poland and the Polish language should have made them feel more comfortable in Poland. But this ease of communication, and more immediate memories from the pre-migration period, also ensured that their experiences were assessed in a very critical manner, being compared continuously with experiences in Australia as well as Poland prior to emigration. Even the one respondent who said travelling back made him feel more ‘Polish’ was highly critical of what he encountered in Poland.

The individuals who migrated at an intermediate age—eight to twelve—were characterised by a greater degree of identity instability than the other groups. The first trip not only heightened interest in Poland but, respondents commonly reported, it made them feel more Polish. This influence extended until after respondents returned to Australia again. The trip awakened respondents’ previously dormant Polishness, to which there was an initial increased commitment. That first trip itself became the object of nostalgia, and a follow-up trip was usually quickly in the planning stage. But subsequent trips, and increased time in Poland, gradually led to increased disillusionment. Poland was being increasingly compared to Australia—and also other places—and there was also the feeling (as with the younger group) of outsiderism: many realised they did not belong in the ‘homeland’ after all. The reaction of Poles to them, including to their ‘Australian’ accent—of which they were not previously aware—accentuated this.
For members of the older and, especially, intermediate age at migration groups, return trips eventually became marked by continuous assessment and identity negotiation. These returnees often asked themselves who they really were, where it was that they belonged more, and so on. That they were seen, to varying degrees, as outsiders by others in both Poland and Australia did not help. Growing doubts, confusion and criticism contributed to making increased time spent in Poland increasingly enjoyable. Respondents in fact spoke of feeling more comfortable in other, ‘third’ countries—precisely because issues of identity and belonging were irrelevant there. Travellers knew they were outsiders; there was no confusion about it, and they could enjoy the experience of travel freely. Similarly, that those respondents who migrated at a young age spoke very enthusiastically of their experiences was because they, too, had few illusions as to where they most belonged. Unlike the intermediate and older groups, their Polish language skills were limited and they were aware from the outset that they were outsiders, though with a Polish background. They could relax more and concentrate on sightseeing and seeing family freely, and without as much identity confusion as the other groups encountered.

Some of the trends outlined in this chapter follow those that Baldassar recognised for Italian-Australians. Baldassar’s research looking at return visits to Italy found that, among second generation Italian-Australians the first trip back ‘home’ had an identity-shifting effect on the young returnee. These similarities, but also the differences between this research and Baldassar’s, are discussed further in the next chapter, the conclusion. Over time, the more that respondents returned to Poland, or the more time they spent there, the more critical, less idealistic their outlook became. The trips became less family-oriented and more about visiting places on side trips, while using family in Poland as a base or temporary home. Return led to substantial fluctuations in identity, which were not easily predictable, though they were influenced by age at migration and how much time returnees spent in Poland. Whether returnees identified more as Polish or Australian, or Polish-Australian or Australian-Polish, seemed very much context dependent. Theirs were ‘situational identities’ (Vertovec and Cohen 2002), varying with place and circumstance. They felt sometimes comfortable, and sometimes not quite certain, in both ‘homes’, Poland and Australia, seeing themselves as, in a way, world citizens. Travelling back and forth, between the two countries, had accentuated the extent of uncertainty and ambivalence about identity.
Conclusion

Over the course of the previous six chapters this thesis has explored the multi-dimensional, multi-directional nature of the migration experience, and the multiple (and often fluctuating and overlapping) identities associated with it. In particular, this thesis sought to examine the importance of transnational links to the homeland to the experiences and identities of members of immigrant communities. This was accomplished by focusing on the example of young Solidarity-era migrants to Sydney and their experiences, especially their visits back ‘home’ as young adults and the effect these had on their sense of identity, belonging, and transnational linkages.

The nexus between homecoming journeys, homeland landscapes, photography and identity was explored through the case study of members of a subset of Sydney’s Polish community: the Solidarity children generation, individuals who emigrated out of Poland in the 1980s as children or teenagers. They had therefore some but relatively limited experience of life prior to emigration; almost all possessed vivid memories of the actual event of migration, but also spent at least part of their school years in Australia and were for the most part (though to varying degrees, depending in part on specific age at migration) thoroughly integrated into Australian society.

transnational communities

The core of this thesis has been the essentially transnational nature of the immigrant experience. Migration is rarely a uni-directional process, instead being characterised by the onset of numerous links and flows, whether predominantly physical (homeland visits), virtual (telephone and email communication, the internet, satellite television, etc) or nostalgic/psychological. As was demonstrated in this research such transnationalism, far from being constant, or in a state of gradual decline as migrants integrate and assimilate in various ways, more typically waxes and wanes. The same can be said of self-identity, which also fluctuates substantially, according to circumstance.
One of the main arguments of this thesis was that return journeys to the homeland are an important factor affecting transnationalism, as well as the migrant's identity and the way he or she feels about both the ancestral and present homeland. This thesis has demonstrated that return trips to the homeland are an important but often overlooked example of the transnational ties that bind the migrant to their 'other', original 'home'. It has been here argued that these return journeys are worthy of academic attention not only because they are in themselves a crucial aspect of diasporic transnationalism, but because they also heavily influence its other manifestations, reinvigorating for example general interest in the homeland and its culture, and rekindling communication with relatives resident there.

