

# Subaltern Cosmopolitanism: The Question of Hospitality in Christos Tsiolkas's *Dead Europe*

JESSICA BROOKS  
University of Sydney

Christos Tsiolkas's novel *Dead Europe* (2005) paints a bleak picture of the exploitative nature of global capitalism and its dehumanising effects. As Andrew McCann has noted, the novel explores the way the global spread of capital has produced a 'discrepant' or *subaltern* cosmopolitanism—a cosmopolitanism of the politically marginalised and economically oppressed. In doing so Tsiolkas confronts the failures of leftist politics and the inadequacy of the standard liberal discourses of multicultural tolerance and cosmopolitanism<sup>1</sup> in combatting or even acknowledging real suffering. Despite 'promises . . . [of] a future in which the logic of the free market will bring justice, freedom, liberation and whitegoods for all,' we face a reality of widespread economic exploitation, inequality, intolerance and exclusion (Tsiolkas, *On Tolerance* 21). As a result the novel raises many ethical questions regarding the global mistreatment of the migrant and asylum seeker. Read through the lens of Derrida's later political interrogations, we find that *Dead Europe* considers the ethics of hospitality—what it means to welcome and receive the 'other'—and explores the economic violence and racial and religious intolerance that is so often behind violations of hospitality. Key to the novel's exploration of these issues is Tsiolkas's use of spectral metaphors such as that of the dead Jewish boy, Elias, who acts as a symbol for the cultural, political, and economic forces that lead to violations of hospitality. Elias's haunting of the protagonist, Isaac, symbolically demonstrates the effect of such ethical questions upon the individual subject.

Cultural theorists acknowledge that the global interconnectedness espoused by proponents of contemporary cosmopolitanism is completely overridden by economic inequalities and systems of power (Hall and Werbner 346). This is starkly captured in Tsiolkas's *Dead Europe*, which, as a number of critics have argued, confronts the hypocrisy apparent in liberal ideals of multicultural tolerance and 'liberatory cosmopolitanism' (McCann 140). In his PEN essay 'On the Concept Tolerance' Tsiolkas makes his position clear:

[g]lobalization celebrates diversity and tolerance . . . when it comes to dealing with the most manifest development of this globalization, the displacement and homelessness of millions of people around the globe, we are then told that we must secure our borders. ('On the Concept Tolerance' 5–6)

Key to the novel's exploration of this hypocrisy is the juxtaposition created between subaltern or what McCann refers to as 'discrepant' cosmopolitanism and the privileged cosmopolitanism afforded the protagonist. The novel's engagement with ideas of cosmopolitan identity is evident from the outset as it describes the literal and symbolic journey of photographer, Isaac, who in a period of midlife crisis travels to Europe in search of something 'more.' As a tourist Isaac embodies a prototypical example of the modern 'cosmopolitan.' Isaac's Greek heritage and Jewish name associate him with the two greatest merchant cosmopolitan societies of the historical world, while as an artist/intellectual he belongs to one of the originally cosmopolitan professions (a Greek exhibition of his photography is what brings him to Europe). But this is no ordinary tour of Europe, and as Tsiolkas himself admits in an interview in *Australian Literary Studies*, he wanted to write about those things 'outside the borders of that tourist world' (Padmore 449). Isaac's journey takes him through the fringes of Europe exploring the marginalised communities of sex

workers, illegal immigrants, and refugees which McCann suggests is what lends the novel its 'clear political subtext involving the creation of victim populations with limited or no rights before the law' (139). Isaac's own cosmopolitanism is thus starkly juxtaposed against this 'subaltern cosmopolitanism' of the marginalised, exploited and oppressed that is outside the bounds of the hegemonic 'elite' and predominately masculine cosmopolitan discourse of traditional tourist or traveler experience. This juxtaposition highlights the novel's concern with discrepancies in hospitality, which Derrida sees as central to any consideration of contemporary cosmopolitanism (*On Cosmopolitanism*).

