Dead Europe and the Coming of Age in Australian Literature: Globalisation, Cosmopolitanism and Perversity

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Convenient Binaries: Europe and Australia, Old and New

THE MODERN INCARNATION OF THE NATION-STATE IS A RELATIVELY NEW SOCIO-political arrangement, frequently dated from the French revolution of 1789, but settler countries such as Australia, Canada and the United States still tend to regard themselves as the 'younger' siblings of their European progenitors.[1] The relative youth of these countries has been both a celebrated feature and cause for anxiety. In the Australian case, the insecurities generated by an immigrant population's lack of historical tenure over the land demarcated by the nation-state's borders are compounded by its status as a former English penal colony. The binary configuration of the 'old world' represented by the English motherland and those banished to the 'new world' of Australia was further reinforced in the post-war period by the waves of European immigrants that sought safety and a new beginning in the geographic remoteness of Australian shores.

This convenient, if somewhat fictitious, binary between Australia and Europe has been useful as a means of distancing Australia from its former incarnation as a British outpost, and of encouraging immigrants to discard their cultural and

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[1] There are ongoing debates over the antiquity of nations and the relationship the modern nation-state may have to former incarnations of socio-political arrangement. See Ichijo and Uzelac ; Breuilly; Smith.

historical baggage for a new cultural identity. Under this binary formation, Australian stereotypes have been developed in direct relation to beliefs about Europe. While Europe is depicted as an urban and cultural centre, Australia's self-image tends in the opposite direction: towards definitions of Australia through its landscape and a characterisation of the Australian people as being defined through their struggle to build a nation, in the harshest of climates. In Australian literature, European national identity is often taken for granted as a fixed entity—something which Europeans wear with certainty—as opposed to the insecurity and self-consciousness Australians have about their relative youth.

Youthfulness, while offering a future filled with hope, promise and potential, can also become a limitation, as was pointed out by Shirley Hazzard in her 1984 Boyer lectures. Hazzard took issue with the self-image of Australia as a youthful nation, observing that eternal youth was neither an option, nor desirable. For her, the greatest dangers lay in a culture which refused to grow up: 'To be a young country sounds well. But no one wants to live in an *adolescent* country' (39). Writing at the height of multiculturalism, Hazzard admonished Australians for using their national 'youth' as a means for deflecting uncomfortable truths about the nation. With the spectre of the White Australia policy and the issue of Aboriginal rights hovering in the background, she wrote:

> Australians will either teach themselves to accept responsibility—for their thoughts and words and deeds and attitudes, for their antipathies and their jokes, for the forms of their society and government, and their policies of commerce, peace and war; for the Australian present and future, and for most of the Australian past—or this country will run the risk of indefinite adolescence. ... I think responsibility will mean here, above all, an end to a certain sentimental image of Australia as innocent, blameless, and chronically victimised. (42)

Her emphasis on the importance of taking responsibility for the past seems to have been brought to bear by Paul Keating's famous 1992 Redfern address pointing the way towards reconciliation, and Kevin Rudd's apology to the Stolen Generations in 2008. But in the twenty-first century, taking responsibility cannot simply mean resolving domestic issues. It also involves a re-assessment of the role that Australia has played in international politics, both past and present.

Nearly twenty years after Hazzard's lectures, Christos Tsiolkas appears to have taken up this challenge. In his 2005 novel, *Dead Europe*, he links Australia to a much broader and deeper European history, offering a savage critique of the effects of globalisation and late capitalism. Like Hazzard, he levels his criticisms at the frequent depiction of Australia as a youthful, innocent and naïve nation. His novel dismantles the binary between old Europe and new Australia by

attacking it on two levels. First, he extends this binary beyond its usual parameters: Europe here is not simply the Old World representing culture, wisdom and civilisation, but rather is a *dead* Europe, its people merely ghostlike spectres who are physically and spiritually adrift in a world with no future. By contrast, Australia here should become the land of the living, but with a nod towards the processes of globalisation, Tsiolkas' novel is set in a world where the distance between Europe and Australia is rapidly diminishing. His second form of attack against this false binary comes in the way he outlines the increasing congruence between Australia and Europe. Europe here is no longer something that can be seen as distinct and separate from Australia. It may be geographically distant, but Tsiolkas makes it clear that its culture and history are tightly interwoven with our own.