In looking at return journeys and their influence, particular attention was paid to photographs taken by returnees on their trips, and the way the returnees viewed and (through photography) depicted the homeland and its landscapes. This was done not only because trip photographs (such trips typically being heavily photographed) constitute a useful methodological tool, but because the photographs were identified as an important part of the return experience, especially the way it was remembered and communicated to others. As such, respondent photography itself becomes part of the transnational web of links, memories and memorabilia that are inseparable from a migrant's experience and self-identity.

Similarly, particular attention was paid to the landscape—the previously familiar pre-emigration Polish landscapes as nostalgically recalled, or imagined, and rediscovered upon return. Respondents commonly and very fondly spoke of the landscapes associated with their childhood, with in many cases their ongoing memories of these influencing their early trips into Poland (and the photographs they took). The trips in turn rejuvenated already held memories and images of these nostalgic landscapes, as well as creating new ones, of additional places travelled to and ultimately contributing to an ever-changing image of 'homeland'. Because of the importance of nostalgia for the homeland landscape (which I have here termed the 'homelandscape') to the migrant, and its role in the return process (as well as the effect of return on it), memories and images of the Polish landscape were here treated as an example of transnationalism. They may be ephemeral and (unlike economic flows, home country visits and media consumption) comparatively unquantifiable, but memories of the homeland continue to exert influence over experience and the imagination. As such, they too are a sign that, among this group of migrants, instead of being severed, and Poland gradually forgotten, post-migration links with the homeland continue.
Chapter One introduced the project and placed it in the context of the existing literature across several subject areas. It was demonstrated how much research on migrant communities has traditionally been limited in scope, focusing on immigrant community dynamics in the destination country. But in reality the original home country is rarely forgotten—it lives on, its influence continuing, through not only nostalgic memories and memorabilia, but through potent physical transnational links with the homeland. Within the last decade the nexus between transnationalism and migration has received increasing attention, though such research has focused on diasporic links via for example satellite television, telephone, the internet and the media, only occasionally touching on the topic of return journeys home. Photography and nostalgic landscapes, it was shown, have also received scant attention in the context of immigrant transnationalism.

Chapter Two discussed the methodological framework within which this research sits. It began by talking about positionality, arguing for the benefits of a less precipitous researcher-research subject divide. The chapter outlined the thesis' original methodology, a fusion of in-depth interviewing, photo-elicitation, visual analysis of respondent photography, and elements of participant observation (I am after all a member of the community studied and it is impossible to remove my own personal experiences and influences, including those acquired outside the research period). The latter half of the chapter focused on the use of photography in social science research, and outlined the way in which photographic analysis would be employed here.

Chapter Three provided the necessary background information for the thesis topic, introducing the history and contemporary characteristics of emigration out of Poland, and migration to Australia specifically. The latter part of the chapter focused on Solidarity-wave Polish immigrants in metropolitan Sydney, introducing the study group and their pre and post migration histories, prior to the first return journey back to Poland. It was shown that at the time of the first return journey, Poland and commitment to the Sydney Polish community did not feature prominently among most respondents. The important exception was those individuals who migrated to Australia in their teenage years.

In Chapter Four the importance of travelling back to Poland for the first time was demonstrated. For all the respondents it was a momentous event that was often described as a turning point. If the respondent returned previously as a minor, the first trip as a young (generally unaccompanied) adult was rated as being particularly important. The chapter described the experience of return, and what respondents saw
as some of the best and worst aspects associated with it. It showed the key role played by extended family (sometimes described in positive terms, and sometimes negative—often by the same person) on the return journeys. Also crucial was returning to and rediscovering once familiar landscapes associated with youth. By visiting family and once familiar landscapes, hazy memories and nostalgic dreams were brought to life, becoming immediate, living, reality—even though reality wasn’t necessarily always better, or welcome.

Chapter Five further elaborated on the experience of return, focusing on the photographs taken by returnees, and also on the Polish landscape and how it was remembered and (through their photographs) imaged by the returnees. This chapter showed that the kind of photographs the returnees took, and the kinds of landscapes they enjoyed most, were ordinary everyday landscapes reminding them of pre-migration childhood, and which seemed ‘other’/exotic compared with everyday Australian landscapes. Yet these ordinary scenes—generally thought of as ordinary by most Poles—were the ones respondents recalled the most fondly, and it was these that they most readily associated with Poland. The homecoming trips, the photos returnees took and the nostalgic landscapes they returned to on these trips were in this thesis used as examples of transnational links intertwining returnees with the homeland.