The notion of hospitality—what it means to welcome and receive the 'other'—has become increasingly prevalent amid discussions of the contemporary issues of European migrancy and asylum (see Yeğenoğlu). For Derrida the concept of 'cosmopolitanism' is troublesome as he believes it contains an inherent contradiction. While it theoretically involves the idea of an *unconditional* hospitality in which all foreigners—asylum seekers, refugees, immigrants and tourists alike—are welcomed, it is then undermined by the legal necessity to be conditional; to impose some definable limits on the rights of visitation or residence. Although he may not be deliberately invoking Derrida, the ethics of hospitality are evidently of concern to Tsiolkas, who in an interview with Nikos Papastergiadis discusses the Greek principle of unconditional hospitality or *philoxenia* in which the host must receive the guest without question, as any guest might be a God in disguise. Anything other than this unconditional hospitality is to be considered barbarian ('Hospitality' 396). This 'barbarian hospitality' is evident throughout *Dead Europe* but is made expressly clear when Isaac enters Italy through the port of Brindisi and witnesses the deportation of a group of 'illegal' gypsies:

Within an hour of landing in Brindisi I saw a boatload of Albanian men being shipped back across the Adriatic, their pleas and insults ignored by the impassive young Italian soldiers . . . Soldiers and police, their rifles splayed against their chests, their enormous pistols in black holsters, wandered lazily up and down the dusty salt-drenched streets. They ignored the junkies and the whores, they ignored the drugs and the sex, and eyeing me quickly and contemptuously, working out that I was neither refugee or terrorist, they ignored me. (137)

Disturbingly, the police<sup>2</sup> are more concerned here with securing borders than the welfare of those within them but more importantly the passage is demonstrative of the conditional nature of current forms of hospitality: '[w]e, the fortunate, the wealthy, the democrats, are free to roam the world, but the non-citizens of the world, those without a homeland, a passport, a job, a future, a livelihood are permitted nowhere' (Tsiolkas, 'On Tolerance' 6). Derrida warns of the necessity of remaining vigilant regarding these distinctions between types of immigration status 'since the difference between the economic and the political now appears more problematic than ever' (*On Cosmopolitanism* 12). The passage is further indicative of the alienation and dislocation experienced within the context of unwelcomed migration. Ivan Cañadas argues that the context of migration is 'associated with the dissolution of identity' in the novel, citing a subsequent passage in this scene in Brindisi in which 'Isaac describes being accosted by three prostitutes, their identities uncertain, but ultimately interchangeable and equally abject: "Three whores who might have been Romanian, who might have been Albanian or Macedonian, niggers from the Balkans and the East"' (Tsiolkas, qtd. in Cañadas 8). Suffered at the hands of sovereign hosts, this dislocation, alienation and objectification demonstrates the detrimental effect such violations of hospitality may have upon the self, not only upon the immediate victims but also upon those, like Isaac, who witness such injustice and are led to an ethical questioning of themselves and their own place in the world.

In his extensive essay ‘Wog Zombie,’ Nikos Papastergiadis discusses the increasing use of ‘spectral metaphors of dehumanisation’ in representing the alienation of migrant subjectivity. Key to the novel’s representation of these issues is Tsiolkas’s use of spectral and vampiric imagery to emphasise the abject inhumanity prevalent within subaltern populations. This ‘spectral logic . . . refers to a kind of abstracted identity that is stripped of national or ethnic markers, and a hijacking of agency by malicious and other-worldly powers’—such as the mysterious and omnipotent forces of neoliberal capital (150, 162). Papastergiadis sees such spectral logic at work in *Dead Europe* in which, ‘[t]he unfettered forces of capitalism have transformed the imagined place of culture [Europe] into a form of hell that is filled with ghosts and zombies’ (159). Indeed ghosts invade Isaac’s photographs of his European experience. Isaac’s mother Reveka, who is familiar with old-world ghosts, immediately recognises the true nature of the photographs:

They will suffer again. She said this quietly. And as soon as she said it, she knew it to be true. Could he not see it? In just three days she had seen it. The beggars on the streets, the Slav girls who cleaned the toilets in the hotel, the train stations plastered with warnings of terror. Their fear, their anxiety, it suffused the city. Could Colin not see the truth of the photographs? Isaac had not photographed the past, he had captured the future. She could not wait to get home. (405)

This paragraph is summative of Papastergiadis’s argument regarding the spectral representation of migrant subjectivity but it also clearly accords with another kind of ‘spectral logic.’ Derrida’s theory of ‘hauntology’ involves a reconfiguration of historical time constituting the idea that the present is simultaneously haunted by the past and what is yet to come. In capturing the migrants of Europe, Isaac photographs the spectres of present and future injustice—the inequality, oppression, exploitation, violence, exclusion and silence—that are the dark underside of global capital. Reveka’s apparent faith in the idea that home in Australia one might escape such horrors can be read as intensely ironic, as the novel’s illustration of the reality of globalisation and her own son’s transformation implies. As he has expressed in interviews, it was Tsiolkas’s frustration with Australian racism and our own inhospitable treatment of asylum seekers and refugees that largely provided the impetus for the novel: ‘We should not assume that Australia is immune to these problems. There is a great deal of evidence that we are also heading in the same direction’ (‘Hospitality’ 391).

Migrant ghosts are not the only spectral metaphors to haunt *Dead Europe*. Spectres from his own familial history further force Isaac to confront the problems plaguing Europe. Finding inspiration in the figure of the ghost of Hamlet’s father, Derrida speaks of the continued influence and inheritance of the ‘quasi-paternal’ figure of Marx that haunts the present supposed hegemony of liberal democracy and continues to inspire a spirit of resistance (*Spectres* 15). Correspondingly, Isaac is haunted by the spirit of his dead father’s radical communism and its failure, which ‘hangs over’ him throughout Europe and is arguably what forces him to confront the injustices he sees around him (265). This aspect of Isaac’s character reflects Tsiolkas’s belief that one should ‘use the knowledge and experience and responsibilities that come with [their] background to look outside [their] background as well’ (‘Hospitality’ 393). Haunted by his father’s politics and his family’s history of migrancy and their subaltern position in Australia,<sup>3</sup> Isaac actually *sees* the migrant workers around him. He is angered by the discrepancies in wealth plaguing postcommunist Europe, and the apparent disregard of the privileged:

I was angered by their indifference to the sight of beggars and gypsies on the streets; I detested their sour disapproval of the new immigrants in their country.

I could not bear their obsession with the accrual of possessions: Prada, Gucci and Versace. (134)

Isaac encounters immigrants in compromising positions throughout his travels: Slavic prostitutes in Greece, illegal migrant laborers in France, Albanian refugees in Italy, Russian-Jewish sex workers in Prague, and Serbians cleaning the halls of Cambridge. The novel's Marxian critique is inextricably linked to the politics of 'othering' as he is horrified by the apparent growth of an underclass made up of migrant labourers and the non-normative citizens, refugees, and 'illegals' who are economically exploited with no legal rights or recourse for justice (much as they are in Australia). What arguably angers Isaac the most is that there is no indication of a desire to rectify the social and economic inequalities in this seemingly 'dead' Europe. Isaac, haunted by the failures of his father's communism, is left to question where we are to find hope in an apparently post-ideological age in which the collapse of communism 'saw an ethics and a politics that defined the passion, suffering, despair and hope of millions of people across the globe disappear' (Tsiolkas, 'On Tolerance' 25). The empty claim that 'we are all democrats, now, aren't we?' means nothing to the novel's economically exploited and politically marginalised migrants for whom democracy has brought little freedom (93–94). Able to do little else amidst such hopelessness, Isaac is increasingly seduced by the rampant greed and unchecked desire that surrounds him.