Tsiolkas has courted controversy since his 1995 debut novel *Loaded*. Identified by Ian Syson in 1996 as one of an influential group of Grunge writers, Tsiolkas has always set himself apart within Australian literature through his left-leaning political pronouncements and his propensity to level ferocious criticisms at Australian society through descriptions of the alienating effects and human degradation wrought by unbridled sexual desire, illicit drug use, rampant capitalism and the disintegration of communities. *Dead Europe* was no exception to this, confounding and intriguing readers with its explicit engagement with anti-Semitism and anti-Semitic characters. Les Rosenblatt was moved to suggest: 'Maybe in future works Tsiolkas can confront the devils of homophobia, masculinity and femininity, and their volatile embodiments, without retreading the badly worn pathways of racial stereotyping or blue-collar fetishisation' (79). The depiction of anti-Semitism is disturbing because it makes the reader complicit in the attitudes and thoughts of the narrator, but it also forces the reader to consider the anti-Semitic elements that might continue to linger in contemporary Western society. Catherine Padmore has demonstrated with great acuity the ways in which the text pointedly draws the reader in and prompts this self-reflection. But I would suggest that this also raises questions about Australia's political inheritance from Europe and provokes an interrogation of its internalisation of European values.

The persistence of a cultural hierarchy based on colonial notions of centre and periphery is discernible in the attitudes of characters throughout *Dead Europe*. Getting homesick at the end of the novel, and feeling burdened by the immense weight of European history, the Australian protagonist, Isaac, says: '"I want to be home, in pure, vast Australia where the air is clean, young"' (375). This perception of Australia as youthful and innocent is also held by the Europeans of the novel, such as Isaac's friend in Prague, Sal Mineo, who tells him: '"You've got a child's hand, Isaac. Even the most hardened Aussie has these hands. You know that's what they call Australians here? Children"' (203). But the image of

Australia as pure, in contrast to the blood-stained earth of Europe, is increasingly difficult to sustain as it becomes clear that Isaac's family curse has the ability to transcend temporal and national borders.

With alternating chapters that switch between the narrative of Isaac circa 2004, passing through an Athens decorated with Olympic rings (30), and the Athens of his grandmother Lucia, living in Greece during the Second World War, *Dead Europe* constantly reminds the reader of the effect of the past upon the present. The structure of the narrative makes it clear that Isaac's story is dependent upon Lucia's: his very existence, and the strange events that occur as he travels twenty-first century Europe, stem directly from Lucia's actions some sixty years earlier. Isaac's grandparents murder a Jewish boy left in their care during the war. This unleashes a curse upon their family—a devil who accompanies his mother on the long journey to Australia, and is finally vanquished there by an elderly Greek woman (326). By returning to the family village, Isaac unwittingly releases the curse once again, this time in the form of a spectral boy who begins to surface in his photos and Isaac's own increasingly vampiric tendencies. The curse comes to symbolise the spectre of anti-Semitism which haunts European, and Australian, culture. The way in which it manifests itself physically in Isaac is a reminder of how prejudice can find expression in real acts of violence.

In this novel, Tsiolkas problematizes the relationship between Australia and its British heritage, which has been the traditional point of reference. The changed political and ethnic landscape in these globalised times is made clear by his depiction of Australia's traditional mother-country, England. When Isaac first enters England, there is a marked change to the country's entry-point, embodied by the customs official who questions him. As Isaac tells us:

> It was a contrast to the last time I entered the country. Then, the customs official could barely bring himself to look at me without making his contempt clear. I remembered him distinctly. He was short and reeked of tobacco, balding, bony and wiry, and his leathery skin reminded me of the faces I had seen on countless late-night black and white English movies. ... The young woman relentlessly interrogating me this time was a new face of England, a post-Thatcherite face. Youthful, officious, pretty and blank. (329-30)

Australia and England can no longer be clearly separated into young and old. England now exhibits a youthfulness and naïveté that has customarily been associated with Australia.