Although research on diasporic transnationalism often ignores this (focusing instead on the more physical—and quantifiable—aspects of migration and/or life in migrant or diasporic communities) photos and memories of the homeland form an important part of the ties linking the migrant to the homeland. The return trips themselves are examples of transnational links—but so are the photographs taken on them (often viewed by others); the memories of the experiences (to be relived time and time again—and sometimes to be repeated to others in conversation); the memorabilia brought back in the suitcase or backpack; not to mention the rekindling of family ties or the formation of new, transnational friendships, often continued following the trip’s conclusion.

Further, the photographs were also shown to, in effect, ‘picture Polishness’. The images taken by respondents on their trips can be interpreted as encapsulating what Poland is, and what it is to be Polish. As they were primarily photographs of family members seldom seen since migration, places associated with childhood (however lacking photogeneity in the traditional sense), generic yet simultaneously exotic ‘Polish’ landscapes—these can be considered the visual manifestations of Polskosc (Polishness) as understood by returning respondents.
Chapter Seven looked at the ‘toing and froing’, and the more general increase in transnational links that typified the experience of most respondents post the initial return journey. At least in the short term, the first return trip resulted in an initial realignment of self-identity, and increased transnational links with Poland, though in some cases the links were only temporary. The trips had less of an effect however on participation in the local Polish community. Polish identity and community was for most study participants much more about the global and transnational rather than the local. It was above all about Poland itself, rather than about links or interaction with locals of similar heritage. And it was about the present, or at least one’s own life, rather than a pre-occupation with national mythology or family history. Visiting Poland, too, was largely about visiting and interacting with a contemporary Poland, rather than the historical or mythical one remembered from childhood, or gleaned from family members, books and media.

The remaining pages of this thesis will show how this study’s findings compare with conclusions reached by other researchers; how they more generally fit into the academic literature on subjects as varied as migration, transnationalism, the Polish diaspora, photography, and landscape; and how they extend debate in these areas.

**migration, dislocation, integration**

This thesis began by talking about the comparative lack of research, historically, in migration studies on post-migration links with the homeland. This study has shown that such links are very important and influential, including among those who migrated at a young age and thus who have little memory of the homeland and who in everyday life would have little involvement with the local Polish community, save for the immediate family.

Only in the 1990s did there emerge a more pertinent focus on transnationalism in migration and its effect on identity. Scholars such as Ang (1994), Thomas (1999), Skrbis (1999), Wise (2000), Pastergiadis (2000) and Akhtar (1999) discussed the influence of continuing links with the diaspora and homeland, including those among second or even third generation immigrants. This research touched on the role of the return journey to the homeland, but generally did not focus on it, with Baldassar’s (1999, 2001) work being an important exception; it was seen as but one aspect of contemporary migrant life and an often fragmented, unstable identity. Most such studies were also located within the context of strong local co-ethnic communities with which identity was (variously) bound (e.g. Armbruster 2002; Ehrkamp 2005; Levitt 2001; Zhou 2001; Airriess 2002; Hardwick 2002) though admittedly this local involvement was lesser where younger or second or third generation migrants were
Here, however, the respondents' accounts suggested that direct links with the homeland were in most cases much stronger than were links with and commitment to the local Polish community. Respondents had very little to do with other migrant Poles, other than family members and in most cases only a small number of friends. Those who migrated at an older age tended to have greater local community links than those who were very young but, other than language skills, differences were fewer than expected. By contrast, there was among respondents very strong interest in Poland itself. Interest in and communication with Poland tended to increase following return journeys to Poland, especially in the aftermath of the first such trip. Following this first trip the general initial enthusiasm and the intensity of such links gradually abated, though they were still stronger than before the initial return, and were in a sense 'topped up' during subsequent journeys, where these occurred.

**Polonia parallels**

The limited contact members of the study group had to the local Polish community in Sydney seemed remarkable when compared to their quite developed transnational links, as well as compared to some other studies of migrant groups which take the transnational angle. However, the findings here correspond with the findings of other studies which examined Solidarity-wave immigrants (Morawska 2004, Drzewicka and Nakayama 1998, Drozd 2001). This suggests that the observations made here are neither an anomaly, nor apply only to the younger generation examined here, but may be characteristic (for whatever reason) of the 1980s wave of Polish migration in general.

It is in some ways tempting to ascribe the study group's comparative lack of participation in local co-ethnic networks, but simultaneous participation in Australian-Poland transnational flows, to the respondents' still young age and age at migration. Such an explanation, however, would paint an incomplete picture, for the above traits appear characteristic not only of the generation examined, but their parents' generation also. Moreover, such observations appear to apply to Solidarity immigrants not only in Australia, but in other host countries as well. This is attested through the few studies focusing on Solidarity-wave immigrants to other corners of their world.

