The Development and Consequences of Multiculturalism: 
As Exemplified by the Polish Diaspora Intelligentsia

By

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Statement of Authorship

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the dissertation contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the dissertation itself.

Signed: ........................................

Date: ........................................
Abstract

This study analyses the way intellectuals within the Polish Diaspora or Polonia in Australia use writing as a means to integrate the community within the host society whilst creating a distinct ethnic community identity. By interviewing authors and analysing the relationship between the evolving characteristics of Polish writing and social policy this study brings to light the shortcomings of multiculturalism. The controversial policy experiment of multiculturalism has lost support as it failed to redress central issues of social equity and as I will show created new social problems which have yet to be overcome. The central argument of the study is that multiculturalism created a reactive social environment which encouraged Diaspora ethnocentrism in a way that has been detrimental to national unity. I show how and why this policy has failed to foster inter-culturalism and why a move towards integration can lead to greater social cohesion and equity in Australian society. I also explore the extent to which Diasporas such as the Polonia have been agents of social change rather than recipients.
Acknowledgements

Firstly I would like to acknowledge the guidance and encouragement of my supervisor Dr Regina Ganter. I am also indebted to the following writers and artists and people in the publishing industry who have participated in my study, particularly; Barbara Damska, Peter Skrzynecki, Ania Walwicz, Ludwika Amber, Jan Dyduśiak, Andrew Stanleyson-Czerski, Janusz Rygielski, Ted Kazmierski, Antoni Jach, Anastasia Stachewicz and Basia Meder, as well as the various academics who have provided an invaluable insight into the various intellectual issues dealt with in my research. I would also like to thank the various Polish community organisations who have provided assistance during my research particularly the Polish Association of Queensland and the Polish Australian Historical Association. Finally I will like to thank my parents for keeping alive the memories of post-war migrant life that both Polish and Anglo-Australians would rather forget.
### List of Abbreviations

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<th>Abbreviation</th>
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<tr>
<td>ABC</td>
<td>Australian Broadcasting Corporation</td>
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<tr>
<td>AEAC</td>
<td>Australian Ethnic Affairs Council</td>
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<td>AIPA</td>
<td>Australian Institute of Polish Affairs</td>
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<td>DLP</td>
<td>Democratic Labour Party</td>
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<td>DP</td>
<td>Displaced Person</td>
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<td>MECDA</td>
<td>Migrant Education and Cultural Development Association</td>
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<td>MWA</td>
<td>Multicultural Writers Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>NAC</td>
<td>New Australian Council</td>
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<td>NESB</td>
<td>Non-English-Speaking Background</td>
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<td>NES</td>
<td>Non-English-Speaking</td>
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<tr>
<td>POL-ART</td>
<td>Festival of Polish Visual and Performing Arts</td>
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<td>SBS</td>
<td>Special Broadcasting Services</td>
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Preface

There has been a Polish presence in Australia from the nineteenth century, yet settlers from Poland did little to challenge the nascent Australian nation’s sense of identity until the post–1947 period. This is because, unlike other settler societies such as the United States or Canada, prior to 1947 Australia had not experienced mass Polish immigration which would significantly alter the social landscape. Migrants from Poland since the Second World War have become the largest refugee group to migrate to Australia.

As a descendant of this post-war Polish migration and a third-generation bilingual Australian I am exposed to the nuances of differences which exist within the Polish Diaspora or Polonia in Australia. This post-war Polish re-settlement challenged the paradigm of Australian identity as the Irish had previously and the Indo-Chinese would subsequently. In turn the changes in the Australian sense of national identity, which the Polish migrants were influential in bringing about, would frame the views of Polishness and the Polish community in Australia. The intellectuals who are the agents of Polish identity-politics and social organisation are the subjects of my study.

This study explores the way national policy on multiculturalism and societal attitudes towards ethnic minorities influenced the structural, cultural and intellectual development of communities such as the Polonia. It explores the way multiculturalism has been ineffective in encouraging an Australian national identity inclusive of and desirable to, all citizens. Further, the way it has been instrumental in the creation of reactive ethno-cultural maintenance including ethnocentrism and how this can be seen in the cultural productions of the Polish Diaspora, will be examined.
Introduction

Why, in spite of the Polish migrants desire to acculturate and integrate into mainstream Australian society, does Polishness and the idea of the Polonia remain important to their descendants? To gain a deeper understanding of this contentious dilemma my dissertation explores the development of Polishness as a community identity, organisation and literary culture within the Polish Diaspora since World War II. This study looks at the Polish Diaspora as a case study exemplifying the emergence of the so called “ethnic” or migrant literature genre and the growing emphasis on alternative minority history writing. My primary research question asks how the Polish-Australian identity and the integrationist aspirations of the Diaspora manifested in the work of its authors and what this reveals about multiculturalism. To arrive at an answer I have also looked at the way the Polish Diaspora\(^1\) or Polonia\(^2\) constructs itself as a competing monad\(^3\) within the wider Australian social context, and how this has changed over the last half century. This has enabled me to ascertain certain identity traits and values that become evident in the literary, historical and sociological work of Polish-Australian writers. A further question which also needs to be answered relates to how the social realities affect individual and community identity and cultural production within the Diaspora.

This process of identity formation changes over time due to political, social and intellectual movements. The majority of people constituting the Polish Diaspora in Australia were among the first post-war migrants to this country and the Diaspora still retains an active community after half a century. This makes the

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1 I have used this term to refer to all migrants from the Polish territories, regardless of religious affiliation or community involvement.

2 The Polish Diaspora also known as the Polonia comprises one-third of the Polish people or 20 million, compared to the current population of Poland which is 38 million. Polonia is generally used in relation to communities that identify primarily with the Polish nation and Catholic religion.

3 The German Enlightenment philosopher Gottfried Leibniz believed that the universe was composed of a pluralism of monads, which are individual self-contained and self-sufficient substances. For examples of Leibniz’s political philosophy see; Murphy, C, 1999, *Theories of World Governance: A Study in the History of Ideas*, The Catholic University of America Press.
Poles a model for this study which seeks to look at the way an ethnic community has evolved due to the changing post-war social and political climate. It is also important to consider that the Poles were amongst the first Non English Speaking Background (NESB) migrants to be admitted into Australia as refugees for the purpose of permanent settlement and that today migrants from Poland numerically remain the largest refugee group to migrate to Australia.4

The benefit of analysing literature rather than other forms of culture such as food, dance, and customs is that literature evolves after migration and does not have to conform to the political ideology, traditions and sentimentalities of the core active ethnic community.5 Social realities can be analysed through the study of a group’s access to power, opportunity and place within the public sphere as a result of the official national policies of assimilation, integration or multiculturalism and of the way individuals within a Diaspora react to the social challenges which arise from these policies. Thus my study is as much historical and sociological as literary. This leads me to hypothesise that integration is a major social goal for migrants from Poland, and that social and political prevention of social integration encourages an isolationist and ethnocentric Diaspora mentality.


5 As I will show there can be financial incentives to fulfill the sentimental desires of an ethnic community, however this populism does not represent the majority of the Polish writers.
Methodology

The analysis of texts of fiction, sociology and history authored by Poles living in Diaspora in Australia has been central to this study’s development of an understanding about identity formation. Studying The Polish Diaspora’s most prominent writers of fiction and non-fiction has advantages over other forms of sociological inquiry such as the interview and statistical analysis. The writers have a semiotic advantage in communicating subtle nuances of themselves in a way that many migrants would not be able to articulate in a written questionnaire or an interview. Their writing is also a public expression of themselves and their ideas within the culturally contested context of the public sphere. The astuteness of the writer and their level of forethought concerning their own temporal social existence, as well as their ability to detach themselves from it, is also an advantage. Thus, the literary analysis will focus on the social, political, psychological and ideological traits which are exhibited. The writers I have studied are established figures within the Australian literary scene whose works are written in English, as well as writers who do not easily fit into a national category due to the use of a non-English language and therefore do not occupy a space within the Australian public sphere.

There are limitations to this kind of interpretational analysis. The theory of humanistic sociology associated with Florian Znaniecki, William I. Thomas and Robert M. McIver in the United States and Jerzy Smolicz in Australia emphasise the need to accept human values and activities as facts, just as human agents themselves accept them, and stresses the need to interpret all social and cultural activities from the standpoint of the actors themselves, and not merely that of the outside observer. To facilitate this, I have provided the writers in my study with open-ended questionnaires which were distributed via mail or email. I distributed and received nine such questionnaires in total which were specific questions formulated to encourage detailed answers from each individual. I also conducted two interviews where this option was possible. In this way I expected to gain a

greater understanding of the writers, particularly in relation to their identity and
cultural production. To counter the perceptions of the writers and their concerns
about publishing I also questioned marketers and publishers on some of the
recurring concerns expressed by the writers in my study. Through this I was able to
gain an understanding of the driving forces behind the final production of the
literature in question.

There is a symbiotic relationship between the reading of ethnic minority
literature and minority studies, where an understanding of one complements the
other. Without understanding such things as core values or the history and
mentality of an ethnic group, the cultural traits and values within its literature
cannot be fully appreciated. Thus much of the thought in this study has been
influenced by the sociological theories of Jerzy Smolicz, in relation to “core
values” of ethnic groups; the criticisms of multiculturalism by Andrew Jakubowicz
and Habermasian theory on the public sphere. Other intellectual thought which I
have applied are Regina Ganter’s historiography which aims at de-centering the
European colonial narrative and emphasising the inter-cultural links within
Australian history and Barbara Misztal’s work on formality and informality which I
have used to help understand the social effects of multiculturalism.

Literature can also give us an understanding of how the NESB migrants’
perception of the core-culture in Australian society as being mono-culturally
British, in turn influences the way these migrants position themselves within this
society. Thus, identity politics and the theories of Sneja Gunew on ethnic literature
have been critically assessed. The opinions, attitudes and thoughts of the various
writers I have interviewed, when coupled with the study of their writing has been
aimed at testing various theories concerning Diaspora communities and identities in
Australia. Through this I have aimed at presenting a deeper insight into the
fundamental contradictions and cultural sensitivities within the Polish Diaspora.
Chapter 1: Numerical Growth and Political Agency of the Polish Diaspora

History, Symbolism and Belonging in the Polish Community

Every sizable Polish Diaspora around the world has its own “creation myth”, a founding historical event which symbolically links the old country with the new. According to Benedict Anderson this historicisation of a group’s history functions both to build a sense of community in a marginalised group, and to unite them in pursuit of common goals. It also serves as a legitimising agent where evidence of distinctive contribution to the development of the state creates a rationale for an ethnic group’s equal rights and status within the nation. For Polish-Americans this means the glorification of Poles who contributed to the American War of Independence such as Casimir Pulaski and Tadeusz Kościuszko; for Poles in Britain it is the Polish mathematicians who cracked the Enigma code and the pilots who fought in the Battle of Britain during the Second World War, and in France it is figures such as Marie Curie-Skłodowska in science and Frederic Chopin in music. In Australia, the well known exploration of Mt. Kosciuszko by Sir Paul de Strzelecki is the historical nexus between Poland and Australia most glorified by the Polish community.

This “most celebrated link between Poland and Australia” is inexorable to Polish romantic nationalism because the mountain is named after the mythic-heroic figure of Tadeusz Kościuszko who lead the unsuccessful Polish National Rising of 1794 prior to the Third Partition of Poland in 1795. Kościuszko had also previously distinguished himself in the American War of Independence at Saratoga and West Point. The Polish national admiration of Kościuszko is expressed in romantic representations such as the Panorama Raclawicka painted by Jan Styka, Wojciech

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Kossak and others in 1893–94,\textsuperscript{10} and Adam Mickiewicz’s epic poem which alluded to the Kościuszko spirit in its title *Pan Tadeusz*. The significance of the name Mt Kosciuszko is that it creates a concrete link between the Polonia and the Polish nationalistic tradition. The history and ideas signified by this mountain are almost completely unknown to those outside the Polish Diaspora, so much so that its name has been traditionally misspelled without the ‘z’ and continues to be mispronounced.

These historical “nexus” figures such as Strzelecki and Kościuszko are regarded by ethnic communities as essential for the sense of integration, belonging and acceptance into Australian society as such they become “cult” figures and household names. Any attempt to undermine social recognition of important ethnic historical personages is tantamount to ostracising the community from the “family of the nation”. One of the most contentious examples of this in Australia is the case of Mt Kosciuszko. Besides the misspelling of its name, this mountain has now over the last four years been the subject of a controversy concerning its proposed renaming by the National Parks and Wildlife Service. The Kosciuszko National Park 2004 Draft Plan of Management proposes the need to introduce dual naming of the mountain as opposed to the originally-proposed complete renaming which did not have popular support.\textsuperscript{11}

The Polish community fears that this dual naming would be used to eventually phase out the use of the Polish name *Kosciuszko* for an Aboriginal one. In the section devoted to the park’s significance, the Draft Plan of Management does not directly mention the Polish community which, besides the Aboriginal population is the only minority community which has a special emotional attachment to the area. The effect of this is a whitewash of the Polish community’s interests in the future of this nationally symbolic mountain. The hostility intrinsic to this renaming is exacerbated by the plan to use Aboriginal names, thus putting the


\textsuperscript{11} Kosciuszko National Park 2004 Draft Plan of Management, 7.1.4 (number 19) Cultural Heritage and Management Objectives, states “As a symbolic means of recognizing the Aboriginal people’s traditional connection to the area, support the dual naming of the park with an appropriate Aboriginal name.
Polish Diaspora in direct confrontation with Aboriginal Australia. The moral argument (as opposed to the one concerning the legality of the renaming) against this proposed change by the Polish Community Council of Australia and New Zealand is that this was not a site of significance for Aborigines\(^{12}\) and that it contravenes the ethos of multiculturalism of which the mountain and national park are a symbol.\(^{13}\) Thus, a Polish link to the Australian “history wars” is created.

Besides the overt nationalistic symbolic connections such as Mt Kosciuszko there are the lesser known “narratives of nexus” connecting Poland to Australia, the most significant of which is the Polish settlement at Sevenhill. Contrary to the perceptions of many, the post-war Polish migration was not the first instance of Polish migration to Australia; there has been a Polish presence in Australia from the nineteenth century\(^{14}\). The most notable early settlement in Australia was in the Clare valley in South Australia, at a place named Sevenhill. This settlement was named after the Seven Hills of Rome, which suggests there was an important Catholic component which helped to produce a sense of purpose and mission. The settlers landed at Port Adelaide on 8 December 1848 from Silesia; their migration was due to crop failure, depression and unrest in the Prussian-annexed areas of Poland. This migration was coordinated by the Jesuits (Society of Jesus) which was also the first presence of this religious order in Australia. Under the auspices of the Jesuits, the Polish as well as the Catholic German and Austrian settlers envisaged Australia to be the new “promised land”\(^{15}\). The Polish settlers at Sevenhill tended to congregate at the eastern part which became known as Polish Hill River, took up Australian citizenship, fought in the First World War and by the fourth generation were completely “Australianised”\(^{16}\).

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\(^{12}\) It should be appreciated that the political motive for discrediting Aboriginal association with the area is obviously politically motivated and not supported by the author of this study.