Met at the borders with hostility rather than hospitality, desperate migrants are forced underground to make a living in the 'brutal black market economy' (Tsiolkas, 'On Tolerance' 21–22). Correspondingly, the sex trade is used in the novel as a referent for the 'contradictions at the heart of the liberal-capitalist order' (McCann, 'Pornographic Logic' 32). It is also a way to directly impugn Isaac as a participant in the degradation and economic exploitation that plagues subaltern cosmopolitan communities. In a sex club in Prague, Isaac's recognition that 'Hell' was 'what lay beyond the red velvet curtain' (223) is a metaphoric expression of his realisation that the capitalism brought to the Czech Republic after the Velvet Revolution of 1989 failed to deliver the hope it once promised. The novel's overarching concern with the inability of democratic ideals to alleviate real suffering is made expressly clear when the Marxian voice of Russian immigrant sex worker, Maria, is juxtaposed against that of a neoliberal French intellectual, Yves. Yves has been employed by the government of Yemen to aid in the country's liberalisation. Yves believes that the creation of a free market economy is key and goes so far as to advocate the eradication of the network of the extended family, which inhibits the economy. Maria crassly objects to Yves's politics suggesting they are out of touch with reality: 'And what about the boys in the streets below? What about the boys you're going to fuck tonight? What does the market give *them*?' (211). This is reminiscent of Derrida's complaint against those who 'have the audacity to neo-evangelize in the name of the ideal of a liberal democracy' despite the fact that 'never have violence, inequality, exclusion, famine, and thus economic oppression affected as many human beings' (*Spectres of Marx* 106). The novel emphasises Yves's complicity as a neoliberal intellectual and government advisor in the problems that his free markets create, by conflating them with his very literal participation in the exploitative sex industry. Isaac is similarly culpable in his naïve subscription to inadequate liberal ideals while in the privileged position of first world tourist, a position that arguably reflects Tsiolkas's self-consciousness regarding his own 'position of privilege and ignorance, a combination that fuelled only guilt at [his] position as a Westerner' ('Capitalist Faggot' 190). As with Yves, Isaac's culpability is compounded by his participation in the sex industry and his procurement of young prostitutes. Isaac seems powerless to resist the hedonistic pleasures of sex tourism despite his understanding of its exploitative dimension. Regardless of his disdain and apparent ethical objections to a sex show, he joins the bourgeois European audience with the 'one lecherous smile on its face'

(223). Isaac's theoretical accountability is further dramatised through the novel's symbolic use of vampirism which, as McCann suggests, represents the dehumanised 'egocentric subjectivity incited by consumer culture . . . [and] the monstrosity of a mobile, cosmopolitan class that is now at liberty to rove the planet and prey (as sex tourists among other things) upon those from the wrong side of the West's borders' ('Pornographic Logic' 38). In a moment of apparent clarity Isaac complains he is 'sick to the soul, of wanting, desiring greatness, of never being satisfied. More, I was always wanting more. I was always hungry for more' (332). As he witnesses, learns about and reflects on the suffering of others, he himself suffers physically and in turn begins violently to inflict this suffering on others.