The fallacy of a hermetic and homogenous nation can also be seen by the shifting and contested borders of Europe, both past and present. During his journey

across twenty-first century Europe, Isaac is constantly aware of the changes which have occurred since his last visit soon after the Velvet Revolution in 1989. He frequently informs us of the contrast between his former experiences of a Europe that was just seeing the end of communism and the rampant capitalism that confronts him on this trip. A striking feature of this novel is how the social composition of present-day Europe is depicted as being closer to a multicultural Australia than any previous concept of homogenous European ethnic culture. Isaac encounters very few native-born nationals in the European countries he visits. Instead, the Europeans he meets are a ghostly collection of tourists, expatriates, exiles and illegal immigrants.

Tsiolkas claims a pan-European history as part of Australia's own national narrative, suggesting that this is our rightful inheritance as a nation of immigrants. In *Spinning the Dream*, Anna Haebich argues that we are often marketed with a glossed-over version of Australia's transition to a multicultural society. Questioning the underlying motives behind the introduction of multiculturalism in the 1970s, she contends that it was international pressure, not the mixed ethnic composition of the nation, which forced Australia finally to embrace multiculturalism. It has only been forty years since Australian national discourse switched from promoting a White Australia to promoting cultural heterogeneity, but Australian governments have proved eager to place an ever greater distance between us and the past.

While multicultural rhetoric in Australia celebrates the rapid changes that have been made in our culture and society, Tsiolkas reminds us of the time-lag that occurs in the adoption of new ideas and cultural practices. Lucia's storyline is told in folkloric language which makes her traditional life in a Greek village seem like a frightening fairytale, but this part of the novel is actually set in the mid-twentieth century. Lucia's reaction when she meets her first Jewish man may seem ludicrous to a contemporary Australian reader, but it also seems credible that a provincial girl in a small village may never have seen a foreigner before: 'She had never been so close to a Hebrew and was surprised at how ordinary he seemed. His features were not so different from those of her own brothers' (21). Tsiolkas also takes care to draw contemporary parallels between Lucia's demonization of the Jewish boy and the swastika tattoo worn by Isaac's boyfriend, Colin, back in Melbourne. Colin expresses shame and regret about the tattoo, but by way of explanation he also says: '"It wasn't as if I knew any Jews, Isaac. It wasn't as if they were the only ones I hated. I was full of hate. I hated everyone"' (252). This novel shows how the reasons for anti-Semitism are not easy to understand nor logical. Instead, Tsiolkas demonstrates how anti-Semitism crosses time and continents, carried as an unreflective cultural tradition.

By examining the persistence of anti-Semitism within Western culture, Tsiolkas also indicates the difficulties currently faced by nations trying to find a means of unifying diverse and increasingly fluid populations. Haebich identifies the current Australian governmental policy of social cohesion as a form of 'retro-assimilation'. She writes:

> Retro-assimilation mixes 1950s dreams of an assimilated nation with current ideas of nationhood using today's spin to create an imagined world based on shared values, visions and agreements where all citizens will be treated equally and the same and share fully in the benefits of Australian society, once they agree to cast off their differences and *become* the same. (8)

The way Tsiolkas connects Australia's history with that of Greece, giving us Lucia's story alongside Isaac's, shows us how the basic premise of retro-assimilation is certain to fail. As individuals, we do not just slot into one linear narrative of the nation. We cannot *become* the same, because we do not necessarily share the same history, nor is there just one telling of that history. This novel disputes nationalist rhetoric that implies we can wipe the slate clean, that we can start again and form new communities unburdened by the past. It wholeheartedly rejects the notion that Australia was created on a blank slate, free from the prejudices, wars and expectations of our forefathers.