\(^{16}\) Kaluski, M, 1985, pp 22–23.
Today there is no longer a Jesuit or Polish community at Sevenhill, yet this place remains revered both by the Polonia (Polish Diaspora) and the Society of Jesus. The Saint Stanislaus Kostka Church at Polish Hill River is now a Polish museum; it was handed over to the Polish community in 1971 by the Archbishop of Adelaide, Rev. J. Gleson and restored in 1971–74. The Jesuits still produce wine at Sevenhill and have school excursions for the students of St Ignatius’ College, Adelaide to St Aloysius’ Church at Sevenhill. Sevenhill occupies an important symbolic place in the minds of both Polish and Jesuit communities, and functions as an object of both pilgrimage and historical narration. Sevenhill was the first and most significant of all the early Polish settlements in Australia (there were other Polish settlements in all the eastern states) and as such Sevenhill has entered the popular memory for later Polish migrants particularly to South Australia. Even though this was largely a poly-ethnic settlement its historical importance for the Polonia and the Jesuits is not matched by other ethnic groups who also had a presence there and no other group has claimed this settlement with as much vigor as the Polonia. Today Sevenhill is seen as symbolising the arrival of Polish Catholics in Australia. Along with the post-war Polish exodus narratives, this narrative is symbolic of the post-war shift in the demographic of Polish migrants from 80 per cent Jewish in the pre–1947 period to 72.5 per cent Catholic in 1981.

The Polish Exodus – The First Wave of Polish Mass Migration to Australia (1947–1955)

Australia, compared to other settler societies, experienced mass Polish immigration relatively late and may not have experienced any mass Polish

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settlement if it were not for the immigration restrictions in the United States.\textsuperscript{20} The single most important figure concerning Polish migration to Australia was Arthur Calwell. Calwell was Australia’s first Minister for Immigration. The Immigration Department was created in 1945 to foster immigration in such a way as to encourage economic growth, maintain the White Australia Policy and preserve Australia’s ethnic and cultural homogeneity\textsuperscript{21}. However, according to James Jupp the post-war migration was due more to the forces of history than to the reluctant decisions of one man. The lack of control over the nature of the post-war migration program is exemplified through the weak “pushes” out of Scandinavia, the preferred source of migrants after Britain, even though much money was spent with limited success in attracting these “Nordic” immigrants\textsuperscript{22}. Yet, historical forces exerted a “great push” out of war-torn Central Europe.

The perceived need for immigrants was greater than any fears that Eastern Europeans could potentially be a social or ideological threat to the Australian social landscape. Calwell’s lack of agency in determining the ethnic composition of post-war migration is the most outstanding feature in this “planned” immigration. In 1947 Calwell signed a migration agreement with Britain after he learnt about the problems of displaced persons on a visit to Europe. This agreement included Polish ex-servicemen from the British Army\textsuperscript{23} and Polish refugees living in the British Commonwealth\textsuperscript{24}. Today, little is remembered of the Polish exodus of around 100 000 people from Eastern Europe and the Russian steppe which was guided through

\textsuperscript{20} The Immigration Restriction Act of 1924 ensured that many European refugees were not able to migrate to the United States until it was repealed in 1965. Until then many refugees chose Britain and the British Commonwealth settler countries such as Australia, South Africa, New Zealand and Canada, as well as almost any country which would accept them in their desperation including Persia and East African countries.


\textsuperscript{23} See Norman Davies 1999, \textit{The Isles}, p 824 for an elaboration on the nature of Polish servicemen in the British Army.

\textsuperscript{24} Kaluski, M, 1985, p 30.
British Colonial territory such as Tehran, India, East Africa and finally South Africa, many of whom eventually ended up in Australia.  

Many of the war related Displaced Persons (DPs) who were permitted to settle in Australia were barred from migrating to the United States which was often their first preference. Yet Calwell’s selection of 170,000 DPs was based on fitness and ability to be used as labour in Australia, which meant the exclusion of the elderly and disabled, at least until later family reunifications. The post-war settlement of DPs remains the largest number of non-British settlers to be accepted into Australia in a short period and the number of refugees from Poland was the largest. The first of these were Polish ex-servicemen who fought under General Władysław Anders, many of whom were veterans of the Tobruk siege and the Battle of Britain and later arrived in Australia in the second half of 1947. Australia eventually accepted a total of 40,000 Polish ex-servicemen who would become a feature of the Polish Diaspora in Australia. The next group which numbered a few thousand were Polish refugees from India and British East Africa as well as from Great Britain. This group largely comprised Polish refugees, who were released from the Gulags by Stalin after the first meeting of the “The Big Three” at Tehran, from 28 November to 1 December 1943. The third and largest group which came to Australia from 1949 to 1951 were DP’s from Allied administered DP camps in the British, American and French occupied zones of Germany and Austria. This group, comprising people released from Labour Camps and Concentration Camps, as well as people fleeing the Red Army’s occupation of Poland, numbered over 60,000. From 1947 to 1955 Australia accepted 71,721 people of Polish birth.


27 Murphy, B, 1993, *The Other Australia: Experiences of Migration*, p 111.


Statistics, however, ignore the subjective relationship between citizenship, nationality and ethnic identity. This is the case for many families of Polish ex-servicemen who settled in Britain and later migrated to Australia as British citizens, or for minorities from Poland who have hybrid or identities other than Polish, such as Jewish or Orthodox Christian. In terms of nationality/citizenship the Poles are still the largest refugee group (17.9 per cent), followed by Vietnamese who comprise 16.8 per cent of refugees in Australia\(^\text{30}\). The Polish refugees and the Vietnamese have much in common despite their difference; they were both victims of war and communist regimes, both incorporated into Australian society as “factory fodder”, and were a challenge to the existing ideals within Australian society. Vietnamese and Poles alike experience ghetto dispersion and integration to achieve upward social mobility whilst being conscious of the importance of their cultural maintenance\(^\text{31}\).

The traumatic war, exodus and settlement experience had an effect on the psyche of generations of migrants from Poland. Many second-generation Poles associated “Polishness” with all the negative aspects of the settlement process and saw “Australianness” as a way of distancing themselves from these traumas. Many rural migrants from Eastern Europe sought “Australianisation” as a way of putting space between themselves and a Polishness which they believed was quaint, backward and incompatible with the Australian lifestyle. In pre-multicultural societies such as post-war Australia this attitude towards ethnicity was common, as was the belief that modernisation is implicit within Australianness, while similar sentiments were espoused by second-generation Polish migrants to America in the 1890s\(^\text{32}\). This static view of ethnic identity has a limiting effect on the creativity of the Poles in Australia and has a negative psycho-social effect for both the individual and the family.


The negative effects of the immediate post-war migrants were caused by the traumas of war and migration, which were partly caused by the high post-migration levels of isolation amongst Eastern European men, as a result of a labour-oriented migration policy.\textsuperscript{33} This, combined with prejudice and low social standing, often lead to alcoholism, family breakdown, schizophrenia and even suicide. The often unpleasant social reality of these ethnic neighbourhoods made the second generation view social progress and modernity as being attainable only through the rejection of a backward-looking rural Polish identity. The long term effects of these traumatic migration experiences and of the rejection of certain aspects of the Polish identity can be seen in studies by Jerzy Smolicz which show how these experiences result in continual negative psycho-social effects as far as the third generation. This third generation, as opposed to earlier generations, often chooses to maintain a Polish aspect of identity even after much of their culture had been lost, thus creating feelings of dissonance or angst in relation to their ethnic identity.\textsuperscript{34}

\textit{“That Polish Mob” – Migrant Agency and Party Politics (1956 – mid 1970s)}

Once it became evident that these Polish migrants were seen as little more than a source of labour, they began to demand more say in a society in which they were powerless. This started to happen almost as soon as the immediate post-war migrants had completed their two year contract labour and had begun settling into newly developed neighbourhoods near industrial areas. Henceforth, the Australian political landscape would be fundamentally altered. The political parties saw in these migrants an element foreign to, outside of, and uneducated about the Australian political process, but which could potentially provide the parties with

\textsuperscript{33} Burnley, I, 2001, \textit{The Impact of Immigration on Australia: A Demographic Approach}, p 133.

large sources of votes. The entrance of migrants into the political process would be a balancing act between mobilising these ethnic groups to form an effective source of votes without disrupting the power structure status quo. This first case of Polish involvement in Australian politics and public policy development is characterised by their ultimate lack of agency.

This process of post-war ethnic politicisation can be seen in Lyn Richards’s 1978 study on refugee migrants and the Democratic Labour Party (DLP) which was created in 1956. “The Movement”, as the DLP was known, wanted migrant workers to become involved as an attempt to attract the “migrant vote”. Owing to the unsatisfying nature of their jobs or their previous political involvement in Europe, many of these migrants were willing to become active. There were many presumptions within the Movement as to what type of migrant would most likely support the DLP. The Polish migrants were Catholic and generally known for their loyalty towards the Catholic Church. There was also an equation between Polish Catholicism and anti-Communism due to the unpopular atheistic regime which reinforced in the Polish population the traditional Romantic notion of Polish Messianism as a means of spiritual resistance. However, a Catholic hegemony within the nascent Polish community was not necessarily maintained. According to the editor of the Polish Catholic Weekly, Fr. K. Trzeciak, about 40 per cent of Poles were described as “very poor Catholics”. This apathy was caused by the young age of the migrants, most of whom where in their twenties, coupled with the demoralisation which resulted from the war.

Still DLP support by Polish post-war migrants was between 75 and 95 per cent. This was primarily due to the “peasant” vote, whereas the “intelligentsia”

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36 Polish Messianism developed into a mentality into which Poles could rationalize the repeated crucifixion of Poland during the Partitions (1773, 1793 and 1795) and later partitions culminating in the Secret Protocol in the Nazi-Soviet Pact. It is the characteristic feature of Polish romantic nationalism. See Norman Davies, 1982, p 433.


often voted Liberal to emphasise class distinction at a time when economic distinction was not possible. This important class distinction within the Polish Diaspora between the “intelligentsia” and the “peasants” is also emphasised by other social activities particularly writing and membership of writing groups as a way of associating oneself with the more desirable former category. There was also a problem with the Polish clergy in Australia who have always remained aloof from party politics, unlike their Irish counterparts in Australia, and whose main function within the community was to provide social services that the state failed to provide. This lack of support from the leaders of the Polish community would mean that the DLP required a core group of politically mobilised Poles who were required for grass roots work within the Polish community.

The migrant faction of the DLP coalesced into the New Australian Council (NAC) which acquired a constitution and later representation on the DLP’s Central Executive. The NAC which comprised about 25 people had hoped to influence the DLP on policy relating to the communist threat as most of its members were from Eastern Europe; however, any concrete attempts to influence policy by these migrants were ignored. Anti-Communist policy within the DLP and the Liberal Party was developed with ethnic voters in mind rather than by the ethnic Australians themselves. 39 This was partly due to the unattractiveness of the Eastern Europeans in the NAC, who were often referred to as “a lot of nuts” or “That Polish Mob”. 40 One of the NAC members, Kwiatkowski, had 30 Poles working for him in one election and eventually organised the Polish Committee of the DLP, which comprised 67 members. However, meetings of the Polish Committee were held about once a year, sometimes not for three years and with very few attendees. 41

This apathy was the result of the migrants’ realisation that they were largely unwelcome in positions of influence within the party. It was not until the late 1970s with the introduction of multiculturalism that migrant involvement in political


activities began to be accepted by Australian authorities. This example of Eastern European migrant involvement in politics continues to remain one of many forgotten aspects of migrant history as researchers have often felt that immigrants did not take an active interest in politics and have viewed immigrants as being uneducated “labourers” with simple political views. Anyone who has come into contact with migrants from politically oppressed homelands knows just how wrong this assumption is.

With this in mind, it is no surprise that overall the political mobilisation of Polish migrants was largely unsuccessful. The migrants were expected to perform the laborious clerical tasks, in effect retaining their second class status within the party. This was the first and last instance of Polish mass participation in party politics, and this exclusion of migrants from real representational power would remain a characteristic of the Australian political landscape. The Poles were and remain, unable to influence policy development through party politics. To the political elites the Polish community remains a source of votes to be won by affirmations of Polish-Australian friendship at various Polish festivals. In the Dożynki festival, for example, lengthy endearing addresses are given by the Premier and the Opposition leader in an attempt to attract voters. Plans to develop a Polish lobby have not been realised and the fall of communism has also meant a loss any unified political agenda concerning Australia’s foreign affairs policies. However, the community has over the years maintained a unified position on domestic concerns in relation to ethnic social justice issues which directly affect individuals in their day to day lives. The political channels by which ethnic

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43 In 1996 events concerning the Dożynki festival in Adelaide became a political battleground when the Opposition Labor’s ethnic affairs spokesman Michael Atkinson delivered a speech during a Polish function which had been recycled from a 1988 Dożynki festival speech. The Multicultural and Ethnic Affairs Commission chairman Mr Basil Taliangis used this to accuse Mr Rann’s office of showing “contempt” for ethnic communities. The scandal of this event lasted only a week in the media but it exemplifies government attitude towards the ethnic communities in our democracy.

communities can exert pressure to advance these issues are narrow and often blocked.\textsuperscript{45} Yet, from the earliest stages of post-war Polish migration there have been other avenues by which Polish migrants have been able to influence public policy and social attitudes; this has been primarily through academia and the liberal arts.


Migrant participation and agency within party politics proved almost farcical yet the pressure mounted by migrant communities on the political landscape would eventually lead to social and political change. This would be achieved within the context of Thatcherite individualism which gives impetus to notions of self-reliance and the minimal state. In the 1960s, during the massive southern European immigration, migrants were resisting assimilation and radically challenged the Liberal and Democratic Labour Party assumptions about this policy.\textsuperscript{46} The ethnic discontent with assimilationist policy encouraged the creation of the ethnic communities’ movement which would lead to the Ethnic Communities Council of New South Wales.\textsuperscript{47} This was the beginning of a new epoch in identity politics within Australian society. With the power that derived from the large numbers of southern Europeans, the intellectuals among the post-war migrants were able to use their voices in the public sphere to influence social policy in a direction they hoped would give ethnic Australians greater agency.

The large numbers of the immediate post-war Polish migrants, who were predominantly political migrants, would make fundamental contributions to the formative nature of multicultural thought. The foundations of this multicultural thought are expressed in the 1977 definition of multiculturalism drafted by Polish-


\textsuperscript{46} Jupp, J, 2002, p 86.

\textsuperscript{47} Jupp, J, 2002, p 86.
born Professor Jerzy Zubrzycki, often known as the “father of Australian Multiculturalism” and his Australian National University colleague Dr Dean Martin, which concluded:

What we believe Australia should be working towards is not a oneness, but a unity, not a similarity, but a composite, not a melting pot but a voluntary bond of dissimilar people sharing a common political and institutional structure.48

This approach was called “cultural pluralism” and would prove to become the controversial territory upon which multicultural theory would be debated.