As it was shown earlier in the thesis, Drzewicka and Nakayama (1998) argued that Polish immigrants to Phoenix displayed very limited contact with one another, yet were preoccupied with Poland in their private lives and through travel, media and capitalist consumption, due to the sprawling, decentralised, car-logic layout of
Phoenix. Such 'postmodern' cities, the authors argue, necessarily lead to dispersed settlement of immigrant groups, rather than the formation of pronounced ethnic enclaves, as in 'modernist' cities like Chicago. While patterns of settlement in Sydney resemble that of 'postmodern' sprawling cities like Phoenix more so than modernist ones, it is doubtful that this urban geography and the settlement of immigrant groups within it is a primary (deterministic) cause of the characteristics of the city's Polish immigrants' lack of active participation in the co-ethnic 'community'.

As was shown by Morawska (2004), Solidarity-era migrants to Philadelphia also notoriously reject active, especially organised, participation in Polish community organisations, while simultaneously maintaining profound 'Polishness' within their homes as well as through transnational links with the home country. Morawska argues that this has to do with the socio-cultural character of Solidarity-era Polish immigrants, with their notorious distrust of organisations, and a culture which is centred around the home. This theory provides a more plausible explanation than that of Drzewicka and Nakayama, and would go some way to explaining the disconnect between transnational links and community involvement among Solidarity Poles in Sydney. The Solidarity children generation may simply have learnt to steer clear of organised community life from their parents.

Another factor might be the comparative invisibility of the Solidarity group, both compared to the general population and the bulk of the Polish immigrant community. Being white, Christian and well educated, Polish immigrants are not as visible as many other recently arrived immigrant groups. As such, they can (at least once the language barrier is overcome) blend in easily in the public eye, not being forcibly 'Othered' by it. This might limit the need to turn to co-ethnics and/or co-religionists for support and feelings of belonging—and might go some way to explaining the lack of involvement in the community by 1.5 and second generation Polish immigrants, who would find it easy to 'lose' their Polishness if the situation required it, unlike people of colour who would find it much more difficult. But similarly importantly, the group is invisible when compared with the bulk of the local Polish community, which in the Australian context is comprised predominantly of postwar immigrants and their children (in the US context, meanwhile, descendants of the turn-of-the century Polish migration waves are even more numerically dominant). As a result, Solidarity Poles have little affinity with organised Polonia life, dominated as its infrastructure and networks are by the earlier migrants and their descendants, with whom they share little in common.

The Solidarity-era child migrants examined in this thesis share some of the traits of their parents' generation—however, their commitment to local Polish networks is even
less pronounced, while the contribution of transnationalism to their 'Polishness' is even more extreme. Given Polish language skills and pre-migration experiences more limited than those of older migrants, this is not surprising: attachment to an at least partial, hyphenated Polish identity, an interest in Poland, transnational links like travel, and romanticised memories or conceptions of the homeland increase in proportional importance as the relevance of local networks diminishes. In this study, there was a clear positive correlation between age at migration and Polish language ability and participation in the local community—but the extent of transnational links to the homeland were much less affected.

locating dislocation: the return journey 'home'

Return to Poland reignited interest in Poland and Polish culture and identity, but in the long term exposure to the 'reality' of Poland also problematised respondents' pre-trip feelings of identity and belonging. Faced with 'real' Poles it was obvious that they weren't 'truly' Polish, especially as the Poles around them without hesitation referred to them as 'Australians'. Many described this as unsettling because in Australia they thought of themselves, and/or others thought of them, as 'Polish'. Their Polish accent in Australia played a part in them being identified as such, but in Poland it was their Australian accent that gave them away. For some there was a feeling of no longer entirely belonging in either of two worlds. In both Poland and Australia they were identified as outsiders. Indeed, some said that it was when travelling in third countries that they were most comfortable, because there their 'belongingness' wasn't called into question.

This dis-ease with one's 'true' identity was not spontaneous but grew with increased time in Poland, and on subsequent trips. As more and more of the 'reality' of contemporary Poland was revealed, it was increasingly apparent that Poland really no longer was 'home', and that life there would now be difficult. Inevitably comparisons were made with Australia and while some things (especially initially) seemed better in Poland, ultimately everyone decided that Australia was a better place to live. Some—especially those on longer trips—even began to get homesick for it, or at least certain aspects of it (e.g. beach, friendly customer service). Seemingly paradoxically, the more time that was spent in Poland the greater the eventual commitment to Australia and Australianness, albeit this was simultaneously accompanied by increased interest in Poland, its culture and current affairs and the family there. This relationship with the homeland and one's culture was approached from a different perspective, and a more detached viewpoint. Poland could be approached and appreciated (or critiqued) like
an interest area or tourist destination rather than the base, one's true home and the source of identity.