Global and Babel: Reassessing Cosmopolitanism

It becomes evident in *Dead Europe* that a binary relationship between Europe and Australia cannot be maintained in the highly networked and globalised twenty-first century. This also forces a re-assessment of another binary relationship that is affected and changed by accelerated processes of globalisation: that between cosmopolitanism and nationalism. Earlier definitions of cosmopolitanism were established in direct opposition to the prescriptive and unitary impulses of the nation. Cosmopolitanism implies 'belonging to all parts of the world' or being 'free from national limitations or attachments', and has since come under criticism for projecting a universalism which has perfunctory Eurocentric or Amerocentric leanings (*OED*). But if, as *Dead Europe* suggests, globalisation affects the ability of the nation to present itself as a homogenous entity, then this must also have implications for the all-inclusive umbrella of cosmopolitanism as well.

In 'Global and Babel: Language and Planet', Jonathan Arac is careful to make a distinction between the global, 'a movement of expansion that one imagines may homogenize the world', and Babel, which is 'a movement of influx that diversifies our land, as in multiculturalism' (24). In this novel, Tsiolkas suggests that while

superficially the homogenising qualities of the 'global' appear to be proliferating, what is actually multiplying beneath the slick transnational flow of commerce and capital is this 'Babel' instead. When Isaac reaches Prague, he muses on how different it is from the city he fell in love with soon after the Velvet Revolution. The city he describes now bears the marks of capitalism and Americanisation: 'Now, ten years later, Czechoslovakia had been reduced to one syllable, there were McDonald's restaurants all over Wenceslas Square, the whores lined up outside the casinos and there were no Czech girls to greet me with kisses at the train station' (180). But while the physical landscape has been marked by global brands, the people that Isaac meets in Prague remain a prostituted and disoriented Babel left behind by the seemingly ordered march of progress. Isaac's friend, Sal Mineo (whose name, as Andrew McCann points out, has 'important resonances in queer consciousness and cultural history' ('Christos Tsiolkas' 39)), comes to symbolise the desperation of those in the city whose dreams of wealth and prosperity did not quite materialise. A talented photographer, Sal heads off to Prague eager to capitalise on the fall of communism (190). A decade later the only commercial worth he has found for his skills is in producing pornography.

Tsiolkas presents us with a world where the systems are moving towards global homogenisation but the actors within those systems, the people, are unable to divest themselves of the baggage of their personal and cultural memories. The cities that Isaac passes through bear the same traces of transnational capitalism, no matter which country he happens to be in, but the people he encounters within those cities still hold onto their past, irrelevant as it may be for them now. In this, they exhibit a lingering attachment to old national ties, even as they exist in a more cosmopolitan reality.

In *Cosmopolitan Style*, Rebecca L. Walkowitz identifies three main strands of thought within modern cosmopolitan theory:

> a philosophical tradition that promotes allegiance to a transnational or global community, emphasizing *detachment* from local cultures and the interests of the nation; a more recent anthropological tradition that emphasizes multiple or flexible *attachments* to more than one nation or community, resisting conceptions of allegiance that presuppose consistency and uncritical enthusiasm; and a vernacular or popular tradition that values the risks of social deviance and the resources of consumer culture and urban mobility. (9)

Under the first of these two traditions, cosmopolitanism is defined in direct opposition to the centripetal impulse of the nation. An ability to detach from the nation or to attach oneself to multiple nations is the key cosmopolitan trait. But

while characters in *Dead Europe* often have this detachment from the nation they live in, or a clear willingness to move to other countries in search of opportunity, their form of cosmopolitanism differs from definitions asserted by earlier traditions in that the role of personal agency or choice seems to be missing from this lifestyle. Tsiolkas' characters therefore tend more towards the third strand of thought—a vernacular cosmopolitanism that is, to a large extent, imposed upon them by globalization.