This was an exciting time for the ethnic minority communities as it was the beginning of a process whereby immigration and settlement policy advice came mainly from the ethnic constituency rather than from established Anglo-Australian individuals and institutions.49 This growth in agency can be seen in the 1977 Australian Ethnic Affairs Council (AEAC) which was chaired by Jerzy Zubrzycki. Much of the theoretical work concerning multiculturalism was done by Australians who migrated from Poland, such as Zubrzycki, Smolicz and Jakubowicz. There are other influential Polish migrants who contributed to the cause of multiculturalism, such as the Secretary to the third Labour Immigration Minister, Peter Wilenski, linguist Anna Wierzbicka, film director Sophie Turkiewicz and sociologist Adam Jamrozik. Other influential multiculturalists of note include Jeannie Martin, Laksiri Jayasuriya, Gillian Bottomley, Stephen Castles, Mary Kalantzis, and Bill Cope, many of whom were from the influential “Wollongong School”.50 Wollongong is an industrial town with a large post-war migrant population. It was largely the theorising of these academics which would determine the nature of multiculturalism in Australia. Particularly important was Martin’s definition of two

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kinds of pluralism, “cultural” and “structural”. Cultural pluralism is conservative and limited to cultural maintenance and recognition; structural pluralism is the more radical version of pluralism which seeks to “multiculturalise” Australia’s mono-cultural institutions. Structural pluralism is thus more conducive to inter-culturalism which is based upon inter-ethnic acculturation, thus it aims to minimise social difference. Structural multiculturalism would theoretically reduce social tension by placing less emphasis on the cultural difference from which inter-ethnic conflict arises.

A representative of the former category Jerzy (George) Smolicz, was part of the Polish post-war exodus to western Asia and is the most prominent of the small number of multiculturalists who emerged from Adelaide. He gained notoriety with his 1971 article, Is the Australian School an Assimilationist Agency? In this article he advocated cultural pluralism in the education system with an intensity that was, according to Mark Lopez, made possible only through the rise of the New Left. From this point on Smolicz devoted much of his academic career to the cultivation of cultural pluralist educational policies in our schools. Smolicz’s Polishness is particularly important to his reasoning and can be seen in his concept of “core value”, where he is of the opinion that ethnic groups have one or more of these which when lost, signals the demise of that culture’s identity. For the Polish ethnic group the primary core value is their ethno-specific language which has an autotelic significance which is greater than the functionality of the language. In this respect the functionality of the language is secondary to the essential goal of experiencing symbolic values. Thus, when the language is lost, symbols which

51 Lopez, M, 2000, p 175.


53 Lopez, M, 2000, p 159.


are essential to the semiotic positioning of the *Polish Self* in relation to the world as viewed for example through humor, is also lost.

However, a negative tendency of cultural pluralism assumes a culture such as Polish is without evolution and places too much emphasis on aesthetic culture which is consciously enacted and ignores aspects of anthropological culture, such as ethics, mannerisms and preferences, which continue to function unconsciously after the aesthetic aspects of one’s cultural heritage, such as language and dress, are lost. Cultural pluralism reveals one of the problems of this form of multiculturalism where there is a desire to “manage” and define the various minority groups by maintaining ethnic identities that remain symbolically atrophied as different. Thus, for these groups to remain within Australian society rather, than be viewed as “Other”, as the emphasis on cultural difference indicates, society must accept pluralism as a national doctrine. Even though huge gains have been made in pluralism in relation to minority language recognition, teaching and university accreditation, this cultural or “rightist” evolution of multiculturalism is becoming a victim of its own success. Governments have been able to emphasise their commitment towards multiculturalism through their support for cultural pluralism; however, without structural pluralism, which allows for equal access to power and influence in society, community gains by minority ethnic groups can be undone if the political climate becomes hostile to pluralist values.

Andrew Jakubowicz, a leading structural multiculturalist who is of Polish-Jewish ethnicity, is critical of the way multiculturalism has developed in Australia. Jakubowicz argues that multiculturalism is a clever strategy for the containment of migrants as a political force, which is a form of social control. He argues that the concept of “cultural pluralism” serves to conceal an absence of structural pluralism (access to power amongst social groups); that its acceptance of ethnic diversity serves as an ideology to legitimise class inequality because that inequality is then interpreted in terms of cultural attributes of various ethnic groups. It is

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Jakubowicz’s concern that class inequality is being concealed by inter-ethnic inequality which aims to legitimise or at least make acceptable these inequalities. With the “celebration” of multiculturalism after the first implementation of recommendations from the Report of the Review of Post-arrival Programs and Services for Migrants also known as the Galbally Report (1978)\(^{58}\), Jakubowicz became concerned that the Galbally era came to be seen as excessively preoccupied with cultural maintenance programs and ethnic language retention, instead of the “more tangible” equity goals such as the decision-making process in society.\(^{59}\) The Galbally Report insisted on outsourcing migrant service to the ethnic communities, which is why it is today lauded as a bastion of social justice and progressivism by many including the ethnic communities. I, however, view this as providing the ground work for a trend which saw ethnic communities become extricated from Australian society.

Today we see the results of this “culturalist” extrinsic Australian Multiculturalism where a neo-conservative government is effectively able to dismantle pluralistic cultural gains due to the lack of real power by ethnic minorities in the decision making process. This trend has further relegated ethnic communities to the periphery of society, if not to the realm of “Other”. Multiculturalism also has been ineffective in combating aspects of what Martin calls the “negative, backward, inward-turning and self-demanding aspects of ethnic pluralism”.\(^{60}\) These are the tendencies that groups such as the Poles must overcome if they as a community wish to be part of Australia’s integration of minority cultural elements rather than continue to struggle against non-recognition, ghettoisation\(^{61}\) and feared assimilations of the Polish culture. Despite their numbers, Poles in Australia have not contributed as much towards Australian

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\(^{58}\) Galbally, F, (chair) 1978, Migrant Services and Programs, Canberra: AGPS.


\(^{60}\) Lopez, M, 2000, p 159.

\(^{61}\) Today actual ghettoisation has give way to cultural and intellectual ghettoisation as communities become increasingly abstracted from territory.
culture as they could have, thus reducing the mutual acculturation process. Positive examples of acculturation can be seen in groups such as the Celts in relation to music, sport and informality and irreverence towards power structures; the Germans in viniculture; and Italians in food culture and different notions of masculinity.

Yet, the Poles may have left a legacy to Australian society of which they are not aware. Is it possible that Polish aspects of the mentalité and core values of those who significantly contributed to the development of multiculturalism such as Zubrzycki or Smolicz have infiltrated this policy? Has multiculturalism emphasised the integration of Polish core values of language and religion in policy considerations over the ethnic values of other ethnic groups? Are certain ethnic groups such as the Poles better suited to the “culturalist” multiculturalism than other ethnic groups? Could multiculturalism be improved by the emphasis of the ethics of a migrant group, such as the Greek ethics regarding family and community solidarity or Asian attitudes towards the elderly rather than ethnic aesthetic cultural values? Unfortunately the answer to this lies outside the scope of this study.

In the meantime, as the Polish community is increasingly removed from the homeland in terms of time, and aspects of identity are increasingly influenced by Australia, the Polish identity within individuals of this trans-national community known around the world as Polonia remains strong. It remains unknown whether this is due to Multiculturalism; the transnational connections of “Third Wave” and other recent Polish migrants, the ability to comprehend virtual or non-territorial communities due to the internet and immediacy of information and communication, or through a historic sense of kinship based around aesthetic and anthropological cultural familiarity which has seen the longevity of the Polonia in America. This dialectic is the cause of internal dissonance between the Polish and Australian identity within the individual and the community. It is through writing that the Polish-Australian seeks to reconcile this dissonance.
Chapter Conclusion

There have been many authentic Polish communities throughout Australian history and some continue to exist as active communities but the Polonia as a community is primarily an imagined one. This does not mean that it is simply imaginary, honorary or symbolic as individuals who are part of this non-localised Polonia continue to have the same social roles and relationships as in more “traditional” localised communities, due to community centers and activities which facilitate regular social interaction. The idea of the Polonia increasingly functions as a nexus for the various active communities and individuals throughout Australian history who view the Polish as their primary culture. This is a linking of disparate individuals in the continued struggle to preserve Polish culture in the face of a host society which differs in various cultural attitudes. To achieve this cohesion Poles in Australia have adopted a common historical narrative which unites the disparate narratives of successive waves of migration. The Polonia is constructed on the margins of society to avoid assimilation and cultural loss and to preserve its uniqueness. As a peripheral element of a largely disenfranchised segment of society it has been ineffectual in influencing policy through party politics. However, Polish migrants have had some agency influencing society in a way that is favourable to their sense of cultural integrity. This has been achieved through the Polish intelligentsia in Australia where academics such as Smolicz, Zubrzycki and others have been integral to the development of a policy they perceived would lead to greater cultural security. The price for this gain in cultural pluralism has been to turn the focus away from the problems of structural integration.
Chapter 2: The Growth of Cultural and Intellectual Tribalism (1980s – present)

Structural Evolution from Personal Community to Impersonal Tribe

The acceptance of “culturalist” Multiculturalism into the Australian social landscape with the publishing of *Australia as a Multicultural Society* by the Australian Ethnic Affairs Council coincided with the growth of post-modernism, as well as with post-colonial and post-structural ideologies and perspectives. The social realities for post-war Polish migrants had been irrevocably altered by the early 1980s. Economic advancement had enabled the second generation Poles to move out of neighbourhoods such as Bankstown in Sydney, Croydon Park in Adelaide and Darra in Brisbane as more recent non-European migrants moved in. From this point on, the Polish community would take on a more abstract and symbolic character as ethnic neighbourhood migrant communities became secondary and almost obsolete compared with the non-territorial Polonia into which 15 000 post-Solidarity or “Third Wave” Polish refugees coalesced. This “Third Wave” of Polish migration was the result of martial law imposed by General Wojciech Jaruzelski on 13 December 1981 in an attempt to suppress the growing Solidarity movement.

In the past the cultural backgrounds of Displaced Persons who coalesced into the migrant neighbourhood communities were largely incidental. The post-war migrants lived in the same neighbourhoods because they had the same social opportunities and restrictions in terms of housing and employment. Having neighbours who were also migrants of similar if not the same ethnicity was desirable at a time when the host population was still hostile towards them. Cultural interaction of people of various migrant backgrounds was the norm. Since the dissolution of these ethnic neighbourhoods, Eastern European migrants who wish to remain part of an active ethnic community integrate themselves into the
nationalistic mono-cultural ethnic community or relegate themselves to its periphery.

For the majority of second and third generation Polish-Australians who retain a Polish identity but choose not to be actively part of these mono-cultural ethnic communities, it means being relegated to the periphery of a periphery. These communities now struggle with the anachronisms of ethnic folk-dancing and festivals which are often their best means of expressing their sense of being a community unique in culture which has become increasingly valued since multiculturalism. Subversive inter-ethnic division and competition for power and prestige resulting from these inter-ethnic divisions has also come to characterise ethnic interaction. These culturally based divisions encourage difference between religious and linguistic groups which leads to highly symbolic and isolationist ethnic communities that are exclusionary of those who do not conform to the symbolic core values of the group. Today, after the “honeymoon” with multiculturalism arguably long over, we are able to look back at the destructive tendencies of multiculturalism caused by those in power who desire to maintain the supremacy of a normative British mono-culture over other cultures in the community. The conservative nationalistic members of ethno-religious communities who perceive change and difference within these ethnic communities as a threat to their community’s future have also contributed to social problems.

Multicultural Writers Associations and Ethnic Minority Writing

The effect of this radical evolution of the social realities upon intellectuals can be seen in the development of Migrant Writers Associations (MWAs); although they may exist under different names, their functions are essentially the same. Such writing groups became popular in the late 1970s and early 1980s where predominantly European migrants of NES background saw writing as the only means whereby they could present their life experiences in the public sphere. According to poet and playwright Barbara Damska the early stages of these
associations were characterised by informal gatherings of writers who happened to be migrants and their successes shocked the Australian literary landscape, for the simple reason that they, as migrants, weren’t expected to be able to write. However, with the growth and organisation of these groups, the more talented writers left and the ineptness characteristic of many self-interested migrant organisations became apparent.

Today, the growth in the popularity of documentaries aired on the Special Broadcasting Services (SBS) has opened a new avenue for presenting migrant and non-Anglo life-stories to a mass audience in a way that writers could never attain. As a consequence the MWAs have lost a sense of purpose. Barbara Damska describes the culture which has come to characterise these associations:

The whole thing started when someone got published and recognition or something then everybody wanted to write migrant stories, but not everybody had something to say, but if you are a migrant it doesn’t mean that everybody has to listen to your story. You have to have something to say and have a talent to write. That was the time when Piotr Skrzynecki became popular, but he is a talented man and he had something to say. There were a few others, who became popular, and the rest of the writers with aspirations expected to follow that path and they were expecting everything would be easy “because we are migrants and we suffer”. It was quite easy to obtain grants to publish but the books went nowhere... but that was the trend “to be kind to migrants”. 64

Here Damska expresses the euphoria amongst many aspiring writers of ethnic background with the artificial creation of a seemingly new genre. Writers of ethnic

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63 Migrant Education and Cultural Development Association

64 Interview, 2004, Barbara Damska.
background were being finally recognised by the late 1970s, but they were socially restricted to a homogenous, cultural “ethnic” space within the public sphere where disparate writers were assumed to be linked together by an overarching “migrant experience” which dominated the way their work must be read. The extent of this artificial creation was that many migrants believed that they could become writers purely by possessing this “migrant experience” and thus gain instant literary recognition.

With the organisation and growth of MWAs there was potentially an opportunity for cultural enrichment through the translation of non-English literature into English. Unfortunately, self-interested opportunism prevented any real cultural or intellectual benefit. As these organisations have not been integrated into national bodies but left to the ethnic cultural periphery there has been no institutional incentive to ensure quality or accountability. There has been no government accountability to ensure the quality of cultural production through public grants to multicultural associations. Damska scathingly describes the misuse of government grants for translation:

…I was quite shocked when I first saw what they were doing. The first anthology they published was of each other’s writing, they basically misinterpreted the whole idea of translating, they wrote a poem or story in their own language and they translated it into English. That’s not what “literary translation” stands for.65

Damska thought that MWAs could contribute to knowledge and culture transmission through the “art” of translation, where obscure writing and great literature could be made accessible to the English speaking public. This would be achieved in an atmosphere where debate and improvement could generate a commodity that larger commercial publishers were not willing to produce. However, the reality of the writers’ groups was such that not only were the

65 Interview, 2004, Barbara Damska.
meetings of these associations characterised by arguments and gossipping but ethnic (particularly Polish) cliquishness became an unwelcome yet inevitable consequence. Damska observed that in the case of the Melbourne MWA there was a group of Spanish-speaking migrants who tried to dominate the MWA, yet the next year it was the Poles who were trying to take over. One of the former secretaries of the Queensland MWA Andrew Stanleyson-Czerski describes this Polish over-representation in these organisations as due to the high level of literacy and education in communist Poland despite its economic poverty. Here we can see how each member of a multicultural organisation represents a mono-cultural ethnic minority group, which created a hostile competitive environment for cultural prestige and recognition. It seems that the Galbally Report’s insistence on the Australia Council’s support of the arts of ethnic communities has not been directed in a way that is either beneficial for ethnic communities or the Australian arts at large.

Most of the writers in these groups were required to leave often comfortable middle class lifestyles in their homeland to settle in less affluent circumstances in Australia. Thus, their writing is often characterised by nostalgia for the homeland and a projection of anger against destructive elements in the past onto the Australian people. To be sure, social realities such as prejudice can have a traumatic impact on the individual, yet the repetition of these common narratives once popular for their novelty as being key indicators of an essential literary “migrant experience” are no longer believed to be in the taste of the “mainstream” Anglo-Australian public. In this case the public or the consumers of culture are presumed to be part of the Anglo-Celtic British mono-culture which is a national myth considering that forty percent of Australia’s population was born elsewhere, or has at least one parent born elsewhere.