Despite the return journeys of immigrants to the homeland being among the most visible (even quantifiable) manifestations of diasporic transnationalism, surprisingly few studies in the rapidly growing literature on transnationalism focus on these trips and their effects. A notable exception is the work of Baldassar (1995, 1999, 2001). In some respects at least, the return journeys of second generation Italian-Australians in Baldassar's research (1999, 2001) resemble those of the young Polish-Australians interviewed here, except that having migrated as children most of the latter retain pre-migration homeland memories and more advanced mother-tongue skills (Baldassar's second generation respondents were Australian-born). Like here, for Baldassar's returnees an immediate reawakening of interest in the home country and culture was followed by increased realism or pessimism as more time was spent in the homeland. Overlapping, fluctuating identities were also at play, with being not only at home but also an 'other' in both societies a prominent characteristic. However, this research has taken Baldassar's research further by focusing on the return of generation 1.5 only, and through the introduction of a powerful visual element by way of respondent photography.

By focusing on the return visits of a relatively homogeneous subgroup of an immigrant community, with a sample containing a cross section of ages at which migration occurred, this study also demonstrated the effect age at migration can have on the return experience, and on the extent of transnational links more broadly. This kind of analysis has been lacking in all other studies looking at return, which examine the second generation proper or those who migrated as adults, and not generation 1.5 as is the case here. It was shown that, as expected, the respondents' experience of return varied substantially depending on the age at which they migrated to Australia, but not necessarily in the ways expected. The initial hypothesis was that a higher age at migration would lead to a more enjoyable experience of return because of greater ease of communication, more pre-migration memories, and less time having elapsed between migration and initial return. Similarly, it was anticipated that those who migrated when very young would be less likely to enjoy the experience because of greater culture shock and communication problems. Those with an intermediate age at migration, it was thought, would feel at home in both cultures—or possibly neither.

However quite a different pattern quickly emerged. Although possessing superior Polish-language skills and prior to initial return overwhelmingly likely to identify as Polish, those who migrated at an older age—between approximately 12 and 16—found
the experience, while initially exciting and emotional—quite problematic, especially as more time was spent there. This was because their familiarity with the language and culture permitted them to have a more critical outlook. Also, because they could easily move back to Poland if they wanted to—and many in this group thought about it—everything viewed in Poland was immediately compared with Australia, or appraised in terms such as ‘I could live here’ or ‘I no longer belong here’. Another factor was that they spent more time in Poland as children, and so the view they had of Poland prior to return was more developed and less romanticised than for those who left as young children. An Australian accent for people in this group really wasn’t a problem, so for all intents and purposes they could pass as Polish locals; their ‘outsiderism’ was internal, the result of their own perceptions and beliefs.

By contrast those who migrated at a young age (before approximately 7), despite comparatively poor Polish language skills and limited knowledge of the country, thoroughly enjoyed return visits. One explanation for this is that they were returning to a country they did not remember well, and thus one that was heavily mythologised, the source of generally pleasant childhood memories and romantic notions of ancestry, family and belonging. The trip was about childhood nostalgia, but also about discovering a new place, contemporary Poland. Limited language skills meant that many had no illusions of belonging there; they knew they were outsiders, and could enjoy travelling the country from that perspective, almost as tourists. They were not visiting the country with the possibility of one day returning to live their permanently, as they definitively viewed Australia as their permanent home. As such there was a lot less pressure. Furthermore, limited communication skills meant that there was less opportunity to critique the nuances of life in Poland.

Those who migrated at an intermediate age (approximately 7 to 11) fell somewhere in between. They spoke enough of the language to be able to communicate and pick up nuances, but not as well as they would have liked, leading to significant frustration when it came to expressing ideas, especially complex ones. Their Australian accents marked them as ‘others’ in Poland, as also did their Polish accents in Australia. Equally likely to identify as Polish and Australian, theoretically they should have been at home in both societies, yet this also meant they often felt accepted in neither. Many at first entertained the thought of moving back to Poland or living there for an extended period, but this idea was usually abandoned as the initial excitement gave way to increased realism and a more critical outlook.
photographing return

In her research Baldassar hints at the importance of images, especially photographs, to this coming or going 'home', as well as to the more general process of migration (e.g. Baldassar 2001: 14-15, 182). While acknowledging their relevance, Baldassar however does not employ the use of photographs in her research in any particularly significant manner. She looks at respondents' photographs when these are shown, or asks for them if they are not or if some appear to be missing, but does not single them or their analysis out in her work. In her methodology photos mainly complement other, more primary research methods while in Baldassar's written work they only occasionally punctuate the text.