Homi Bhabha is frequently credited with having coined the phrase 'vernacular cosmopolitanism', which refers to non-elitist forms of cosmopolitanism, such as may be experienced by migrant workers or asylum seekers (Bhabha). In *Dead Europe* Tsiolkas depicts this form of vernacular cosmopolitanism as a marker of the globalised reality of late capitalism. Just as nations in this novel are no longer populated by native-born nationals, cosmopolitanism here is no longer the domain of the elite. Jonathan Arac makes it clear that processes of globalisation themselves have contradictory effects. This is clearly captured in the phrase *vernacular cosmopolitanism*, where the 'vernacular' stands as a reminder of the 'Babel' of nationalism, national identity and nation-states that persists within the 'global' homogenising force which drives cosmopolitanism. Characters in *Dead Europe* do not willingly relinquish their national attachments. In many cases, it is the national borders and the nation-states that have shifted away faster than the nationals can keep up with. Isaac reminds us of this when he declares, 'Not the Eastern Bloc … the Eastern Bloc doesn't exist anymore. This is all Europe' (184). The spectres of Europe are created in this novel by people holding onto nations which no longer exist.

Set almost entirely in Europe, a striking feature of this novel is the blanket use of English in the narrative. Both narrative strands in the novel—Isaac's and Lucia's—steer away from exoticising foreign locales through the language. The smattering of foreign words included in this novel consist either of Greek phrases, swear words or insults. It could be argued that the dominance of English is to be expected, given that Tsiolkas is an Australian author writing mainly for an Australian market. But the dominance of the English language in this novel about an Australian's transnational journey throughout a Europe moving towards integration also draws attention to the way in which the role and significance of the English language has been altered by globalisation.

Speaking the English language remains one of the core and incontrovertible aspects of Australian nationality. This is emphasised by the Australian government's citizenship test, introduced in October 2007, which assesses whether a person has 'basic knowledge of the English language' because 'English

is our national language'.[2] This could be seen as a hangover from our British ties, an outdated notion of Australian nationality that persists because of our British heritage. However, as Arac observes, the English language is no longer a symbol of English imperial dominance but has evolved into a common medium of global exchange. Arac points to a study in 1987 that showed the number of English works translated into Portuguese far outnumbered those from Portuguese translated into English. He writes, 'So by a ratio of one hundred to one, English may be more world-significant for its disseminal powers than its powers of appropriation' (23). The way Tsiolkas depicts an English-speaking Europe could be interpreted as a sign of an Australian mentality that assumes everyone else speaks English, but it also rings true because the English language itself has become something more than a colonial remnant. It has become a means of international discourse, the unifying language of a cosmopolitan society.

The changed significance of the English language in the twenty-first century becomes further apparent with quick reference to the way in which the English language has historically been portrayed in two other notable Australian novels. In Joseph Furphy's 1897 novel *Such is Life*, divesting oneself of an accent is seen as a symbol of cosmopolitanism and class. He describes the upper class Englishman, Folkestone, as 'the European, lazily raising his eyebrows, and speaking with the accent—or rather, absence of accent—which, in an Englishman, denotes first-class education' (239). This is in accordance with earlier, 19th-century theories of cosmopolitanism which associated transnational experiences with a certain class of person wealthy enough to travel and learn about other cultures. To draw from a twentieth-century example, Patrick White's 1979 novel *The Twyborn Affair* is similar to *Dead Europe* in that it focuses on an Australian living in Europe. The sexually ambiguous protagonist of the novel, known variously as Eddie/Eudoxia Twyborn or Eadie Trist, seems to take cosmopolitan fluidity and adaptability to its physical limits. White's narrative, however, liberally sprinkles French through the speech of his characters to remind the reader that they are in France. This gives the reader a similar experience to that of the Australian characters within the novel. It conveys a sense of not quite grasping all that is being said, a sense of being a foreigner in a strange place.