66 Polish migrants are overly represented in MWA’s, in the Brisbane MWA they account for over half the members.

67 Galbally, F, 1978, Migrant Services and Programs, section 1.29, p 12.

The early success of Ania Walwicz is a classic example of a poet’s ethnic identity. It exemplifies a sense of “Otherness” which Walwicz herself has consciously manufactured. The nature of migrant writing in Australia is determined by how the “migrant” or “Other” reacts to the landscape or social reality which is considered intrinsic to a contemporary Australian identity. In Walwicz’s case the implied author of an autobiographical-style narrative chooses to have the “migrant” aspect of her identity as a dominant attribute. According to Senja Gunew the term “migrant” is intentionally misused here as it often is by the general public and publishers alike when referring to anyone of migrant background even if they have been born in Australia.69 This intentional generalisation is both a form of ignorant simplification on the one hand and a tool of marketing on the other as “ethnic writing” is seen to be part of this “migrant literature” genre. Thus, their level of “Otherness” is exaggerated and the reader judges the migrant self’s reaction to both the social realities and landscape which determines the reader’s ability to empathise with the author-cum-protagonists. By migrant self I mean the aspect of self which has been affected by the migrating experience either first hand or as the product of the reader’s own ethnic background. Consequently, it is the way the migrant self is seen to react to both these elements, landscape and social realities, which determines the public’s reaction to both the author/migrant. Through this literary Polish migrant self I hope to give the reader a greater understanding of the Polish migrant self and how the Polonia positions itself on the periphery of Australian society rather being an integral element. The difference which exists on the periphery is believed to be empowering. This is an effect of the “cultural” multiculturalism in which Polish intellectuals were so influential in developing.

69 Gunew, S, 1994, Framing Marginality – Multicultural literary studies.
Minority Agency or Diaspora Ethnocentrism?

The under-representation of the non-Anglo-Celtic aspects of Australian history is a well-known feature of Australian historiography. Writers of Australia’s national history have invariably been of Anglo-Celtic descent, and have generally under-represented aspects of Australian history that are not in the forefront of the historian’s consciousness. If not perceiving Australian history from a completely Anglo-centric position, historians have then written history from the Black Australia/White Australia binary which does not represent complex inter-ethnic connections. In terms of the integration of non-Anglo-Celtic components into Australian history, little has been done by the “history wars” and “black-armband” revisionism. This has had the effect of providing a new Anglo-Celtic post-colonial history in the place of previous narratives without dealing with the issues of integrating non-Anglo-Celtic histories into Australian national history. However, the recent publication of Henry Reynolds North of Capricorn (2004) has shown that there has been progress in the popular national history towards a less Anglo-centric portrayal of Australian history. This progress towards presenting a less ethno-centric history of Australia has not been developed in the histories of minorities in Australia, including the Poles.

As a settler society the emphasis on taking possession of the land has an important psychological effect in emphasising the European impact upon an alleged *terra nullius*. This is seen as necessary in establishing colonial ownership and postcolonial legitimacy. In the past the exclusion of non-British elements in Australian history has encouraged historians who became aware of this historical

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misrepresentation to write histories of Australia from rival ethnocentric perspectives. The Irish have been the most predominant in writing rival ethnocentric histories; however the positioning of the Irish in Australian society as a component of the dominant Anglo-Celtic monoculture places Irish-Australian histories within the hegemonic “master narrative” of the Anglo-Celtic Australian historical tradition. Non-recognition of Polish contribution to Australia has not only been seen to deny their belonging as part of the Australian nation but it has also been viewed as an insult.

Groups such as the Poles have not escaped this mentality, in fact Polish-Australian historiography is characterised by this desire to emphasise the Polish legitimacy in colonial Australian history. This can be seen in the emphasis by Polish historians on Polish pioneering and colonial personalities such as Sir Paul de Strzelecki and John Lhotsky and settlements such as Sevenhill over artistic, cultural and economic aspects of Polish settlement. In this way the Polish Diaspora chooses to emphasise the more triumphalist colonial aspect of its history. That is why the historians such as Lech Paszkowski are so adamant in their defence of the significance in Australian history of Poles. Geoffrey Blainey’s opinion that Strzelecki’s discovery of gold was amongst the least important economically and that a few museum stones do not make a goldfield,\(^4\) is not just viewed as an attack on an individual but an attack on a community. This highly reactionary aspect of the Polish psyche derives from the prevalence of the Romantic strand of Polish nationalism. Besides political factors for the erasure of Polish contributions to Australian history, there are also practical reasons for this. The lack of familiarity with Polish history, mentality and language also inhibit serious scholarship on Polish individuals while in Poland there has also been a significant lack of interest of Poles who have become famous abroad.\(^5\) Polish historians in Australia such as Marian Kaluski viewed the need to overcome this as an essential aspect of their history writing.


The Polish–Australian Counter National Narratives

The first major historical account of Poles in Australia was Lech Paszkowski’s *Poles in Australia and Oceania 1790-1940* in 1962 which was published by a Polish publisher in London. Since then there have been other significant histories published that fill this historical knowledge gap, such as Lech Paszkowski’s *Social Background of Sir Paul Strzelecki and Joseph Conrad* (1980); Marian Kaluski’s *Sir Paul E. Strzelecki: The Man who Climbed and Named Mt. Kosciusko* (1981) without which scholarship on Strzelecki remains disproportionately small considering the significance of his exploratory work. Historical sociology such as settlement history has also been an important focus of Polish Diaspora historians and sociologists such as Kaluski, Paszkowski, Jamrozik, Zubrzycki, Smolicz and many others right back to Sygurd Wisniowski’s 1873 account *Sziesiec lat w Australii 1862-1872* [Ten Years in Australia]. It was Marian Kaluski and Lech Paszkowski, however, who wrote the national histories which were encouraged by the ideology of multiculturalism.

The apogee of this ethnic history writing was the publication of a series of histories of various national ethnic groups in Australia in the mid 1980s. In this series called the Australian Ethnic Heritage Series an anti-integrationist aspect of multiculturalism becomes most evident. Ethnic groups who would otherwise not have their histories recognised as part of an Australian national narrative were given the opportunity to write their own ethnocentric histories. This series is an example of the contradictory nature of multiculturalism which seeks national unity and integration through the reductionist attitude towards ethnicity as something to be categorised into convenient *monads* that exist independently of each other. Ethnic histories written during multiculturalism’s “heyday” such as those in the Australian Ethnic Heritage Series exemplify the response of this ideology to Australia’s multi-ethnic society. The various ethnic groups as seen from these

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77 Wisniowski, S, 1872, *Sziesiec lat w Australii 1862-1872* [Ten Years in Australia], Lwow.
histories are encouraged to compete with each other in terms of their contribution to Australian society. This can be seen as a form of ethnic pacification as relatively little Australian national history written in this era includes any of the content or personalities from these “ethnic” histories. In most cases the need to relate their ethnic group’s contribution to the nation overrode any considerations of historical misrepresentation that mono-cultural approaches to history might create.

Kaluski’s *The Poles in Australia* (1985) is a classic example of this type of history. At the beginning of this history Kaluski acknowledges the problem of the notion of ethnic categorisation in the section ‘What is a Pole?’ noting the ethno-geographic problems of identity in Poland where the national boundaries changed dramatically. Besides Poles the population of Poland comprised, Lithuanians, Latvians, Byelorussians, Ukrainians and Slovaks as well as large numbers of Jews, Germans, Walachians, Tartars, Armenians, Karaites, Italians, Flemings and Scots. The ethnic Poles themselves are comprised of various Western Slavic cultural-linguistic groups. By acknowledging this difference and the rival ethnic claims on various figures linked to Polish history, Kaluski at least warns the readers of the problematic nature of this type of history based on mono-cultural assumptions. Like Paszkowski before him, Kaluski then continues to write a history which supports the national ideology of the Polish Diaspora. That is, the ideology of the Poles as an integral part of the Australian nation, while maintaining a separate mono-cultural Diaspora identity. This identity is based on the historical narratives or “creation stories” such as Sevenhill, the messianic “passion play” of the destruction of Poland and the post-war exodus, which unite a people defined by “core values” which increasingly focus on religion in a Diaspora context.

Since multiculturalism Australian society has became a battle ground for various rival ethnic voices each striving for social acceptance of the individual on the basis of their historic and cultural legitimacy. Each voice is expected to represent a recognised ethnic minority in a society which regards historical contribution as a source of collective legitimisation, status and prestige. Since both the ethnic community and outsiders alike expect such a voice to speak for the

group, the desire to represent one’s own ethnic community becomes a motive for writing. The result of this is a confused Diaspora history which fits awkwardly into the meta-narrative of the Australian nation. The desire for legitimisation, status and prestige blinds the Diaspora community to overt historical inaccuracies. In the case of Polish-Australian history this can be seen in the representation of individuals as Poles who would not be regarded as Poles today.

The Polish community, and its historians such as Kaluski and Paszkowski, regards the first Polish presence in Australia to have been by Johann Reinhold Forster and his son Johann George Forster who accompanied James Cook on his second voyage across the Pacific on the HMS Resolution. The importance of the Polish symbolic claim to these individuals cannot be underestimated, as it places Polish Australians well within the Australian national narrative. The Forsters are symbolic for Polish Australians, of the longevity and belonging of a relatively recent Diaspora. The fact that the Forsters were Prussians and would today be regarded as Germans is ignored.

Other examples of the confusion of such ethnic identities can be seen in two publications *The Czechs in Australia* (1983) by Michael Cigler and Marian Kaluski’s *The Poles in Australia* (1985); both are part of the same ethnic heritage series and each author claims Dr John Lhotsky as one of their ethnic subjects which both biographies of him pitched in such a way as to present their ethnic claim over him. Wilhelm Blandowski, the first Government Zoologist of Victoria, is claimed as one of their compatriots by German historians as well as by Polish historians. Another book of that series *The Baltic Peoples, Lithuanians, Latvians, and Estonians in Australia* (1986) emphasizes a Lithuanian connection to Sir Paul Strzelecki. I use the term “morphing syndrome” to describe this prevalent process

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79 Kaluski, M, 1985, p 12.


which extends to many other historical figures claimed by Poles such Nicolai Miklouho-Maclay, a scientist who worked in Australia and New Guinea whose father was a Russian and mother a Pole. This claiming process also extends to settlements such as Sevenhill which was poly-ethnic. Conversely, the former Governor-General Sir Isaac Isaacs whose mother was Polish and father Jewish despite being the most significant Australian from Poland is not idealised by the Polonia because of his Jewishness. This is also the case for another former Governor-General Sir Zelman Cowen.

Another consequence of this competitive ethnic historiography is the tendency of Poles to present historical figures as altruistic. There is a feeling that figures such as Sir Paul de Strzelecki somehow reflect the great and moral characteristics of the Polish nation. The aspects of his life which reflect character faults are often under-researched and under-represented, such as his attempted elopement with a fifteen year old girl as well as charges of misappropriation of funds whilst administering an estate in Russian occupied Poland. As Polish historians are the main public source of knowledge on these Polish historical figures it can be difficult for the public to access objective information about them. Rather than competing for claims over these ethnically ambiguous individuals, Regina Ganter recommends that *histories that are to be relevant for the future ought to pin themselves on the crossroads of culture contact, on threads that link populations rather than retrace, affirm and reinvent boundaries between them.*

After all, Dipesh Chakrabarty reminds us that minority and majority are constructions that do not exist naturally, the construction of which inevitably leads to misunderstanding.

There is a tradition of continual literary links between Poland and Australia in both Polish and English and to a lesser extent German, French and other

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European languages which are legitimately part of both the Australian and Polish national literary history. It is more useful to look at these works as part of a transnational form of writing by people of Polish cultural and linguistic heritage writing in the unique landscape of Australia. This world view is best exemplified by the early intellectual and creative writings of figures such as the anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski who in 1918 and 1919 wrote the first drafts of his monographs on the islanders of Melanesia;85 Joseph Conrad who sailed to Australia in the 1880s,86 an experience which subsequently influenced his literature; or Gracjan Broinowski who was the author of Birds of Australia.97 Australian history can be better understood when looked at from this world history perspective where a historic cultural and intellectual connection between Australia and Poland and other nations were an integral part of Australia’s national development, the acceptance of which would lead to greater opportunities for integration and recognition of groups such as the Poles in Australia today.

The effect of multiculturalism on Australian history has been to produce competing ethnic or subaltern narratives which ignore important transnational and inter-cultural connections and encourage an anachronistic way of perceiving individuals and their identities. Minority ethnic historians in Australia have always based their historical narratives on the normative colonial master narratives, in effect imitating Anglo-Australian history writing and colonial mentality and therefore barely qualify as modern history let alone post-modern. Robert A. Rosenstone observes that history is often regarded as a form of discourse that fosters nationalism, racism, ethnocentrism and colonialism;88 however it may be more accurate to state that history merely reflects and reaffirms these already existing sentiments rather than gives rise to them. As most Polish-Australians are


86 Paszkowski, L, 1962, Polacy w Australii i Oceanii 1790–1940, p 57.


the result of post-war refugee migration this form of colonial inspired history does not reflect the Polish Diaspora. Mono-cultural Diaspora histories inhibit the malleability of national identities.89 It is not surprising then, that many Polish intellectuals such as Smolici, Jamrozik and Zubrzycki have preferred the more integrated discipline of sociology as a way of understanding the Polish Diaspora rather than the mono-ethnic approach of Australian historiography.

The challenge now for historians is to foster a historiography that presents history in a way through which Diaspora communities such as the Polonia can feel a sense of integration into the Australian nation, whilst not being hostile to their ethno-specific Diaspora consciousness, at the same time not letting community myths interfere with historical accuracy. Regina Ganter has shown that this is possible on a national level,90 but Diaspora communities such as the Poles, Italians or Irish have yet to move away from historical romanticism and attempt this non-national approach to history which does not conform to the Diaspora ideology.

Chapter Conclusion

This period saw the dispersion of the post-war migrant ghetto as Polish-Australians sought greater inclusion into society. This was spurred by a desire by Australians of Polish and other ethnic backgrounds to have greater agency within, and influence upon, a society in which they had previously been marginalised. This period also saw the introduction of “culturalist” form of multiculturalism in Australia as the official social ideology. It was within this policy framework of encouragement and celebration of difference that the Polish Diaspora subsequently

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reconstituted itself. The introduction of multicultural thought upon Australian society encouraged the perception by Diaspora communities such as the Polonia that by asserting one’s non-Anglo cultural heritage one could gain voice and access to discourse in the public sphere which would correlate to an increase in power or agency in society. Thus a social environment was created in which ethnic intellectuals adopted a tribal mentality which supported the general orientation towards the ethnic tribalism of Australian society in the 1980s. The writing of these intellectuals, particularly ethnic historians, provided the public discourses and myth making with which ethnic Australians could reorient their position within society. This was necessary as Poles in this period like other post-war migrants increasingly moved and socialised outside ethnic ghettos. With this social change from close-knit ethnic neighbourhood community to non-localised ethnic communities, social interaction and political discourse became increasingly formalised through ethnic organisations. These increasingly formalised and abstract communities would greatly rely on symbolism as a way of manifesting cultural difference.
Chapter 3: The ‘Overt Ethnic’ and the Allocation of Cultural Space in the Public Sphere

Introduction

This chapter deals with the way in which the works of Polish-Australian writers reflect identity and how these writers see themselves within Australian society. The intimate approach to identity and migrantness in the works of authors of NES background became the dominant way in which these writers were able to present themselves and their attitude towards the world. This growth in “migrant literature” encouraged by early multicultural ideology and Commonwealth Government funding by such bodies as the Australia Council was also supported by publishers, who saw the “migrant experience” as a commodity with mainstream public appeal. It was believed by publishers that the best way works of literature by migrants could be successfully consumed by the reading public was if this cultural production fulfilled the expectations of the public either through exotic appeal or by reflecting the experiences of migrant Australians.