The difficulty in negotiating an ethical subjectivity within the exploitative environment of global capitalism becomes increasingly apparent as the various moral dilemmas of the novel are inscribed upon the body of Isaac. Isaac's steady mental and physical decline, which begins the moment he sets foot in Europe, is largely attributed to his haunting by the phantom of a Jewish boy, Elias, who was murdered by Isaac's anti-Semitic Greek ancestors who had given him asylum in exchange for gold. As a microcosmic expression of the larger themes of the novel, the tale is also one of economic and sexual exploitation. It is the boy's rape by his female captor and his fathering of her child (Isaac's mother), Reveka, that cements his haunting place in their familial history. Arguably the most significant spectre to haunt *Dead Europe*, the 'ghoulish boy' as Papastergiadis suggests, 'provides the metaphoric references for the broader narrative of moral and political corruption' (160). As Isaac witnesses and participates in the inhumanities of capitalist Europe, Elias takes an increasingly firm grip upon his psyche (396). All of the novel's spectral metaphors culminate in the figure of Elias, whose Judaism associates him with displacement and migrancy and the figure of the Wandering Jew who is cursed to remain forever homeless, and it is the boy's dehumanising experience of violent anti-Semitism that ironically turns him into a vengeful, vampiric demon. (Vampires have long been discussed as a figurative anti-Semitic representation of the Jew, and the Wandering Jew story is thought to have provided the origin for Bram Stoker's *Dracula*.) Elias becomes not only a symbol of ethnic hatred, violated hospitality and sexual exploitation, but also of money<sup>4</sup> and capitalism itself, implicitly suggesting the intrinsic relationship between the economic, cultural and political which so problematises contemporary issues of migration. The wider implications of the relationship between xenophobia and economic struggle are again illustrated through Elias's Judaism. The unique place of Jews in the history of global capitalism has been well documented and as Jerry Muller suggests, '[f]or a variety of intellectuals in Europe, Jews served as a kind of metaphor-turned-flesh for capitalism' (15). Muller notes that modern forms of anti-Semitism often had less to do with religious difference than with a resentment arising from an exaggerated perception of Jewish economic success (6). As Jean Paul Sartre had long since argued, our encounter with the 'other' under capitalism is necessarily marked by the often violent and aggressive struggle for limited economic resources which leads us to dehumanise the other (*Critique* 131–33). Consequently, Elias's presence in the novel becomes symbolic of a premodern history of prejudice, xenophobia and religious enmity that is arguably perpetuated rather than effaced by the modern economic system of global capitalism. The spectral presence of Elias as symbol of capitalism, ethnic xenophobia and violated hospitality haunts Isaac and the present eschatology of capitalist democracy, demanding recognition and a more effective response to subaltern 'others' whose suffering it ignores (Derrida, *Spectres* 112). Isaac's violence while in the grip of Elias is the kind of resistance Papastergiadis finds is also present in dehumanised representations of the subaltern 'zombie' who 'has the potential for demonic and unpredictable reaction against the machine' (164).

Through Elias, Tsiolkas is able to infer the unspoken forces behind the practice of conditional hospitality: money and racism. In post-9/11 Europe, the spectre of anti-semitism rears its head

amidst new waves of dispossessed, growing fears of Islam, and the difficulties in negotiating historical racial and religious enmities in our increasingly globalised environment. Anti-Semitism is used illustratively in the novel as one of the most virulent and ancient forms of ethnic and religious prejudice, and its spectre continues to loom large in contemporary society albeit in a slightly different guise. Tsiolkas sees anti-Muslim sentiment since 9/11 becoming increasingly problematic: ‘the events of September 11, 2001, resurrected the shadows of religious intolerance and initiated a new conflict in which questions of belief and faith are again central’ (‘On Tolerance’ 10). The ironic parallel between historical anti-Semitism and contemporary racism against Muslims is made explicit in Isaac’s encounter with the illegal Muslim immigrant, Sula, who angrily questions why the term ‘anti-Semitism’ is reserved solely for the Jew: ‘Aren’t I a Semite as well?’ (278). Sula has even fewer options as we are told that ‘[if] she were a Jew she could go to Israel’ or even stay in France. The novel’s concern with contemporary forms of racism is made yet more concrete when in order to take Isaac out on an excursion in Paris, Sula must first remove her headscarf and put on makeup because ‘it is easier’ (275). As an obvious allusion to the 1989 hijab controversy in France and anticipating the Burqa controversy of 2010, this episode is one of many in the novel that exposes the inadequacy of the ideal of multicultural tolerance, which like our hospitality, is often, if not always, conditional. Yet it is hardly surprising that the management of external borders then becomes displaced onto internal ones (Yeğenoğlu 4), as in the case of Sula. Indeed Tsiolkas, among others, has recognised that the ideas of multicultural tolerance and cosmopolitanism allow for a certain level of detachment towards the other. As Slavoj Žižek provocatively claims, ‘multiculturalism is a disavowed, inverted, self-referential form of racism, a “racism with a distance”—it “respects” the Other’s identity’ and yet this ‘respect for the Other’s specificity is the very form of asserting one’s own superiority’ (44). ‘Multicultural tolerance,’ and certainly the *conditional* tolerance it so often seems to be, is not enough. Tsiolkas posits a similar problematic in his polemical essay ‘On the Concept of Tolerance’ where he hypothesises a dinner party at which social democrats, Greens and feminists are seated next to conservative right-wing bureaucrats, alongside a Catholic priest and a moderate Muslim. The dinner party is ‘an example of democracy and tolerance in miniature portrait’ until the host walks into the kitchen and is ‘outraged’ to find the cook and her family eating the roast because they’re unable to survive on her poor wages. We are prepared to practise tolerance and the principles of liberal democracy at a distance and amongst those we deem acceptable but when the guest is uninvited and takes our food, our tolerance wavers. Thus, as Tsiolkas concludes, ‘[i]f we are to demand an end to intolerance on the level of belief and the individual then we must be prepared to accept the demand that we also require freedom from social and global economic exploitation’ (‘On Tolerance,’ 18-19, 54).