By contrast, in *Dead Europe*, Tsiolkas seems more concerned with demonstrating the common elements shared by the different countries Isaac visits, rather than the exotic aspects of travel. The implication is that the Europe which Isaac travels through lacks the national differences that are present in the Europe that Eddie/Eudoxia/Eadie lives in. For example, in *The Twyborn Affair*, White describes the morning of a Frenchman, Monsieur Pelletier: 'To exchange the

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[2] See Australian Government: Department of Immigration and Citizenship.

smells of tortured sheets and sleeping bodies, a full *pot de chambre* and the dregs of a *tisane*, for those of damp newspapers, mildewed cigarettes, and coffee brewing on a spirit lamp, gave him a *raison d'être* he had never achieved in marriage, parenthood, vice, or any form of civic responsibility' (71). It is clear that Monsieur Pelletier thinks in French and that he follows a distinctly French routine. He does not drink a herbal tea, he drinks a *tisane*. This is a very different France from that encountered by Isaac, who does not meet any native French people, and instead spends his time in Paris with Sula, an illegal immigrant; Anika, a Dutch woman living in exile; and Gerry, a man who tells Isaac: '"Where I come from doesn't exist now"' (293).

The France that White portrays is one where the Australians stand out as foreigners. The Paris that we see in *Dead Europe* is one where Isaac feels out of place, but not simply because he is Australian. Exploring Paris with Sula, Isaac tells us: 'When the bus arrived, mine was the only white face among the passengers except for a pale teenage girl, her right ear spiked with an array of hoops and rings, whose head was slumped on the shoulder of her bored African boyfriend' (277). In White's France, someone can be clearly labelled a Frenchman, as White does by calling his man 'Monsieur Pelletier'. In Tsiolkas' France, there is no such thing. He suggests that contemporary France is made up of disparate groups of migrants, refugees, marginalised figures and lost individuals who do not feel any sense of national belonging.

In this world, English is the common language shared by the wealthy and the dispossessed. English is the language of choice in Prague's underworld of drugs, sex shows and prostitution. When Isaac sees a sex show it is narrated, in English, by a Russian woman to an audience described as 'all men, all well-dressed, all European' (224-226). English, which once represented British colonialism or American imperialism, has now become the language of capitalism. With this transformation, it is the language of currency, and it also becomes the language through which a person's most perverse and taboo desires can be fulfilled. In 'Discrepant Cosmopolitanism and the Contemporary Novel', Andrew McCann observes that Prague in this novel is a 'city of sexualised consumerism', but that, 'It also has a clear political subtext involving the creation of victim populations with limited or no rights before the law' (139). McCann's invocation of Agamben's concept of *homo sacer* seems particularly apt here, as Tsiolkas draws attention to the way in which rampant capitalism has the power to reduce individuals to a state of bare life. Hardt and Negri have described *homo sacer* as 'the negative limit of humanity' (366). But we would do well to remember the parallel that Agamben draws early on in *Homo Sacer* between language and living beings, and between bare life and the *polis*. Agamben states: 'The living being has *logos* by taking away and conserving its own voice in it, even as it dwells in the *polis* by letting its own bare life be excluded, as an exception, within

it' (8). In Tsiolkas' novel, the tyranny of English stamps out individual voices, and the individual's ability to decide between the just and the unjust. The English language here does not signify man's elevation from simple, natural life (*zoē*), but rather becomes a tool of subjugation that supplants the divine reason contained in his original voice (*logos*).

Using Walkowitz's terminology, the philosophical or anthropological traditions that underwrite cosmopolitanism have tended to present it as a positive counterbalance to the perils of nationalism. Tsiolkas' bleak depiction of vernacular cosmopolitanism suggests that the real expression which cosmopolitanism finds in the twenty-first century is one where individuals are simply deprived of the social and political security afforded to them as citizens of a nation-state. Their forced detachment from a nation renders them powerless and vulnerable to exploitation.

The truly 'global' in *Dead Europe* is the demon that haunts Isaac and transforms him into a vampire. This demon is timeless, and like Furphy's cosmopolitan Englishman, it speaks without an accent. In Paris, Isaac hears the devil speak through Anika when she is nursing him in the bathroom:

> In the darkness, she spoke to me. You are hungry, she said. You must feed.
> Do you know who I am? she asked. I am exiled, as you are, from Paradise.
> You are mine, she whispered, but there was no French lilt to her accent—
> instead the voice was childish, a boy's speech, he talked to me in my
> mother's tongue and the arms holding me then were thin and icy-cold. (295)

While the demon speaks in Greek—Isaac's mother tongue—we are given the words in English. We do not hear the exact words that the demon utters, only Isaac's translation of them into English, the language of dissemination.