For this to be successfully achieved the public needed to be aware of the author’s ethnic credentials, thus the author as an “overt ethnic” was reliable in his/her ability to provide an “ethnic experience”. By “the public” the publishers, according to Sneja Gunew, perceive a British mono-cultural mainstream; their expectations of the familiarised unthreatening “Other”, and the need of NESB Australians to see “their story”. According to Sneja Gunew, literature by writers of NES background becomes “migrant writing” and is expected to adhere to the reductive notion of their content (“the migrant experience”). Thus, a new genre was created and supported by pro-active government funding. This “migrant writing” is not understood as true literature of the Australian aesthetic culture, it is merely located within the paradigm of oral history and sociology.91 The reality of

mainstream Australian society and contemporary Australian literature are both poly-ethnic and these artificial distinctions which have become so prominent under the policy of multiculturalism misrepresent this fact in the public sphere. In this way boundaries are marked between “migrant writers” and “Australian literature” in the same way minority histories are defined and removed from the narrative of Australian national history.

**Polish Identity Representation and the Public Sphere**

Most people in Australia are not conscious of how people of Polish background are portrayed in the media. The ideological background of any media organisation which relies on corporate sponsorship is by nature profit-oriented and conservative. Conservativism is not only a mainstay of the commercial television and radio stations; the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) is also a bastion of conservative values and the Special Broadcasting Service (SBS) is increasingly reliant on corporate financing and fiscal consideration which has increasingly caused the negation of its original charter of multiculturalism.92 The conservative nature of the media which relies on corporate financing is the result of the belief by people in the industry that ethnicity is seen by an assumed Anglo-Australian majority as a problem, and thus presented in this negative manner. This was found in a study commissioned by the now disbanded Office of Multicultural Affairs in 1991. The study also found that the lack of representation of people of NES background resulted from the myths that an assumed Anglo-Australian mainstream refused to watch programs deriving from non-Anglo cultures and that multicultural programming offended the sponsors.93 These prevailing social myths of an Anglo-Australian mainstream that views ethnicity as socially, economically and politically


problematic determines the way Polish-Australians and other NES migrant groups
are treated in the public sphere.

The way prominent members of the Polonia are presented in the media exemplifies social attitudes. The airline Jetstar decided to use one of Australia’s most well known actors Magda Szubanski to feature in its promotional activities as she was seen by the company as being fun contemporary and accessible to all Australians and that customers will love her warmth, humor and down-to-earth Australian attitude.94 Szubanski’s mother is Scottish; her father is a Pole who fought in the Polish resistance during the war and was interned in a POW camp before being released by the Russians and subsequently finding his way to Scotland95. Her success in being seen as representative of Australianness might be more accurately seen because of her poly-ethnic ancestry not despite it.

Dr Karl Kruszelnicki is another nationally recognised popular television personality, and like many Australians with Polish names in the public sphere, he is known by his more familiar first name than the hard-to-pronounce, ethnically identifiable surname. Sporting personalities who represent the apogee of all Australian ideals are certainly not mentioned as ethnic such as cricketer Michael Kasprowicz, or the swimmers Daniel Kowalski and Michael Klim, who have all represented Australia at the highest sporting level. As there are obvious “markers” of their ethnicity, commentators are quick to support any non-ethnic alternative Australian in a particular sporting event if given the opportunity, and to emphasise the “true blue” nature of the athlete of NES background if they succeed. They may be of ethnic background but they have become truly Australian due to their sporting prowess, so dearly valued by Australian society. The head of Telstra, Dr Zygmunt (Ziggy) Switkowski’s ethnicity is overlooked by the media as an irrelevant factor in


96 This was the case in the Kerin Perkins versus Daniel Kowalski long distance swimming rivalry where Perkins representing the archetypal Australian was favoured by corporate sponsorship and event commentators alike. In tennis there was a similar yet more publicized example of this in the Patrick Rafter/ Mark Philippoussis rivalry.
his success, unlike Australia’s most famous homeless man — Toowong’s Ziggy the Bagman. Zbygnew’s Polishness is never directly referred to because of Ziggy’s expressed concern that it may embarrass his ethnic community. The media, however, constantly refer to his “Eastern European background”, “Slavic features”, “devout Catholicism” and other cultural indicators that have no relevance to the public debacle that is this man’s deviant mode of lifestyle which has polarised public opinion in television and news polls. There is a tendency to construct successful Polish-Australians as Australian and their successes are attributed as such, whereas notorious figures are constructed as the “Other” by alluding to causal relationships between ethnicity and deviant behaviour.

Polish-Australians, due to their lack of access to the mainstream media, have developed their own Diaspora public sphere with which to address cultural sensitivities represented in the mainstream media. This subaltern counterpublic’s function is to address issues which it feels are of concern to the Polish community such as depictions of historical events, particularly the Second World War, in an unfavourable light. The way Poles are depicted by the media has a profound impact on the ability of Polish-Australians to feel welcome and included in Australian society. A negative historical depiction of Poles is believed to reflect negatively on the Polish community today. Owing to the basic lack of knowledge of Polish history in Australian society, Australians are likely to view historical events that concern Poland in a way that aims to propagate a non-Polish perspective of historical facts. These versions of history may not emphasise certain aspects of history that Poles feel are essential, due to the highly emotional context and the important link between Polish identity and certain historical events. There have been efforts in the past by the Polish community to combat public perceptions of historical events which are presented in a way that appear to contradict the Polish historical narrative.


98 Fraser, N, 1992, “Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy”, in Habermas and the Public Sphere, Craig Calhoun (eds.), p 123.
The Australian Polish Review bought a full-page in The Australian to highlight the three Polish mathematicians who broke the “Enigma” cipher machine code during the Second World War. This aspect of the “Enigma” code-breakers was not made public until 1967, and the British government did not acknowledge the Polish centrality to this code-breaking operation until the year 2000. A recent Hollywood film titled Enigma which had fictionalised the events surrounding this code breaking operation was thus viewed as an insult in the various media outlets which constitute the Polish Diaspora’s public sphere. Hollywood war genre movies have had a history of presenting Poles in a negative manner with social results that the Polish community feels unable to combat. Holocaust genre films made in America have repeatedly sought to present Poles in a way that disregards the Polish heroism, suffering and resistance that characterised Polish wartime experience.

The Polish Community has been particularly critical of the SBS, the supposed bastion of ethnic Australia. This was particularly so after World News on Sunday 16 May 2004 in which Nazi Concentration Camps in Poland were referred to as “Polish death camps”100. This is not the first time this terminology has been used. Representatives of the Australian Institute of Polish Affairs met with the head of SBS Television Ms Sawsan Madina in 1996 after a similar incident to gain assurances that this would not happen again. The Polish Diaspora perceives references such as “Polish Death Camps” as laying blame for Nazi war crimes on the Poles. The Polish Diaspora may seem over sensitive to the semantics behind phrases such as “Polish Death Camps”, but given the Polish historical sense of vulnerability and tradition of romantic resistance, even the most minor unfavourable representation of Poles in any way is perceived as a threat. The phrase “Polish Death Camps” contradicts an essential element of the Polish historical narrative, that of suffering and persecution which the Polish Diaspora sees as an integral part in the pre-migration life of the majority of the Polish Diaspora. This reference is viewed as a threat to the Polish identity which the Poles can relate back

99 The Australian, 2 October 2000, “Enigma”

100 See the official reply by the Polish Community Council of Australia and New Zealand to the SBS at www.polish.org.au
to similar threats to their national identity, such as the cultural-linguistic persecution of Poles in the Tsarist occupied Polish territories following the Partitions (1773, 1793 and 1795) and religious persecution during the Communist era.

The formalisation of the Polish Diaspora public sphere coincides with the formalisation of its community institutions, and the way it handles inter-ethnic conflict resolution. As unilateral discourse in ethnocentric public spheres on issues concerning inter-ethnic relations in Australia increases, the opportunity for inter-ethnic dialogue has become limited, thus conflict resolution becomes ineffectual. This lack of dialogue and increased formality has come to characterise inter-ethnic relations in Australia, whilst informal personal relations between individuals of various ethnicities increase through the moving from traditional ethnic enclaves. When Polish organisations use formal mainstream media and institutional avenues (as opposed to Polish ones) the Polish organisations are able to engage in public discourse; however, this intrusion into the Australian public sphere is often too costly and ineffective.

Poles, Jews and the Construction of Ethnocentrisms

The detrimental effect of the lack of inter-ethnic dialogue in Australian society is exemplified by contemporary Polish-Jewish relations. The particular complexity of this relationship results from the self-perception of the Polish Catholic and Polish-Jewish Diaspora, who both identify with historical narrative of suffering and persecution. In a Diaspora setting, however, the Polish Catholic and Jewish communities “think” of their respective nations in different terms. According to Benedict Anderson’s theory on nationalism this “rethinking” of the nation results when fundamental changes take place in the way people apprehend the world.101 In the Polish case this was caused by the destruction of the Polish

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nation-state (1795–1807, 1874–1918 and 1939–45) and resulting migration process. The result of such a process saw the more civic version of Polish identity, however problematical, capable of including the various ethnic groups of the poly-ethnic and poly-religious Rzeczpospolita (Republic) replaced by an ethno-religious version of Polish identity. This post-war Polishness was reformulated along the mono-cultural core values of the language and the Catholic religion which run contrary to pluralist principles.\(^{102}\) Poles, Jews, Ukrainians, and Lithuanians no longer live together in large numbers in Poland, but continue to do so in various Diaspora communities.

Without an overarching civic Polish nationality bonding these various ethnic groups, the Polish ethnic minorities rethink community in terms of the individuals who hold the same ethno-specific core values, particularly religion. Thus there is a tendency of people of very similar cultures, originating from the same cities or towns, to view themselves as different. With Australian multiculturalism emphasising this cultural difference, historical prejudices, fears and antagonisms continue. As the common link with Poland fades out of memory over the generations, the former ethnic groups of Poland look increasingly towards mono-cultural ethnic communities for a sense of community and identity in Diaspora. This is not a new phenomenon caused by Australian social policy. It is part of a historical continuum of two ethnic groups who exhibit high levels of “ethnic tenacity”\(^{103}\) which was also the concern of Russian thinkers of the early nineteenth century such as the Decembrist Paul Pestel who held the opinion that Jews and Poles could not be assimilated into the Russian nationality.\(^{104}\) In Diaspora, religion determines one’s inclusion into an ethnic community, thus the Polish speaking Orthodox Christians acculturated into Russian communities and

\(^{102}\) Davies, N, 1982, p 491.

\(^{103}\) This is a useful concept, however, Jerzy Smolicz reminds us that this does not take into account the relationship between the culture of the minority group and that of the majority. The level of ethnic tenacity of a group can vary dramatically from country to country. See Smolicz, J, 1999, “Culture, Ethnicity and Education: Multiculturalism in a Plural Society”, in J. J. Smolicz on Education and Culture, edited by Margaret Secombe and Joseph Zajda, p57.

\(^{104}\) Billington, J, 1966, The Icon and The Axe, pp 265–266.
Polish Jews acculturated into Jewish communities. In this way Polish Diaspora identity in Australia is increasingly following the views of the “hawkish” ultra-right Polish ideologist Roman Dmowski (1864–1939) who thought that to separate Polishness from Catholicism strikes at the very essence of the Polish nation and that mixed or multilayered identities are a threat to national cohesion.

The notion of suffering has been around for a considerably longer time in the Jewish tradition than the Polish tradition. Rival Polish versions of this notion could arguably be seen as an affront to this essential aspect of Jewishness. The Jewish reaction to this is to depict Polish history in an antagonistic fashion intent on presenting Poles as persecutors rather than victims, which is the preferred history of the Polonia. This take on Polish history is reflected by the Australian Jewish comedian Sandy Gutman whose stage name is Austen Tayshus who made a documentary about Poland for the SBS TV series Aussie Jokers (2001) which attempted to present Poles as willing participants in the Holocaust. Another example is the recently published book by Leo Cooper In the Shadow of the Polish Eagle in which anti-Semitism is presented as a primordial aspect of the Polish-Catholic mentality.

Robert Cherry, Koppelman Professor in the Department of Economics at Brooklyn College, and past President of the Brooklyn College Hillel, believes that “Poles and their attitudes towards Jews are totally misunderstood by the Jewish community which has little knowledge of the hardships experienced by the Poles during World War II, of the extent to which Poles are honoured as righteous gentiles at Yad Vashem and the willingness of the Polish community to understand the shortcomings of its behavior during World War II.” This optimistic view of Polish-Jewish relations is not often expressed publicly and may reflect more closely

107 Cooper, L, 2000, In the Shadow of the Polish Eagle.
the informal attitudes of individuals; however, the formal community attitudes as expressed publicly usually present the views of the religious right constituents of their respective Diaspora. What Jolanta Ambrosewicz-Jakobs found in a year 2000 study seems to confirm Cherry’s optimism. Her sample of adult Poles did not confirm the general view that Poland is pervaded by a traditional anti-Semitism rooted in Catholicism. Of the Polish students surveyed 63.3 per cent answered that Jews suffered “much more” than Poles and only 0.9 per cent answered “much less”. These conciliatory sentiments, although well intentioned, do not deal with the problem of selective ignorance within the Polish and Jewish communities. Whether the Jewish community understands Polish suffering and righteousness during the war years and whether Poles understand their own short comings is the issue behind this inter-ethnic mistrust. This inter-ethnic conflict is based not on theological prejudices but is the product of contemporary nationalism and its ensuing ethnocentrism and xenophobia. The essential problem here that prevents the engagement in constructive dialogue is that both communities choose not to recognise the moral righteousness of the other, lest it diminish their own uniqueness.

The literature of the Polish Catholic and Polish Jewish communities are often viewed by their own communities as belonging to different categories just as both communities themselves are viewed as separate entities. Despite this difference and the desire to see each other as the “Other”, both communities are united by historical narratives or “passion plays” that emphasise the uniqueness and moral value of the ethnic group. For Polish Christians this can be seen in the Jesus story and its influence on Polish Messanism; for Jews, stories of Jewish wartime sacrifice.


110 Ambrosewicz-Jakobs, J, 2000, p 573.


112 A notion that grew out of Polish Romanticism where Poland was viewed as a Christ-like entity whose sacrificial destiny was seen to redeem Europe’s sinfulness. This is part of the dominant Polish romantic nationalist tradition which is characterised by a religious Jesuitical zeal which has in crucial moments of Polish history taken precedence over the Polish rational or realist variant of nationalism.
heroism and suffering which require Polish gentiles to be presented as the High Priests in this Jewish “passion play”. The Polish-Jewish relationship has been described by Ilya Prizel as a marathon of competitive victimhood.\textsuperscript{113} In this way it may be more appropriate to view Eastern European Diaspora nationalism in multicultural Australia as national-chauvinism.