As Isaac’s journey through Europe demonstrates, our experiences of alterity under globalisation necessitate a radical reconsideration of our contemporary ethics. What is our ethical responsibility, as humans, to those like Sula who fall through the cracks of international law? There is no hope for a new life for Sula in Australia, as Isaac vehemently turns down a request for help, stating that Australia is ‘just as fucked as here, maybe more so,’ since they’ll put her in detention (272). Indeed Papastergiadis and Tsiolkas question how a concept like *philoxenia* or unconditional hospitality can be reconciled with mandatory detention in Australia: ‘What sort of barbarian hospitality is that we offer to refugees?’ (‘Hospitality 396). One’s ability to set conditional limits on one’s hospitality is a constant reaffirmation of one’s sovereignty and place as ‘master’ of the house/nation.

Through the novel’s various references to Australian detention (272, 342), and Tsiolkas’s nonfictional work, he makes it clear that the discussion must extend to Australia. In a novel that is so obviously concerned with negotiating a contemporary ethical identity in our increasingly global environment, the notion of hospitality becomes paramount; as Derrida

asserts, ‘inasmuch as it is . . . the manner in which we relate to ourselves and to others, to others as our own or foreigners, ethics is *hospitality*; ethics is so thoroughly coextensive with the experience of hospitality’ (*On Cosmopolitanism* 17). The novel’s concern with this ethics of hospitality is most evident in the story of Elias’s asylum. In an interesting way the story reflects the contradiction Derrida finds apparent in the Latin origin of the German word *hospitalität*—‘which allows itself to be parasitized by its opposite, hostility’ (‘Hostipitality’ 3). Isaac’s anti-Semitic ancestors treat the boy with a thinly disguised hostility despite their agreed upon role as hosts. The couple’s subsequent murder of the boy, their betrayal of their responsibility to the ‘other,’ is the ultimate violation of this hospitality and the Greek principle of *philoxenia*. Correspondingly, Isaac recognises that he has made a similar betrayal in the case of Sula when he refuses Gerry’s request to help her get to Australia: ‘I felt shame because I knew the real reason why I would not take this risk. I was scared. I was chickenshit scared. I didn’t want to risk my own security for a stranger’ (273). Neither can Isaac be tempted by the offer of money—because of the lack of financial need he succinctly equates with ‘freedom.’ This perhaps speaks to an even larger ethical consideration, why those of us who can afford the ‘luxury’ of ethics (Rowe 233), still choose not to act. Interestingly, when Isaac finally sees past the figure of the ‘Muslim refugee’ to get to know Sula, the person, he retracts his previous refusal to help, instead offering to bring her to Australia (282). But this not enough. It is still a violation of *philoxenia*, the validity of which depends on ‘its capacity to be executed blind.’ The generosity must come first; one must invite the other to share a meal *before* conversation (Papapastergiadis, ‘Hospitality’ 394).