Cosmopolitan perversity

The association of cosmopolitanism with forms of transgression or perversity is not new. The cosmopolitan spirit, elitist though it may have been, arose in defiance of the limitations imposed by nationalism. Cosmopolitans, with their lack of allegiance to the nation-state and their ability to transcend national borders, are by their very nature transgressive. Walkowitz moves in this very direction in *Cosmopolitan Style*. Defining the role of cosmopolitanism as conceived by modernists, she states: 'This book treats cosmopolitanism not simply as a model of community but as a model of perversity, in the senses of obstinacy, indirection, immorality, and attitude; this approach allows me to consider the relationship between gestures of idiosyncratic contact or distance and those of sympathetic association' (13). By shifting the definition of

cosmopolitanism away from models of community, which by necessity must be unitary and therefore suffer from charges of universalism, towards the transgressive tendencies inherent within cosmopolitan approaches, Walkowitz aptly describes the form of cosmopolitanism denoted by Tsiolkas in *Dead Europe*.

Tsiolkas' work has long been marked by the tendency towards excess both in his language and in the behaviour of his characters. An early reviewer of the novel described *Dead Europe* as having 'the effect of a Hieronymus Bosch painting' (McCann, Sparrow and Cornell, 29). Tsiolkas' willingness to lay bare the full spectrum of human corruption and depravity is also where his work differs most from other contemporary Australian authors who might also be considered to be part of this new coming of age in Australian literature. Novels such as Brian Castro's *Shanghai Dancing* (2003), Antoni Jach's *Napoleon's Double* (2007), Alex Miller's *Landscape of Farewell* (2007), Gail Jones' *Five Bells* (2010) and Anna Funder's *All That I Am* (2012) are similarly interested in delineating the non-Anglo transnational connections that have historically existed between Australia and other countries. But Tsiolkas stands alone in the extreme ugliness of the globalised world he paints, and in his assertion that the human qualities most likely to be found universally always lean towards the sordid and the sinful.

Most controversial of all in this novel has been Tsiolkas' exploration of anti-Semitism. Robert Manne accused Tsiolkas of wanting to tackle anti-Semitism since it was the last taboo in a 'post-transgressive age'. But it was this very aspect of the novel that led to its adaptation into a film. The film's core production team—producer Emile Sherman, screenwriter Louise Fox and director, Tony Krawitz—all identify as Jewish. In a 2012 interview, Sherman discussed how the two aspects of being Jewish and wanting to explore nature of anti-Semitism were related, and part of the driving force of the project: 'Christos was interested in the idea of some Jewish filmmakers, essentially, flipping over to the other side. You know, we're doing it, but we're carrying the other baggage that he was trying to invent. And we're inventing the other side'.[3] For Sherman, deciding to work on *Dead Europe*, released in 2012, was also an opportunity to confront narratives of anti-Semitism and to wrest control of them.

In terms of cosmopolitanism, the Jewish diaspora, with its pan-European presence, makes it a natural contender for examples of cosmopolitanism in practice. Until the establishment of the nation-state of Israel in 1948, Jewish people were a unique example of a transnational community which was bound together primarily by cultural and kinship ties. The transnational qualities which come with being part of a diasporic community were one of the contributing factors towards the anti-Semitism which arose throughout Europe. Walkowitz

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[3] Interview conducted by the author on 24 May 2012.

points out how cosmopolitanism can be both a model of community and of perversity: the very cultural idiosyncrasies which allowed people to identity as members of a transnational diasporic group were the same aspects which marked them as separate from the national communities in which they lived. Within the dominant framework of nationalism, any transnational connections or loyalties can be seen as potentially deviant or transgressive. One of the contributing factors to anti-Semitism is therefore a native distrust of cosmopolitanism.