Anti-Polish attitudes in the Jewish Diaspora have given rise to a new term anti-Polonism, which has been a major factor inhibiting mutual community trust and understanding. This is recognised by the AIPA which is trying to deal with these problems of mutual distrust by establishing dialogue.\textsuperscript{114} Anti-Polonism overtly manifests itself in the literature of Australia’s Polish-Jewish community. Yet in the Polish case, anti-Jewish feeling does not manifest itself in Polish historical writing; where Jews are written about there has been a denial by Poles of the negative aspects of Polish-Jewish relations. In the few cases where Judaism appears in Polish Catholic writing it is presented in a rhetorically positive manner. Contemporary Polish nationalism is not accepting of discourses whereby Poles are the persecutors. Besides institutional discrimination against Jews, Polish peasants were not regarded as Poles by the Polish nobility as a moral means to justify the abuse of the enserfed peasantry. Centuries of oppressing Orthodox Ruthians contradicts contemporary perceptions of the Russians as perpetual persecutors of the “righteous Poles”.

The ethnic consciousness of the migrants from Poland constitutes one of the most publicised characteristics of Polish Australian literature. The overt ethnicity of the author and the content of the artistic work has become the basis of success for some Polish writers who are willing to accept a certain space in the public sphere. This is particularly the case with the ever problematical category of Polish Jewry in Australia. This category of Polish migrants, while significant, decreases every year,


\textsuperscript{114} AIPA, 2001, \textit{Expanding the Dialogue}. 

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from 80 per cent of migrant from Poland in 1947 to 12.9 per cent in 1981. The predominance of the Jewish as aspect of identity as opposed to a Polish one remains the case even though they often retain strong Polish cultural traits such as food, language, as well as European collective organizations such as Landsmannschaften and Bunds and other community associations named after Polish towns, and organise pilgrimages to Poland in memory to the 5.5 million Jews (2.9 of them Polish Jews) who were killed as a result of Nazi racial policy during the Second World War.

Today, the majority of Polish-Jewish writers make a living of writing autobiographical books which are an amalgamation of history and literature. The most prominent poet in this category is Lily Brett who wrote an anthology Poland and other Poems (1987), Just Like That (1995) and Too Many Men (1999). Diana Armstrong has also entered the popular literary scene with her historical novels Mosaic: A Chronicle of Five Generations (1998), and The Voyage of Their Life – The Story of the SS Derna and its Passengers (2001) a novel which has sold over forty thousand copies. Other Australian authors whose works are characterised by this appeal to Yiddish sentimentalities are Mark Baker author of The Fiftieth Gate (1996), and Arnold Zable, author of Jewels and Ashes (1991). These works are all characterised by their strong thematic concern with the genocide of Europe’s Jewry during the Second World War, in contrast to the literature of the Polonia which is not unified by any historical or thematic concern.

A common aspect in the work of both these groups of writers is their strong emotive attachment to Poland and Polish culture even if, in the Jewish case, it often cultivates hostility towards Polish Catholics. Anti-Polonism is an attitude that reflects hostility towards Poles themselves, not Poland which can be viewed in a positive way, unlike the new anti-Semitism which is often analogous with anti-Zionism directed against Israel and Zionist nationalism. This can be seen in Brett’s poem Poland (1987) about the Second World War which accuses Poles of being

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116 Davies, N, 1982, p 463.
worse than the Germans. It is also evident in Armstrong’s novel *Mosaic: A Chronicle of Five Generations*, which depicts Polish gentiles as being “Other”, an underclass treated with indifference in their own country. These two writers have gained much attention and have entered the popular literary mainstream because of their ability to publish within ethnic networks underwritten by the demand within the Eastern European Jewish community for this popular style of ethnic autobiographical literature. Polish-Jewish writers are attracted to this form of popular personal history writing because of the substantial demand within this Eastern European Jewish community. The result of this is a much higher degree in the uniformity of content and style than for the writers of Polish Catholic background, who cannot rely on comparable ethnic community consumption despite their larger numbers. The popularity of Jewish writers, however, relies on the precondition that their personas reflect that of a left over romanticised element of Poland’s destroyed Jewry. Their works have the common lamenting, non-threatening, nostalgic depiction of a quaint community which no longer exists and therefore amounts to nothing for contemporary Australians, who may perceive immigrant communities as potential threats, about which to be concerned.

The Myth of a Migrant Literature Genre

Writers such as Brett and Armstrong have become successful exponents of migrant literature by elevating the ethnic component into the central focus of their work in a way that primarily satisfies the needs of the Polish/Russian Jewish Diaspora and a curious non-Jewish mainstream. This trend, however, is not reflected in the other prose and poetry writers from Poland. As I will show, not only

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118 For an example of the issues surrounding Holocaust remembrance see: Berman, J, 2001, *Holocaust Remembrance in Australian Jewish Communities 1945–2000*, University of Western Australia Press, Nedlands, Western Australia.
is there nothing “migrant” about this genre other than the cultural heritage of the authors, but there is no textual unity warranting the label of “genre” being used to describe such ethnic Australian writers. Writers of Polish Catholic background are too disparate in style and content to be categorised as belonging to any particular genre. The mythical nexus between this eclectic grouping of writers, the “migrant experience”, has appeared so sparsely within the texts of all the leading Polish Australian writers of the last twenty years that it can hardly be regarded as more than incidental, at most a framing device, for the more essential messages of the texts.

Peter Skrzynecki, who is of Polish background, is an author and poet of considerable interest and public acclaim who rose to prominence as a young poet in the immediate period after the introduction of multiculturalism as a national policy. Skrzynecki’s prose is characterised by a traditional autobiographical mode, in a manner accessible to a wide public. He was elevated onto the national literary scene in an era of positive attitudes towards migrant writers from the mid–1970s and has been able to weather the growing hostility towards issues such as migration and ethnicity.

Peter Skrzynecki’s success as a writer in the face of such governmental and media hostility towards migrants may seem like a contradiction. The continuation of his success is proof of a place for writers of NES background within Australian national literature as opposed to the artificial grouping of writers into “migrant” and “Australian” which was characteristic of early multicultural Australia. Skrzynecki is concerned with issues that writers of NES background must face that Anglo-Celtic writers do not. These are concerns that revolve around identity politics and the resulting public and literary space given to writers of NESB origin, owing to the social attitudes of a particular era. Skrzynecki was one of the first Polish writers to be published in the journal Australian Short Stories\(^\text{119}\) and was one of the few Polish-Australians to have been published in Poetry Australia\(^\text{120}\).


1980s and early 1990s these two journals featured very few writers of NES background despite government support for such writers. During the 1980s Australian Short Stories featured only two Polish authors, and only one author of NES background in any edition. In this respect access initiatives recommended by the Galbally Report did not infiltrate the private sector in the same way they did the public. The lack of emphasis on the non-government sections of society by the Galbally Report may well have been just as important as its emphasis on ethnic community self reliance and empowerment\textsuperscript{121} and cultural maintenance\textsuperscript{122} in the prevention of ethnic integration.

Most of the literary anthologies published during the 1980s were funded by public money through the Literary Board of the Australia Council to give non-Anglo writers an opportunity to be showcased. With funding from the Literary Board Skrzynecki was able to publish the anthology *Joseph's Coat*. Even though government support for multiculturalism was at its height in the early 1980s, certain sections of the public sphere, such as the literary establishment and the media were reluctant to accept the cultural and creative plurality within Australia. This may have been expected as the public sphere as an ideal, is a space where private individuals can engage in discourse concerning the public good on an equal level. As an ideal the public sphere achieves social integration through communication of rational critical discourse rather than domination.\textsuperscript{123} However, Nancy Fraser argues that the public sphere functions to legitimate class rule through the illusion of equal access.\textsuperscript{124} This lack of structural integration of migrant artists induced non-Anglo artists to establish ethnic alternatives as a way of accessing the public sphere.

The anthology *Joseph's Coat* was published with funds from the Literary Board in 1985 because Skrzynecki was disillusioned with the inability of quality writers of NES background to access the literary journals. The effect of this, however, was a trend towards the creation of a multicultural subaltern


\textsuperscript{124} Fraser, N, 1992, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy", in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, Craig Calhoun (eds.), pp109–143.
counterpublic. During multiculturalism the British mono-cultural literature industry remained actively hostile towards writers of other cultural backgrounds. As a result of diminishing applied multiculturalism and its emphasis on ethnic difference from the mid-1990s onwards, NESB writers have gained wide public support. This is because what NESB Australians have always desired out of multiculturalism was structural and cultural integration whilst being able to retain an ethnic identity rather than empowered tribalism and rival subaltern counterpublics. After all, by the time Australia became multicultural, the post-war Diasporas were already into their third generation and had established new social networks which were often more important than their original ethnic community ones. There is now a general acceptance that pluralism is more desirable than the struggle against it. It is no surprise that today there is no need to create more organisations such as MWAs, the *Australian Multicultural Book Review*, ethnic anthologies and POL–ART which were all ethnic reactions to persistent inequality in terms of cultural access to the public sphere.

The legacy of multicultural tribalism is ethnic communities based on symbolically distinct, formalised and non-territorial Diasporas. The Polish Visual and Performing Arts Festival or POL–ART exemplifies the contemporary Australian Diaspora; it is non-territorial, appearing at a different city every three years which also fosters Diaspora consciousness to transcend local community, and its main events are folkloric concerts, Catholic masses and other cultural events that are highly symbolic. POL–ART is the epitome of the confusion that is the Polish cultural identity. It is the largest ethnic artistic cultural festival in Australia and has the same popular appeal of Greek or Italian festivals that focus on food and village festivities. POL–ART projects a peculiar idealisation and emphasis on the romantic intellectual culture of Chopin and Mickiewicz interspersed with idyllic Soviet-inspired representational folk dancing. Most Poles are also of rural background.

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125 The Soviet emphasis on pride in national culture saw the development of various Eastern European "folk" dance ensembles, such as the state sponsored *Mazowsze* in Poland to promote regional and national culture. There is nothing "folk" about these professional ensembles of virtuosic dancers in generic exotic folk costumes. Today this Soviet-created form of dance which was originally a tool of national pacification has become the leading form of national cultural expression of the Polish Diaspora. Around five hundred of young Poles across Australia perform in these increasingly popular
rather than of the intelligentsia, and in this way the ideal of the Polish intelligentsia has replaced the village/rural identity of Poles in Australia, which is unique amongst European migrants.\textsuperscript{126}

The introduction of multiculturalism and the nation's ensuing identity crisis, created a literary climate where Australia developed an appetite for anything that may have provided clues to who Australians are, or at least, who they are not. This ideology has been diminished and unofficially supplanted by an ideology which insists on the nation as a united entity since the rise of John Howard's Liberal-National Coalition government in 1996. Howard's long opposition towards this ideology is well-documented and hostility towards migration issues reached an apogee after the government's re-election in 2001 largely as a result of its adoption of elements of an ultra-conservative Hansonite platform.\textsuperscript{127} Since the mid-1990s there has been what seems to be a contradictory improvement in some areas of structural access by non-Anglo Australians into the cultural mainstream. This can be seen in the increase of non-Anglo literary contributions to established journals, as well as the publication success of writers of ethnic background such as Skrzynecki who to date has sold 40,000 copies of his anthology of poems \textit{Immigrant Chronicle}.\textsuperscript{128}

Multiculturalism is no longer practically supported in the way it was during the 1980s and as a result many multicultural organisations such as MWAs have disappeared. This puts greater pressure on the integration of artists of non-Anglo background.\textsuperscript{129} Struggles of the multiculturalist opposition to conservative and armature versions of these ensembles which are staged at local government and community events as a showcase of multiculturalism.

\textsuperscript{126} It should be no surprise to note that the Lithuanian Diaspora also views itself in the same way, and has a similar cultural festival.

\textsuperscript{127} Jupp, J, 2002, \textit{From White Australia to Woomera: The Story of Australian Immigration}.


\textsuperscript{129} Today there is an increasing move towards social integration without cultural assimilation of the ethnic community organisations which are seen to have benefits to society beyond the ethnic community. The introduction of the Polish language into the Queensland senior school syllabus in 2004 exemplifies the move away from Galbally Report recommendations which emphasised Government aid to ethnic community service provision by the ethnic communities themselves back
unworkable ideals of a mono-cultural nation were necessary. In demographic terms, Anglo-Australians constitute a diminishing majority in the Australian society, for this reason integration need not be premised on the Anglo-assimilation that theorists such as Jerzy Smolicz feared. However, the myth of the “British mainstream” remains sufficiently strong to perpetuate an integration which supports Anglo-assimilation rather than mutual acculturation. The place available to non-Anglo Australian writers in the public sphere, however, is still distorted by the continual cultural perception that the Habermasian public cannot openly acknowledge ethno-cultural or class difference in order not to reveal the lack of structural equality that runs contrary to the democratic ideal.

Peter Skrzynecki’s work has been received as part of this migrant literary genre because the characters and settings of his stories are placed within a Polish post-war migrant context. This migrant persona is just one facet to his writing, it cannot exist on its own as many migrant writers of the 1970s and 1980s found out, but it is the essential popular component which enables him to remain publishable. For example, stories of migration hardship and persecution in Australia that are not presented in any other form of media. There may be documentaries on the ABC or SBS from time to time highlighting the fond memories of migrant laborers on the Snowy Mountains Scheme, however, these documentaries neglect to mention for instance the aspects of condescension and mockery of NES migrants by immigration officials. Publishers such as Anastasia Stachewicz of University of Western Australia Press believe that the popularity of writers such as Skrzynecki is due to the fact that so many Australians today are of post-war migration background and can directly relate to and empathise with Skrzynecki’s stories. But the central themes of Skrzynecki’s novels and short stories in no way limited to or preoccupied with the “migrant experience”. They are universal themes that appeal to a universal readership such as the death of one’s parents and the process of aging. His preoccupation with the Australian landscape puts his work more firmly within the Australian romantic tradition than within the so called “migrant” genre.

towards the structural integration of ethnic community services into the wider community. Another example ethnic community social integration is the OzPol Community Care Association which despite its name now looks after the elderly of many of Brisbane’s ethnic groups with public funds.
Skrzynecki is conscious of the fact that he has written more poems about the Australian landscape, wildlife, nature and flowers than about the migrant experience, but he realises that as long as there is a public appetite for the “authentic migrant experience”, publishers would target that and his work would continue to sell. A market for migrant literature encourages authors like Skrzynecki to incorporate migrant aspects into essentially thematically universal texts, to perform their ethnic self.

Skrzynecki performs a successful literary balancing act presenting ethnic content in a way that is both exotic and essential to the Australian experience. In this way he satisfies the needs of the Polish or other migrant communities to see life stories they can relate to whilst affirming their sense of history and belonging to Australian society. Anglo-Australians on the other hand can see a non-threatening migrant community with integrationist aspirations. Many of the events in Skrzynecki’s recent autobiography *The Sparrow Garden* described in vivid and dear terms quintessential Australian experiences identifiable to anyone who grew up in post-war Australia. In this way the migrant’s difference is overt yet superficial, privately cultivated yet with an unthreatening public face. Through pathos Skrzynecki dissolves the barriers of “us versus them” which have been characteristic the social realities of post-war Australia.