The thesis goes beyond Baldassar's work through its focus on visual material, and through an original methodology which made use of photographs taken by the respondents themselves on their visits home. This thesis employed respondent photography and its analysis as a core component for a key reason: photography was for respondents a very important part of the return experience. Where returnees went they took photos, in some places and at some stages of the journeys many more than in others. Particularly large numbers of photographs were taken on the initial trip, and early on during each trip, where the nostalgic excitement of being back 'home' was greatest, as was the impulse to photograph—everything was just so different, yet so very familiar, loaded with memory and history. These photos acted to document the trip—for themselves, family members, and in this instance this researcher—but were also in themselves a core component of it. Sometimes they even directed part of the trip, with behaviour modified just to get this or that shot to show the family back in Australia how this or that person or place had or had not changed since emigration, or the last visit home.

Despite its huge potential, respondent photography remains a rarely used social science research methodology. As was shown earlier, among the few studies to have made use of respondent photography are Crawshaw and Urry (1997), Markwell (1998, 2000), Jenkins (2003), and McAuliffe (2004). Much such research largely employed content analysis methodologies, whereas this thesis relied on a combination of photo elicitation and iconographic visual analysis. Many of these studies, including Markwell (1998) and McAuliffe (2004), involved the researcher-initiated respondent photography, where the respondent was asked to take photographs, whereas here respondents took photographs naturally and out of their own volition, not knowing that they would be later looked at by a researcher. This provided the respondent-photographer with significant agency arguably lacking in other photographic
methodologies, where respondents are asked to respond to photographs taken by others, or are told to take photos for a research project.

It was found that when respondents were asked to show the photos they took on their trips at interview and talk about them, their accounts become much more vivid and detailed, and delivered more enthusiastically, than prior to the introduction of the visual prompts. It also appeared that, looking at the photos of the trips, respondents relived individual moments and were more likely to describe things as they saw them at the time. By contrast accounts provided at the verbal only stage of interviewing seemed more subject to retrospective self-censoring and interpretation. Certainly the same events, people and places were described more positively and with a greater degree of nostalgia with the photos than without. The photographs, in short, enabled the trip/s to be relived and more effectively recounted.

But their contribution does not end there—photographs contribute also a wealth of visual material, which can be analysed or (without words) allowed to speak for themselves. The experience of return, the landscapes encountered by returnees, family reunions, are all very visual phenomena. They cannot easily be condensed down to words alone. Visual methodologies such as the one employed here help bridge this gap, aiding understanding of what it was like for the respondents to return, helping us to see the people and places returnees visited, as well as how these might be remembered by the returnees and communicated to others.

For all the reasons outlined above, this method therefore cannot be recommended highly enough for those contemplating similar research. It engages the respondent in interview, provides visual material where words alone may not be sufficient, and provides the respondent with a degree of agency. Such an approach would prove useful in examinations of not only ‘homecoming trips’ or other journeys into ancestral lands, but travel more generally. It might also prove an invaluable tool in other work involving immigrant communities, especially given the prominence accorded to photography in remembering the ‘homeland’, in communicating with transnational family networks, and in documenting life in the new country (the period immediately following migration being anecdotally an especially well photographed one).

**nostalgic landscapes**

Nostalgia, the longing for a now distant home (or, in some modern interpretation, one’s youth), is a common characteristic of migrant life (Boym 2001). People, places and landscapes associated with pre-migration continue to influence thinking well after migration, even if the migrant was barely old enough to remember much of pre-
migration life (Akhtar 1999). Sometimes this can lead to a pining for the homeland, a deep homesickness remedied only by return home (Boym 2001: 4; Read 1996). A key theme to have emerged from interviews and photographs alike was the importance of nostalgic landscapes to the returnee. These are landscapes once familiar, through residence or family connections, but which following emigration have disappeared from the foreground. They were relegated to nostalgic recollections, or to photos or family stories; sometimes they disappeared altogether from consciousness, only to re-appear again when these places were re-visited upon return, dormant memories often being thus triggered. Among the most common types of photographs taken were images of such places. Often returnees went out of their way to visit and photograph sites associated with their youth, such as their old home or school. There were signs of a kind of ‘returnee nostalgia’ aesthetic having developed, with countless images taken of scenes that disinterested observers would be unlikely to consider not photogenic, either due to poor weather, lack of uniqueness, or unattractiveness. The blokowiska, the huge estates of grey, communist-era apartment block, are one example of such scenes. Of course to the returnees such scenes were unique—they were radically at odds with their usual Australian everyday reality, but also they were heavily imbued with nostalgia, with a pre-migration past, memory and family history. Hence grim, ordinary housing estates or patches of half melted snow become symbols of the extraordinary, worthy of capture, documentation, dissemination. They were a core part of the semi-spiritual pilgrimage which was the return journey ‘home’.