Dead Europe examines the continued prevalence of anti-Semitism in Western culture, but it also gestures towards the ways in which the growth of vernacular cosmopolitanism may overturn these formerly held prejudices against more cosmopolitan communities. Sal Mineo's boss in Prague, Syd, knowingly embodies the worst stereotypes about Jewish culture and its relationship with mercantilism. Syd's business is the exploitation of the capitalist system, of young boys, and of the most debauched desires of his customers. He not only embraces this exploitation but he revels in it, viewing it as a means of defying the anti-Semitism of the past. He tells Isaac:

> I am the real Jew, mate. Your friend's smarter than that Russian zoine, he'll never trust me. ... You don't know Jews, do you? you think we should be the nice old fella in the back of the store, wouldn't hurt a fucking fly. Salt of the earth and God's chosen people. I'm not that kind of Jew, cunt. That kind of mumza Jew is finished. I hope that mumza has gone forever. (219-220)

With a character like Syd, Tsiolkas suggests that the transgressions we perceive are related to an overstepping of cultural boundaries and an uneasiness within Western culture with the current reversal of power.

Vernacular cosmopolitanism was theorised in response to the elitist division that had been made between cosmopolitan experiences along cultural-ethnic lines. *Dead Europe* makes it clear that the rise of vernacular cosmopolitanism does not simply involve the migration of people from the colonies to do menial jobs in the European urban centres, but that there is also latitude for some of them to move socially upwards. The very nature of capitalism is the tendency to push societies towards the extremes. In this novel, the logical and natural result of rampant capitalism is an excess of desire and perversity. Isaac travels through a Europe where all taboos can be broken, as long as you have the money to pay for them.

Tsiolkas also suggests that these transgressions of societal norms may be a part of cosmopolitan practices which lead to empowerment. Syd has taken advantage of the capitalist system to gain power at the margins, and under the terms of capitalism this power provides him with a certain measure of protection. He is

described as being 'obsessed with taking revenge on history' (232) and views his exploitation of others as a form of retribution for the wrongs done against Jewish people in the past. Whilst he has eagerly cast aside the tenets of communism and embraced capitalism in Prague, Syd continues to view his fellow Europeans through the lens of national affiliations and past wrongs.

Further underlining the way in which late capitalism and globalisation has eradicated the differences between 'old' European countries and 'newer' ones such as Australia, Syd observes in the Czech people a similar propensity to view the national culture in terms of innocence and denial. He says: '"That's what they'd like you to believe. That they are always the little innocent in the middle, our darling Czechs. They're never responsible for anything"' (219). Innocence here comes to be synonymous with denial. In *Dead Europe* everyone is involved in the greedy process of capitalism and everyone's hands are tainted by the past. Significantly, it is Isaac's very ignorance of the past which allows him to become reinfected by the curse.

In many ways, Isaac is an older, mature version of Ari, the hedonistic protagonist of *Loaded* (1995). But where Ari dreamt of overseas travel as a means of escape, Isaac discovers that in the globalised world it is no longer possible simply to cross national borders and leave your past behind. The family curse is reactivated by his trip to Europe, but it can only be removed and put to rest upon his return to Australia. The geographic distance between Europe and Australia is negated by their shared culture and past. Tsiolkas places Australia back on the world map as a continent whose residents carry with them the burden of world history. The novel may focus on European nations but the criticisms it levels at Western culture implicitly include Australia. Tsiolkas offers a bleak and sobering portrayal of the alternative currently being presented by globalisation to the nation-state: a form of cosmopolitanism that is decadent and perverse. It is a cosmopolitanism whose transgressive nature may allow some to escape the hegemony of socio-cultural traditions, but which thrives on the exploitation of many others. Above all, this is a form of cosmopolitanism far from being a celebratory assertion of freedom and cultural hybridity. Like the structures of the nation-state, this form of cosmopolitanism is being imposed on one and all.

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