Skrzynecki also provides the non-Polish reader with esoteric knowledge of the kind only a native of the foreign culture can authentically purvey. For example, *The Sparrow Garden* describes the Polish notion of *żal*:

...in those early years of our migration I also failed to understand a deeper and more poignant reason to be drawn into associations with their exile; it had to with their loss, with the word *żal*. Literally, it means “sadness” or “sorrow” or “grief”, but it has a depth to it that no English word can capture, certainly not in three letters. Anglo-Australians, especially literary critics and academics, often confuse it with sentimentality and a lack of irony in the work of European immigrants, failing to understand the deep psychological and
emotional issues in the heart of the immigrant. In doing so, they reveal their own ignorance of the state of being of Europeans and sometimes display an inner fear of being, demonstrative themselves, of exhibiting their own feelings, especially men, in public.

Żal is more than a description of a physical feeling, it is a heartfelt reaction, carrying the notion of profound loss and yearning at the same time; it belongs to the language of the spirit or soul, to an Absolute that is intangible.\textsuperscript{130}

Skrzynecki’s preferred themes of nature and deeper existential reflection are important to his writing, but he is aware that this by itself does not sell as well or gain as much public attention without a well-dosed sprinkle of ethnic esoteric knowledge. Australian media reviews of this novel often focus on the notion of żal.\textsuperscript{131} Curiously this is not the case for his audience in Germany who do not focus on the migrant aspects as much as Australians. From the way Skrzynecki’s work is received in other countries we may accurately see where his work should be located within the Australian cultural sphere. This created “migrant literary genre” is both convenient for authors, publishers and those who wish to view contemporary Australian culture as nominally Anglo in character.

**Ania Walwicz and her Struggle for Artistic Freedom**

The “overt ethnic” that I referred to in the title of this chapter is not an individual, but a persona created by publishers, the media or the subjected individual to serve a specific purpose. This act of emphasising ethnicity is a productive one for public figures such as cooks of ethnic cuisine, some writers, and some intellectuals in the humanities or anyone who wants to be seen as the


purveyor of exotic, yet highly sought-after knowledge only available from certain people. It can be detrimental when sensationaly applied by the media to imply a causal link between deviant acts of behaviour and intrinsic ethno-cultural characteristics.

Walwicz, like the authors mentioned previously in this study, has benefited from her overt ethnicity which was not necessarily instigated by herself. For authors it is perfectly normal to become objects of interest, as the readers hope that knowledge of the author will give a greater understanding of a text. However, knowledge of an author centering on aspects of migrant or ethnic identity can also interfere with the understanding or appreciation of a text. This can be seen in the cases of Ania Walwicz and Peter Skrzynecki. Ania Walwicz is an experimental writer who writes poetry in a style many find intimidating and inaccessible. If it were not for the subject matter of some of her earlier poems concerned with her identity as a migrant, she may well have remained part of an esoteric artistic fringe. Walwicz’s works gained national scholarly interest after inclusion in the published works of Sneja Gunew, such as Displacements 2 – Multicultural Storytellers (1987),

132 Striking Chords: Multicultural Literary Interpretations (1992)

and Framing Marginality: Multicultural Literary Studies (1994) providing an in-depth analysis of her poems about migrant identity.

134 However, the poems dealt with in these publications present a narrow, thematically homogenous sample of her work. The way academics such as Sneja Gunew presented writers of migrant background in books such as Framing Marginality: Multicultural Literary Studies was by “making marginal” or by constructing the writer as belonging to an essential migrant genre by presenting works that conform to this and ignoring those that do not.


Publications such as these gave Walwicz national recognition and poems such as *Australia, Poland, Europe* and *Wogs* continue to be her best known,\textsuperscript{135} and thus maintain her public persona both as being “ethnic” and the purveyor of the cultural and intellectual capital associated with this. The poem *Australia*, for example, grabs our attention with its title which appeals to our voyeuristic attraction to both the exotic and the familiar for Australians of migrant background and of non-migrant background. This poem is still studied in universities and high schools giving the impression that Walwicz’s writing is distinctly characterised by this migrant experience. The wider implications of setting poems such as *Australia* as course texts is that it encourages the perception that not only is there a migrant literary genre but also that it is the only contribution NESB Australians have made to Australian literature.

The next question we must ask is what it is about this poem that is seen to epitomise this fabricated genre. Upon reading *Australia* for the first time the reader becomes captivated by the level of “honesty” that conforms to our most secret expectations of a poem that exemplifies all the prejudices which are the necessary fuel for the fire that is ethnic identity politics:

\begin{quote}
\end{quote}

This fetishisation of the migrant perception of Australian society and landscape is what readers during the 1980s were all too fascinated with. The open hostility of Walwicz’s migrant voice towards Australia continues to appeal to the populist sentiment of all segments of Australian society, migrant or not. It could be seen as the manifestation of ethnic chauvinism which is a feared facet of “culturalist” multiculturalism where the migrant (an implied ethnic) voice is eternally hostile

\textsuperscript{135} Gunew, S, (eds) 1987, pp 130–134.

\textsuperscript{136} Walwicz, A, 1987, Australia, in Sneja Gunew (eds), p 130.
and “ungrateful”. This populist perception ignores the fact that Northern European settlers have always experienced feelings of unease in relation to Australia, caused by nostalgia for an idealised lost past and a unique social and ecological environment.137

From a single text alone one cannot hope to gain an understanding of identity or Australianness. The writer’s identity does not speak through this emotive poem encapsulated within an ambiguous, almost parodic voice of a generic NESB migrant woman. This poem continues to spark debate in universities and high schools where it remains part of many syllabi. Even if this poem may have been written by Walwicz to come to terms with the isolation and dissonance experienced by all migrants, it is insufficient to understand the identity of Walwicz herself. Walwicz states that the poem *Australia* is a part of her history, written over twenty years ago. Over the years her knowledge of herself has changed and issues of importance to her in the past are no longer significant to her current work, yet there remains an aspect of herself that can revisit her old poems and identify with them as an essential part of her “self-in-progress”. This poem is not one of which she is particularly fond and she would hardly like it to represent the apogee of her artistic career.

For Walwicz this poem is a part of herself but it should not be a guide to her identity, which evolves with time, knowledge and experience, let alone the identity or attitudes of all migrants and Australians of NES background. The poem *Australia* presents the general attitude of a voice which is derived from the poet's consciousness and does not reflect the complexities of evolving or situational identity:

When I go away from Australia I miss the space and the sea and the large sky but when I’m here it seems desolate. Wherever one is there is always the potential of the other place, another placement. I wrote an essay “the sense of place” [in *heat 1*]. I do love the seaside but I

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have not written about this...yet. But there are two levels of answer here – the personal area and what I wrote, they are never exactly the same.138

Walwicz’s identity is not directly accessible through her depiction of the environment in her poetry. Walwicz states that she has a love of sea, but in the poem Australia she writes: You nothing much. With your big sea. Beach beach beach. I’ve seen enough already.139 A relationship between the implied author as exhibited through the narrative voice and a reader hungry for knowledge about Ania Walwicz is necessarily flawed, whether this knowledge is objective according to the author or conforms to the reader’s need to see Walwicz as an exotic “Other”. We should not see Walwicz’s work as representative of herself, even if this is exactly what the idea of “migrant writing” insists on. Seeing the author’s work as representative of his or her own self, denies the literary implied author and fictive narrator, thus erroneously excluding “migrant writing” from literature.

Walwicz published a compilation of poems under the title of Boat with funding from the Australia Council. The subject of these poems in no way reflects “the migrant experience”; however, the way the book has been marketed reflects the desire of the publisher to commodify the migrant through the maintenance of an “overt ethnic” persona. The title, an image of a boat as well as the by-line stating “Dazzling Honesty – the form and rhythms of the confessional speech” on the cover, all present this book as something it is not, an anthology about the “migrant experience”.140 The success and public acceptance of writers of NES background during the 1970s and 1980s was often conditioned upon their presenting themselves as being the purveyors of knowledge, experience and culture that is exotic in the same way that ethnic folk dancing and food festivals continue to function today.

138 Interview, 2004, Questionnaire: Ania Walwicz.


Walwicz’s work has become increasingly removed from the migrant themes characteristic of her initial publications which awarded her a place in the Australian literary scene. The result of this is an unwillingness of publishers to publish her works because without the migrant subject matter there is little to which the Australian public can relate. Walwicz’s novel *Red Roses* (1992) for example, is a novel experimenting with a highly inaccessible form of stream-of-consciousness writing which disregards all the most elemental literary conventions such as punctuation. Poems like *Australia* appeal to the Australian public because whether one is of immediate migrant background or not, the issues of migration have been one of Australia’s essential historical concerns. The reader is willing to make allowances for Walwicz’s experimental style of writing in this case because of the resonation of the migrant subject matter. This reflects the social desire to see the cultural production of Australians with strong ethnic “markers” from the anthropological perspective rather than the aesthetic.

Whereas publishers supported a persona of the Polish migrant Ania Walwicz that enforces the ideology behind “cultural” multiculturalism, Ania Walwicz constructs herself differently. She does not see herself as a migrant figure and views this perception as an oversimplification of herself that results from categorisation and stereotypes. She perceives that there is a desire for others to see her as the parodic narrative voice of her earlier migrant genre poems. Walwicz neither sees herself as a mainstream figure, despite the mainstream appeal of poems such as *Australia*, nor does she have any contact with the Australian Polonia. She views her work as belonging to the genre of experimental poetry rather than the migrant genre. She has remained conspicuously absent from POL–ART and she is on the fringe of Australia’s Polish community, yet there has been desire by the publishers and sections of the community to see her as somehow representing the essence of a Polish-Australian type. Walwicz, like many migrants, does not fit within the ethnic mould expected of her.

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Being thrust into the public sphere, was for some NESB writers a unique opportunity during a brief Zeitgeist where writers’ fame and access to publishers grew and diminished not according to the level of talent, quality or quantity of production, but in accordance with prevailing social attitudes and public demand. Walwicz expresses discontent with the limitations this imposed. She wonders whether her work has only been located in the migrant writing era of the 1980s and early 1990s. Walwicz is of the opinion that writers are “assigned” a place in the public sphere which is beyond their control. Walwicz views her role in society (and that of other artistic creators) as one in which to enter the mainstream means to create a monolithic persona, perform a function and disappear quietly when the individual as a commodity is no longer of value. As l'affaire Demidenko demonstrated, when it comes to “ethnic” writers, the audience’s trust in the authenticity and continuity of the writer’s persona is a primary requirement in the commodification of the migrant image. Walwicz expresses this transformation of the private self into a public commodity:

Maybe I was only ever seen in one way and that’s all there is, scary, as though one can only think about an author in one way only, implying one can only think of things in one way only as though there is an official line of thought. Education could be seen like that maybe, linear, limited tabulation of authors, groupings, selection…

As an experimental poet her works could not expect to reach a mass market and would not extend far past libraries, universities and a sub-culture readership. For Walwicz this subculture audience is mainly found in experimental music events comprising people who she states are “open minded and informed”. For Walwicz the prevailing popularity of the poem Australia, particularly in education, reveals the agendas which NESB writers have to come to terms with if they wish to be published.

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142 Interview, 2004, Questionnaire: Ania Walwicz.
Walwicz is of the opinion that her popularity in the 1980s and 1990s was propelled by her *migrant persona* as the “multicultural Other” and now that this persona is no longer significant to the content of her work she questions her ability to be published as a fictional or poetic writer in established journals. She finds that the ethnic persona has a limiting effect on her artistic freedom and no longer sees it desirable to emphasise her ethnic background. Walwicz is now working on different forms of writing, such as non-fiction and children’s fiction.

**The Inescapable Matrix of Identity Politics**

Unlike Anglo-Australian writers Skrzynecki and Walwicz are both made to write with ethnicity in mind. The consciousness of their background and the way they present it will inevitably be scrutinised in a way Skrzynecki and Walwicz feel detracts from their work and interferes with their literary freedom and position within the public sphere. In effect their publicity is contingent on their incorporation within what I call “the inescapable matrix of identity politics”. This public insistence upon a migrant literary genre into which the NESB writers automatically fall is based not upon the literary criteria of the text of the literature, but on ethnic markers of the author, such as the author’s name and the traces of “ethnicity” or non-Anglo traits which can be used to confine a writer into this arbitrary definition. Flaws in this form of categorisation are evident in the examples of Drusilla Modjeska and Antoni Jach. Is Drusilla Modjeska, for instance categorised as a migrant writer? Even though she is of English background, her name and the Polish characters in books such as *Poppy*¹⁴³ and *The Orchard*¹⁴⁴ may appeal to the attraction of ethnicity to many readers. Does she in this sense benefit from an assumed ethnic literary identity? Another question is why Antoni Jach, the


author of two successful novels *The Weekly Card Game* (1994)\(^{145}\) and *The Layers of the City* (1999)\(^{146}\) is not regarded as a part of the migrant literary genre. Only in the latter novel is there a single token representation of a Polish subject. Unlike Skrzynecki his Polish ancestry is not marketed as he believes the success of his work may be adversely affected by such ethnic associations. Jach instead aims his work at “intelligent readers of literary fiction”, which results in fewer sales (between 2,000 to 2,400 copies) than the more popular writers from Poland who are regarded as part of the migrant genre such as Peter Skrzynecki and Diane Armstrong. It may be the case that his work can be more freely appreciated without the interference of identity politics and the mindset that the reader brings with this. The evasion of the migrant genre for Jach ensures a freedom and acceptance within the public sphere of contemporary Australian literature. This may be characteristic of a new trend in post 1996 literature of Australians of NES background in what is being referred to as post-multiculturalism where ethnic identities can be assumed or rejected irrespective of the ethnic background of the author. For the moment however, Jach is an exception to the current trends in Polish Diaspora literature.

### Polish Cultural Adaptation to the Public Sphere

Writing is an important facet of the Polish Diaspora which can be seen in the leading positions Polish writers had in the development of all the major MWAs, as well as forming their own associations like the Kraków Literacy-Creative Association in Sydney. The Associations of Polish Writers Abroad in London and Polish Writers Association in Poland both have members in Australia. Australia increasingly prefers to accept educated migrants from Poland rather than the rural migrants that characterised the post-war mass Polish migration, and the desire for integration of Poles into Australian society is exemplified through its high level of exogamous marriages. This suggests that writing will continue to be an essential


element of this integration process. Unlike the various Mediterranean and Asian Diasporas the Polish Diaspora does not have other avenues such as restaurants and small businesses to aid in cultural and social integration. Consequently the intellectual and artistic contribution of the Polish Diaspora remains important because this is seen as a central component of Polish integration and cultural contribution. Without a sense of contribution and influence upon society, minority Diaspora groups risk becoming disenfranchised as ethnic community organisations and the values they uphold remain divergent from the mainstream formal social institutions.

Polish writers in Australia have always existed in a cultural sphere that transcends national boundaries. The Poles in Australia have written in various languages and published in many different countries depending on which country afforded the most prestige and opportunity at the time. In colonial times Polish intellectuals in Australia had a particularly close connection with Britain and the Royal Society, but as Australia developed, opportunity grew for Polish-Australians to publish scholarly writing in Australia. They have not, however, had the same success, recognition and legitimisation in the creative writing field. Intellectually many Polish-Australians have been recognised for their integral contribution to Australia; culturally however, there has been a continual struggle for recognition. The result of this has been the growth of writers who are proficient in English who choose to write in Polish and publish in Poland where they retain cultural connections and a sense of integration.