Isaac’s dismissal of responsibility to the other in order to protect his own security is the same justification used by those who determine the conditionality of European and Australian borders: an inability to risk our own security for a stranger. This is why Derrida’s formulation of hospitality as ethics (in response to ideas of hospitality discussed by Kant and Levinas) necessarily involves a dispossession or interruption of self—one might even call it sacrifice (Yeğenoğlu 64; Derrida *Adieu* 42, 52). As Derrida suggests, ‘the host [*hôte*] is a hostage insofar as he is a subject put into question’ (*Adieu* 56). Arguably, we see this question of ipseity played out upon the body of Isaac. His apparent possession by the boy Elias sees the host taken hostage by the uninvited guest. On the one hand, Isaac’s possession is perhaps a figurative demonstration of extreme anxieties over the possible consequences of *unconditional* hospitality. Yet seen in a more positive light, it may be that the experience of being held hostage is necessary for the achievement of ‘pity, compassion, pardon and proximity in the world’ (Levinas, quoted by Derrida in ‘Hostipitality’ 9). Indeed Derrida reads Levinas as suggesting that ‘the exercise of ethical responsibility begins where I am and must be the hostage of the other, delivered passively to the other before being delivered to myself’ (‘Hostipitality’ 9). The experience played out in the character of Isaac is far from passive but it is nevertheless one of deliverance. As the novel’s various allusions to Homer’s *Odyssey* infer, Isaac, like Odysseus, will return from the underworld a wiser man (406).

Largely symbolised by Elias’s hostile presence, Tsiolkas depicts Isaac’s personal struggle as he internalises the dilemmas of social injustice he sees around him, which compel him to confront certain truths regarding his own character. One of the most interesting aspects of his turn inward is the way in which he is forced to recognise and confront a kind of latent racism hidden beneath the surface of his apparently liberal and multicultural identity as an ethnic, gay, educated artist. The reader is somewhat shocked when a difficult confrontation leads Isaac to admit that ‘[f]or one deranged, terrified moment . . . I wished that not one Jew had ever walked on the face of this earth’ (158). This is not, as some might suggest, proof of the author’s anti-Semitism, rather it is a poignant moment in which a liberal readership is also led to confront what may be hidden beneath the surface and to perhaps reexamine those liberal ideals we so often take to be *a priori*. Isaac’s apparent psychic rupture towards the end of this

novel—we are told he was found ‘ranting and screaming’ in the streets of London (397)—is the direct result of his confrontation with the subaltern cosmopolitanisms of Europe. Through his delusional fantasy of raping and killing the American and Russian international businessmen who ‘smell of commerce’ he enacts his outrage and his own kind of symbolic justice on representatives of the capitalist world order (371). The violent murder and ‘consumption of the other’ in this scene, Laura Joseph argues, is an example of the novel’s penetration and disintegration of coherent ‘individual, national, and ideological forms of subjectivity,’ and the novel’s way of ‘perversely inhabiting the “otherside of politics” . . . by opposing the logic of oppositions . . . self/other, life/death, inside/outside’ (107, 106). This dissolution of identity is in some ways, as McCann suggests, the result of the destabilising and alienating effects of exploitative capitalism but more specifically in the case of Isaac it is a result of his realisation of his own culpability in, and responsibility for, the violations of hospitality he sees around him and the degradation and suffering they cause (‘Pornographic Logic’ 37). Isaac’s psychic rupture is a result of his embodiment of the fundamental problems and contradictions that are emerging, and will continue to emerge, as a result of globalisation and the growth of international capitalism—problems which expose the inadequacies of current liberal discourses and the ideals of multiculturalism and a singular global cosmopolitan community in combating the immediate realities of globalisation. Elias’s symbolic possession of Isaac is arguably representative of ‘the interruption of the self by the self as other’ (Derrida, *Adieu* 52). It is a transgression of the boundary between self and other, which is essential to the realisation that our responsibility to the other is also a responsibility to ourselves.