These ordinary landscapes the returnees spoke of fondly, and photographed, these ordinary landscapes, are what Schama (1995) referred to when he spoke of ‘landscape and memory’. These landscapes continue to exist in memory, and the imagination, long after they have disappeared from sight. They become over time part of a person’s, even an entire nation’s, sense of identity and understanding of what this thing called ‘home’, or ‘homeland’ is. Schama discussed the nexus of landscape and memory in a historical sense, looking to the past, and art history, for examples. This thesis has discussed landscape and memory (and the return to that remembered landscaped steeped in nostalgia) in the present, through the example of one group of child migrants. Instead of looking at images from the distant past, it has considered photographs taken by the respondents themselves. Just as Schama showed that, through their landscape art, or literature or film, nations often turn to their homeland landscapes for a sense of identity, so here in the landscapes they photograph what the respondents in effect picture is Polskosc—their idea of Polishness.
**capturing Polishness**

The photographs taken by returnees capture Polishness; they are effectively an embodiment of *Polskosc* as understood—as felt—by the respondents. The scenes they took pictures of, whether family, nostalgic landscapes, or tourist landscapes, are scenes which to them (at the time they were taken, as well as now, looking back on them) essentialise Polishness. For them Polishness is an amalgam of all those things that make Poland different from the respondents' experiences in Australia, yet things which through pre-migration memories, or family stories, seem simultaneously familiar. This is precisely what emerges from examinations of the photographs—rarely seen relatives, the landscapes of youth, and other quintessentially ‘Polish’ scenes. Respondents interpret Polishness through their experiences in Australia; the two are counterpoised—that which is Polish is what is missing in Australia but which Poland has—yet for this Polishness to exist Australia is also necessary.

Return to the homeland is all about travelling into the heart of this Polish-Australian Polishness, exploring it. It seems almost ironic, then, that when faced with the real, physical Poland upon return, over time most respondents began to discover their Australianness. Compared with the Polishness they encountered, they realised that they stood out, that maybe they were not that Polish after all.

**return as transnationalism**

Throughout this thesis return trips to the homeland were analysed as an important example of transnationalism, and a key aspect of the contemporary immigrant experience. As was shown through the case study of Solidarity-wave child migrants from Poland to Australia, return visits can be particularly important events for second or 1.5 generation migrants. For them, return journeys are not just an expression of transnationalism, they are capable of directing it and notions of identity and belonging. In the cases examined here, the initial journey spawned significant subsequent transnational contact where previously there was little: not only further trips, but increased family communication, greater interest in the homeland and its events, consumption of homeland related media, books, and websites, etc. Plus there were manifestations of so-called 'small-scale transnationalism' (Burrell 2003): memories of the trip gleaned from the trip, new photos to look back on nostalgically and share with others, and so on. The experience of return also led to shifts in self-identity and perceptions of where 'home' really was and where one belonged more: the original homeland, the new one, or maybe somewhere in between. In this way return journeys, identity and the migrant experience become one and the same—they stem from and
are expressions of homeland memories and identity, but at the same time once undertaken they themselves heavily influence both of these.

This thesis, in bringing together previously rarely discussed features of the migration experience, including return visits home, 1.5 generation immigrants, photography, and landscape, has given us significant new knowledge. It has demonstrated the profound role of return visits to the outlook and identities of individuals who emigrated as children, and as such for the most part remembered something of pre-migration life, but compared to adults not very much at all. The return visits shifted identity, but the precise way in which this occurred varied, depending largely on age at migration.

Ultimately, then, transnational linkages such as return journeys (and all the other types of links they precipitated) become virtually inseparable from concepts of identity and belonging. One can be Polish or Australian or neither, just as home can be here or there or both or neither or everywhere (sometimes even simultaneously). Transnationalism, and the fluctuating identities that accompany it, thus go right to the core of what it means to be a migrant. Partly by using photographic techniques, this thesis has demonstrated the intricate fluctuations in national and personal identities, that are at the core of migration. To be a migrant is to be forever on the move, between one home and the other (be it through memories, physical return trips, photographs, food consumed, or the media), and between one identity and the other. To be a migrant is, in short, to experience the blurring of boundaries between current home and homeland, and to be subject to the inevitability of ambivalence.
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Appendix A

Interview Questionnaire

PERSONAL DETAILS

1. Name:
   Address:
   DOB & age:
   Gender:
   Marital status:
   Place of birth:
   Present occupation:

2. Highest level of education attained:

3. Where were you born? List all the places you lived as a child:

4. Occupations of parents and grandparents plus where were they born and/or where they lived?
   What was the highest level of education each of them attained?

5. Do you have any siblings? Age? Gender?
   Where do they live / what do they do?

MIGRATION

5. When and why did you/your parents migrate?
   How? (was a third country involved?)
   How old were you?
   Why Australia?
   (If migration was via a third country) tell me about your experiences in third country?

6. Describe the period immediately following migration.
   Where did you live?
   Did you have family / friends here?
   What were your initial impressions of Australia? What about your parents?

7. How do you think your parents felt about leaving Poland behind?
   About coming to Australia?
   With hindsight, do they ever say they regret it?