Polish is the twelfth most spoken language in Australia and is considered a medium sized ethnic group with 62,715 speakers in 1996, but the market for Polish language literature in Australia is not large enough to support Polish literature. According to Ted Kazmierski, author of the historical autobiography ...Then Nothing Will Fail (1998) the Polish community is not supportive of Polish historical novels as individuals already believe they know what happened in

147 Burnley, I, 2001, p 40.
148 Kazmierski, T, 1998, ...Then Nothing Will Fail, Verand Press, Rose Bay, NSW.
the past and have no need to re-live it, which differs from the Jewish community which can sustain a market for such Jewish historical novels. The continuation of writers who write and publish in Polish and who participate in Polish literary associations and gatherings in Australia is evidence of continual cultural production despite a lack of integration within Australia.

The post-Solidarity migrants, unlike the pre and post-war era Polish migrants, are cosmopolitan in their mentality, thus able to live in Australia yet operate within the Polish cultural sphere which is now more accessible at a distance. What implication does this have for democracy when due to the lack of access to the public sphere, ethnic communities and their intellectuals choose to operate outside of it? Where issues of concern to Australia’s minorities are not addressed or debated outside the mono-cultural Diaspora information networks? Today, inter-ethnic dialogue is sporadically established via connections between the various subaltern counterpublics in a way that aims at redressing grievances and satisfying their ethnic community constituents. This myopia cannot confront any serious long term inter-ethnic divisions as, unlike in the Habermassian theory of a unified public sphere, Australian society is made up of many exclusive publics the discourse of each cannot regularly and freely transcend the ethno-centric community media and organisations to enable equal discourse of private individuals on matters of mutual concern. In this environment one cannot expect the Polish/Jewish rapprochement sought by the AIPA to be able to compete with the antagonist populist sentiments often expressed in the ethnic media.

The access to a second national market is not viewed by Polish Diaspora writers as an advantage but a consolation. This attitude reflects the desire of Polish writers to both integrate into the Australian national culture yet write in a minority language. Andrew Stanleyson-Czerski, commented that there were certain areas of his life that he felt unable to write about in a language other than Polish, that events and feelings in the past seemed to happen in Polish. The concern for writing for a market in this case becomes irrelevant, as artistry takes precedence over accessibility. Ludwika Amber, a poet, has been the most successful writer to transcend this linguistic barrier through the publications of the bi-lingual anthology
Nasze Terytorium (1997). Amber states that multiculturalism facilitated the publication of bi-lingual books, however, like all the Polish writers interviewed she still feels that there is less opportunity for "ethnic writers" to publish than for Anglo-Australians.

The combination of a desire to express herself poetically in Polish and the opening up, access to and acceptance of, the Polish public sphere has driven her most recent work away from any association with Australia. Pora Kwitnienia (2001) is a tri-lingual (Polish/German/English) anthology published by Wydawnictwo Edukacyjne in Kraków, and despite Amber’s strong connection with the Australian landscape which featured more prominently in her earlier works there is little content within the collection of these poems that could identifiably be regarded as Australian, or Polish for that matter. Amber, like the majority of the Polish writers in my survey, does not exhibit literary content that is overtly ethnic.

Chapter Conclusion

Since the introduction of multiculturalism, Diasporas such as the Polonia still have not been able to access the mass media in a way that would have been desired. This period from the introduction of multiculturalism to the present saw the growth in ethnic agency due to increasing levels of non-European migration and the policy of pluralism. However, without the emphasis on structural integration the only creative outlets for this agency have been mono-cultural and existed on the multicultural fringe of society. This is seen in the growth of the mono-cultural POL-ART from a small event in 1975 to a large event with hundreds of participants and the utilisation of major venues such as the Sydney Opera House, as well as MWAs and literary publications such as Joseph’s Coat which exist peripherally in the Australian cultural sphere. The one area where the Polonia has
been able to access the public sphere to a limited extent has been in the field of
literature. However, if writers choose to make their ethnicity known the success of
their works becomes contingent on the ability of the writer to present his or her self
in a way that fulfils the public expectation for *ethnic exotica* which authors
ultimately feel distracts from their significant literary themes.

In this period the Polish Diaspora has experienced increasing polarisation
between the Catholic and Jewish elements which multiculturalism has not been able
to overcome. Polish and Jewish literature becomes the battleground where Diaspora
righteousness and ethnocentrism are able to find an outlet in the public sphere.
That migrant literature is not a genre in the literary sense, despite popular opinion,
should not come as a surprise. What is significant is that this genre was a direct
result of multiculturalism, which shows the extent to which a national ideology can
influence public culture. With the opening up of a free market economy in Poland
after the events of 1989, Polish Diaspora writers in Australia have found access to
an alternative mono-cultural market and public sphere. This means that in
contemporary Australia there is not one public sphere but many intersecting non-
English language spheres of cultural networks crossing national boundaries. Today
there is a trend whereby Polish writers look to the Polish public sphere rather than
the Australian which is still difficult to access, thus the historical trend of wasting
migrant talent which could otherwise benefit Australia continues.
Conclusion

Although the Polish Diaspora has experienced significant tangible benefits from multiculturalism, such as greater linguistic and religious freedom and recognition, this policy on the whole has worked to the detriment of Diaspora communities and the wider society. The conservatism inherent within “cultural” multiculturalism has functioned as a subversive means to prevent structural pluralism. This variant of multiculturalism supported by Jerzy Smolicz and Jerzy Zubrzycki was a more realistic approach to ensure the achievement of tangible social change than the more radical variant propagated by Andrew Jakubowicz. However, the acceptance of this as policy threw an uncertain public into a social impasse as politicians publicly called for politically correct “access and equity” based on “unity through diversity”. Cultural institutions unsupportive of and threatened by this display failed to change their Anglo-centric attitudes.

This fundamental change in governance does not represent a natural social progression but required an ethnic intellectual class to re-conceptualise notions of belonging. For the Polish intellegensia this meant providing creation myths such as Sevenhill and the post-war exodus to unite a disparate Diaspora with integrationist aspirations. Polish historians in Australia such as Marian Kaluski and Lech Paszkowski wrote ethnocentric histories characterised by anachronistic applications of contemporary Polish identity onto individuals whose link with Poland was often contested. The function of this multicultural history writing was to construct an understanding of the past which confirms to the growing tribal sentiments of the Polonia. In this environment of increasing inter-ethnic antagonism where Australian society was broken down into competing monads in a state of nature with each other, group legitimacy and prestige became increasingly important.

Social difference became the order of the day and a myth of the normative British main-stream was necessary to encourage this ethnically based exclusion. Exclusion was morally justified by popular interpretation of the Galbally Report which emphasised ethnic autonomy and self-reliance. The Galbally recommendation of outsourcing services to migrant communities was in the spirit
of Thatcherite individualism. As a result of this lack of inclusion into Anglo-dominated cultural institutions Polish intellectuals such as writers increasingly developed ethnic alternatives such as multicultural writers associations, literary publications and aesthetic cultural events. This was not a desire by Polish and other ethnic groups but a cultural adaptation to the institutionalised cultural discrimination which found legitimacy under multiculturalism. Ethnicity, henceforth, became a salient and highly politicised feature of ethnic aesthetic culture and ethnic tribalism became a necessary part of social and cultural organisation.

Formal mono-cultural ethnic organisations developed, often with the aid of government funding, to co-ordinate the increase in Diaspora cultural production and to facilitate non-localised social connections. Funding by the Australia Council which aimed at increasing equity by supporting publications such as Skrzynecki’s *Joseph’s Coat* served ultimately to encourage public discrimination by supporting a cultural “space” for “ethnic” Australians. This trend helped ease the pressure on existing cultural institutions such as publishing companies, galleries, museums and theatres to adapt to the ethno-demographic changes in society. Not only did tensions remain between the various ethnic groups and Anglo-Australia but inter-ethnic tensions also grew under multiculturalism as ethnic groups increasingly defined themselves according to cultural differences such as language and religion. In this way we can see how multiculturalism’s influence in the arts has encouraged this divisive multiplicity of competing ethnocentrisms.

With the withdrawal of government funding and lack of public interest many multicultural organisations have dissolved such as MWAs and literary journals and reviews, putting pressure on institutions to increase integration and social change. This integration has increasingly occurred across all segments of society resulting in higher levels of pluralism in personal informal social relationships in the private sphere. This is not duly reflected in the mono-cultural public sphere which retains strong myths of an Anglo-Australia essentially British in culture which opposes pluralism. This public Anglo-centrism remains largely because of the myth that the public sphere is ethnically neutral which functions to
eliminate discourses of inequality. This problem is compounded by a legacy of ethnic tribalism that remains enduring long after the move away from multiculturalism that occurred during the 1990s. The enduring legacy of social tension encouraged by multiculturalism is a product of its intrinsic nature. Multiculturalism was not about access and equity. It was about individuals internalising exclusionary identities and mentalities after it became unethical for the state to do so.

Since the mid 1990s ethnic writers who choose not to perform their ethnicity have gained greater access to non-Australian public spheres and cultural networks with implications that are not yet clear. What is clear is that since the introduction of multiculturalism as a form of cultural pluralism there has not been a fostering of public inter-culturalism or an elimination of ethnically based social divisions. While the Polonia has long since vacated its traditional ethnic ghettos, its literature, history and artistic culture have not.
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**Interviews**


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Selected Biographies

Ludwika Amber

Ludwika Amber, poet and translator, was born in Poland and has been living in Sydney since 1982. Ludwika is the author of several volumes of poetry, which have been published in Poland and in Australia, in both Polish and English. These include: Tamten brzeg (Sydney, 1990); Rozmowy z panią drzewo (Sydney, 1994); Na ziemi pora kwitnienia (Warsaw, 1994) and Nasze Terytorium (Wollongong University, 1997). In the year 2000, the State Publishing Institute in Warsaw published Delinety – selected poems by L. Amber and Billabong – an anthology of Australian poetry, selected and translated by L. Amber. Before the end of this year, two new books of poetry will be published by Ludwika – Drzewa na pustyni and a collection of poems dedicated to the Pope, John Paul II, commemorating the 25th anniversary of his pontificate – Ziemia Święta. Ludwika Amber is the recipient of various awards including the International Order of Merit Cambridge, (1994) and awards issued by the Association of Polish Writers Abroad in London. Ludwika was also a member of the Committee organizing the International Congress of Poets in Sydney in 2001. She conducts poetic workshops and is also a mentor for young poets. She belongs to the Poets’ Union in Sydney and is also a member of the Australian PEN Club.

Diane Armstrong

Diane Armstrong was born in Poland and arrived in Australia with her parents on the SS Derna in 1948. She received a Commonwealth scholarship to the University of Sydney where she gained a Bachelor of Arts degree majoring in English and History. Having decided to become a writer at the age of seven, Diane became a freelance journalist. She has won national and international awards for her articles, including the Pluma de Plata from the Mexican government and the George
Munster Award for Independent Journalism in Australia. Over 3000 of her articles have been published in newspapers and magazines in Australia as well as in England, Hong Kong, Holland, Hungary, Poland, India and South Africa. In 1997 she received an Emerging Writer's grant from the Literature Board of the Australia Council to write her first book *Mosaic: A Chronicle of Five Generations*, which was published in Australia in 1998. It was short-listed for the Victorian Premier's Literary Award for Non-Fiction and for the National Biography award. In 2001, *Mosaic* was published in the United States. In 1999 Diane received a Developing Writer's grant from the Literature Board of the Australia Council to assist in writing *The Voyage of Their Life*.

**Lily Brett**

Lily Brett was born in Germany and migrated to Australia with her parents in 1948. Her first book, *The Auschwitz Poems*, won the 1987 Victorian Premier’s literary Awards’ C. J. Dennis Prize for Poetry. *The Auschwitz Poems* was also short-listed for the 1986 Age Book Of The Year, and short-listed for The 1987 Braille Book Of The Year. Lily Brett won the 1986 Mattara Poetry Prize for her poem *Poland*. Lily Brett is married to the Australian painter David Rankin. They live in New York.

**Andrew Jakubowicz**

Andrew Jakubowicz has a PhD in Sociology and has worked at universities in Australia and the UK. He first became involved in work around ethnic issues in the early 1970s where he served on the Migrant Task Force, and in the early 1980’s he was a board member of SBS. Since 1987 he has lectured at the University of Technology, Sydney, where he was head of the Humanities School from 1991 to 1994. He is currently researching on disability and representation.

**Marlan Kaluski**
Marian Kaluski is a well-known Polish-Australian journalist and writer. He arrived in Australia in 1964, and since then he has contributed to both Polish and English-language newspapers and journals in Australia. In the years 1974-77 he was the editor of the Melbourne-based *Polish Weekly*. He was one of the founders as well as chairman of the Polish-Australian Historical Society. He has also authored several books published in English and Polish, including *Sir Paul E. Strzelecki: The Man who Climbed and Named Mt. Kosciusko* (1981), *The Poles in Maitland* (1983), and *John Paul II: The First Pole to Become Pope*, which was published in Melbourne in 1979, and in the USA and Poland in 1980. He is a member of the Australian Journalists’ Association, the Fellowship of Australian Writers and the Royal Australian Historical Society. He was involved in efforts resulting in Australia Post issuing a stamp in September 1983, which commemorates the contribution of Paul E. Strzelecki to the exploration of Australia.

**Peter Skrzynecki**

Peter Skrzynecki is an Australian poet of Polish and Ukrainian origin. He was born in Germany and as a child migrated to Australia with his parents after World War II. Peter is a graduate of the University of Sydney and the University of New England. He has published several volumes of poetry as well as prose including *Easter Sunday*, *The Wild Dogs*, *The Beloved Mountains*, *Rock and Roll Heroes*, *The Polish Immigrant*, *Night Swim*, *Immigrant Chronicle*, *The Avery*, *There*, *Behind the Lids*, and *Headwaters*. He is also the editor of an anthology of multicultural writing from Australians of non-English speaking backgrounds, *Joseph’s Coat*. He has recently published an auto-biography *Sparrows Garden*.

He is the recipient of many literary awards, which include the Bicentenary Literary Competition (1970) the Grace Leven Prize (1972) and a Fellowship from the Literature Board of Australia Council (1975). Peter was writer in Residence at the Sydney Teacher’ College (1977) and won the Henry Lawson Short Story Award in 1985. For the last two decades Peter’s poetry has been published on the
Ania Walwicz

Ania Walwicz came to Australia from Poland in 1963. She has attended Art School in Melbourne where she now lives, paints and writes. Her first book *Writing*, was published in 1982 and reprinted in 1989 in *Travel/Writing*. In 1990 her anthology of poems *Boat* won the New Writing Prize in the Victorian Premier’s Literary Awards. Her work has been anthologized in Australia and Europe, and three of the plays have been staged in Melbourne. She has been writer-in-residence at Deakin University, Victoria, at Murdoch University, Western Australia, and at the Experimental Art Foundation, South Australia. She has performed her work in England, Switzerland and France and is now a lecturer at Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology.

Jerzy Zubrzycki

Jerzy (George) Zubrzycki, M. B. E. was born in 1920 in the medieval university city of Cracow in Poland. During the war he was a member of the Polish resistance movement and acted as a liaison officer with the British Special Operations Executive in London. On demobilisation he joined the London School of Economics and took his B.Sc.Econ and M.Sc. degrees. He studied for his Doctorate of Philosophy at the Free Polish University abroad under the late Florian Znaniecki. Between 1956 and 1961 Dr Zubrzycki worked in the Department of Demography in the Institute of Advanced Studies at The Australian National University, Canberra, and in 1961 he was appointed Senior Fellow in the Department of Sociology at that university.