With curious frequency the novel’s European characters comment upon an air of ‘innocence that the Americans have now lost’ that they believe surrounds Isaac and characterises the few other Australians they have met (282). However, this refrain is starkly juxtaposed against Isaac’s harrowing journey—perhaps Tsiolkas’s suggestion that in our increasingly globalised world and the ever-increasing reality of a globalised future, we as Australians can no longer feign innocence. By the end of the novel Isaac has lost any trace of this innocence he might once have had. Most often people read this novel as a demand to take responsibility for our holocaustal and colonial past but I would argue that Isaac’s historical family curse is most significant in the way it informs a penetrative vision of the present and future that forces an ethical reconsideration of our responsibility to the absolute other, to the subalterns and ‘victims of the oppressions of capitalist imperialism’ (Derrida, *Marx* xviii). So where does one locate hope in a novel as dark as this? In the final pages, we are told of the close bonds Isaac’s mother makes with immigrant women in her son’s hospital room, and while considering the Caribbean nurse with whom she was to ‘exchange stories of exile,’ Isaac’s mother is ‘struck’ with the idea that if ‘migrants were to form a nation, they could conquer the earth’ (401). Like so many contemporary scholars, it seems Tsiolkas entertains ideas of how the new patterns of human association and new operations of labour that arise from globalisation may offer emancipatory possibilities for the disenfranchised (Minhao Zeng 140). Indeed, although Hardt and Negri, in *Empire*, admit that global mobility ‘often cost[s] terrible suffering,’ they nevertheless identify the transformative potential for political resistance in the movements and singularities of what they refer to as ‘the multitude.’ Derrida similarly formulates the concept of the ‘New International,’ a loose alliance of people linked not by nationality or community but by a link of ‘affinity, suffering, and hope’ who are ethically committed to the possibility of a democracy to come (Derrida, *Marx*, 106; Abbinnett 154). Although such plurality makes it unfeasible to bring all struggles of social exclusion ‘under a single banner . . . the potential and [the] viability of counter-hegemonic globalization’ as De Sousa Santos suggests, nevertheless revolves around the possibility of ‘communication, mutual understanding and co-operation’ (Santos 459). Not only does Tsiolkas’s novel serve to remind us of our ethical responsibility to the other, it also reminds us that this responsibility is



first and foremost a human responsibility and should be free from all considerations of race, and the demands of the economic or ideological. While *Dead Europe* offers no concrete solutions to the confronting problems it highlights, its radical critique of global capitalism, its illustration of subaltern cosmopolitanisms and interrogation of the ethics of hospitality, open a space for the emancipatory possibility of what is ‘to come’—another site for the ‘possible resurrection of the socialist project’ as a potential counter-hegemonic alternative to global capitalism (Derrida, *Marx* 65; Tsiolkas, ‘Capitalist Faggot’ 195).

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> In an interesting discussion regarding reconciling the ideal of ‘cosmopolitanism’ with the realities of globalisation, Stuart Hall uses the term ‘cosmopolitanism from above’ to describe a limited cosmopolitanism of an elite nature in which ‘global entrepreneurs [are] following the pathways of global corporate power and the circuits of global investment . . . and who have apartments in three continents’ as opposed to ‘cosmopolitanism from below’ in which ‘people [are] driven across borders, obliged to uproot themselves from home, place and family, living in transit camps or climbing onto the backs of lorries or leaky boats . . . to get to somewhere else’ (see Hall and Werbner 346).

<sup>2</sup> The scene is also indicative of what Derrida identifies as ‘the profound problem of the role and status of police’ in violations of hospitality as they often get their job descriptions confused, taking it upon themselves to make the law rather than merely enforce it and do not necessarily distinguish between suspected terrorist and political refugee (Derrida, *Cosmopolitanism* 13–14).

<sup>3</sup> Sneja Gunew discusses the way in which the spectre of British colonialism haunts contemporary debates around multiculturalism and migrancy, allowing ‘the Anglo-Celtic descendants of the settler colonizers to construct their English ethnicity against . . . paradoxically, those ‘multicultural others’ many of whom in the wake of postwar migration came precisely from . . . the West’ (10).

<sup>4</sup> Derrida highlights the fact that ‘Marx always described money, and more precisely the monetary sign’ in the figure of the ghost (*Spectres of Marx* 55).

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