8. Do you ever think about what life would have been like if you did not emigrate?
   What do you think things would have been like? Better/worse?
   Are you glad that you migrated? That your parents made the decisions they made?
9. How long did it take you to adjust to English, and to Australia? Did you experience any problems?

10. What school did you go to?
   At school, did you ever feel an outsider as a result of your background?
   At school, who were your friends? Mostly Australians, Poles, or other NESB?
   Did you have any Polish friends at school? Do you keep in contact with them now?
   How would you rate your time at school?
   Academic performance?

11. What did your parents do during this period?
   How did their occupations compare to what they did in Poland?
   (If they didn't work in their professions) how did it make you feel?
   How do you think did it make them feel?
   Why do you think they could not work in the professions they wanted?

12. What have you done in between finishing school and now?
   Do you still live with your parents?

13. Do you at present have many, or any, close Polish friends?
   What proportion of your friends or close acquaintances are Polish? Other NESB?
   Anglo-Celtic Australian?
   Do you communicate with your Polish friends chiefly in Polish or English?

14. How would you rate your Polish?
   When talking to your parents, do you speak Polish, English, or a mixture of both?
   (If you moved away from your parents):
   Would you say your Polish language skills have decreased since moving out?
   How often would you see your parents?
   What about other individuals with whom you might communicate chiefly in Polish?

15. Do you have a partner?
   Is your partner Polish?
   If not, what is their national / ethnic background?
   If yes, at what age did your partner migrate to Australia?
   Do you speak to them in Polish, English, or a mixture of both?
   If a mixture, is it chiefly Polish with some English, or English with some Polish?

16. Do you ever (and if so roughly how often):
   Read Polish books?
   Watch Polish films/TV shows?
   Listen to Polish radio/music?
   Look at Polish websites?
   Attend Polish mass?
   Go mushroom-picking?
   Attend Polish community clubs and events?
   Look back at old photos (or other images) from Poland?
17. What is contained in these photos? (e.g. people, family, events, landscape, historical monuments?) Are these photos generally from the time you or your family lived in Poland, from visits made since emigration, from other people’s visits, from relatives who sent the photos to Australia, or other (e.g. images in books, magazines, calendars, postcards, the internet)?

18. Do you have any photos/paintings/prints/sculptures depicting Poland, or originating from Poland, in your home? What about your parents’ home, if you no longer live with them? Provide examples.

GOING ‘HOME’

19. How many times have you been back to Poland since emigration?

20. When was your first trip back?
   Age?
   Time of year?
   Length of time?
   Who, if anyone, did you go with?
   Where in Poland did you go?
   Did you go anywhere outside of Poland?
   If so, where?

21. Did you spend all your time there with family?
   If not, where else did you go, and with who (if anyone)?

22. Which part/s of the trip did you enjoy most?
   What do you remember most fondly?
   Least fondly?
   Overall, did you enjoy the experience?

23. Did you have problems communicating in Polish?
   Did your Polish language skills improve over the course of the trip?

24. Did you take photos?
   Approx. how many?
   What are the photos mostly of?
   How often do you look back at them?
   How do you feel when you look back?
   Have a lot of people seen the photos you took?
   Do others continue to look at them?

25. Did this trip change the way you felt about Poland, or your Polishness?

   Where did you go?
   Family/holiday balance?
   Impressions?
   Did these change?
   How did your family react or interact with you?
Was this different from the first time? How did they make you feel?
When you were there, did you feel more Australian or Polish?
Did you miss Australia? What about it did you miss?
Photos?
How did your feelings about Poland and your Polishness or Australianness change after this trip?

POLAND vs AUSTRALIA

27. Would you now describe yourself as more Polish or Australian?
   Does your identity change depending on where you are or who you are talking to?
   Where do you feel you belong more?
   Do you think you could, or would, ever go back to Poland to live permanently?
   What about for a year or two?

28. Do you think you will ever go back to Poland to live?
   What about if your parents moved back there?

29. Do your parents plan to, or ever talk about, going back to live in Poland (e.g. after they retire)?
   Have they visited Poland since emigration?
   If not, do they plan to?
   If yes, what did they think of it?
   Were their impressions positive or negative?

30. Do you ever get homesick for Poland?
   What in particular do you miss?
   What reminds you or makes you think of these things? Books, photos, films?
   What about landscapes?
   Have you ever seen in Australia a place or scene that reminded you of Poland or something you saw in Poland. Name as many such places as you can.

31. Are there any places that you and your family like travelling to more than others?
   Why do you travel there / why do you think they like to travel there?
   What is your favourite part of Australia? Why?
   What is your favourite part of Poland? Why?

INTERVIEW STAGE II: PHOTOGRAPHS

Ask interviewees to bring photo albums from their trips back to Poland, and any photos from their youth in Poland, and Australia, that they think may be of significance. Go through photos one by one, asking for explanations. Select a few for scanning and, perhaps, more thorough investigation.