Europe as Alternative Space in Contemporary Australian Fiction by Carey, Tsiolkas and Jones

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Abstract:
This article investigates imaginings of Europe in contemporary Australian fiction in order to explore whether (traveling to) Europe provides alternative points of reference to discourses on nation, belonging, and identity beyond the (settler) postcolonial. The article sets out to compare recent works by Peter Carey, Christos Tsiolkas and Gail Jones who narrate Europe against a wide range of backgrounds, covering diverse diasporic, migratory and expatriate experiences, in order to explore the role of Europe as an alternative space, and of European modernities in particular, in the Australian literary imagination. Concentrating on *Jack Maggs* (1997), *Dead Europe* (2005) and *A Guide to Berlin* (2015), the article has a threefold focus: Firstly, it analyses the representation of European spaces and explores how the three novels draw attention to multiple modernities within and beyond Europe. Secondly, it demonstrates how all three novels, in their own way, reveal European modernities to be haunted by its other, i.e. death, superstition, ghosts, or the occult. Thirdly, these previous findings will be synthesized in order to determine how the three novels relate Europe to Australia. Do they challenge or perpetuate the protagonists' desire for Europe as an 'imaginary homeland'? Do references to Europe support the construction of national identity in the works under review, or do these references rather point to the emergence of multiple or transnational identities?

Keywords: contemporary Australian literature; fictions of Europe; multiple modernities; Peter Carey; Christos Tsiolkas; Gail Jones

Introduction

This article sets out to compare works by Peter Carey, Christos Tsiolkas and Gail Jones in order to explore the role of Europe as an alternative space, and of European modernity in particular, in the Australian literary imagination. My article concentrates on *Jack Maggs* (1997), *Dead Europe* (2005) and *A Guide to Berlin* (2015)—three novels whose protagonists travel to Europe. My analysis will focus, in particular, on the representation of European spaces and explore how the three novels draw attention to multiple modernities within and beyond Europe. The term 'multiple modernities' was coined by Shmuel N. Eisenstadt as a way to refute classical theories and their "homogenizing and hegemonic assumptions of th[e] Western program of modernity" (1). Rather than presuming converging variations of one global modernity, the idea of multiple modernities acknowledges "a multiplicity of continually evolving modernities" (Eisenstadt 3). According to Eisenstadt, "[o]ne of the most important implications of the term is that modernity and Westernization are not identical; Western patterns of modernity are not the only 'authentic' modernities, though they enjoy historical precedence and continue to be a basic reference point for others" (3). As a result, the appropriation (selection, reinterpretation and reformulation) of Western ideas and patterns of modernity by non-Western societies tends to be characterized by "a tension between conceptions of themselves as part of the modern world and ambivalent attitudes toward modernity in general and toward the West in particular" (Eisenstadt 15). Drawing on Eisenstadt's theorization, the analysis will show how the three novels reveal European modernities to be haunted by its other, i.e. death, superstition, ghosts, or the occult.

By focussing on contemporary Australian writers' 'fictions of Europe,'[1] this article builds on Ken Gelder and Paul Salzman's section on "European-ism" in Australian fiction after 1989 (cf. 110-121). In their discussion, Gelder and Salzman connect Australian literature's turn to Europe as setting or sensibility to the "ongoing exploration of modernism … and to possible connections between modernism, conceptions of European culture, and explorations of multiple Australian identities" (110; cf. also 121). While their overview tends to remain vague about what exactly makes Australian novels 'European' (Gelder and Salzman 110.) or how they exude a "European feel" (110.), they convincingly point out how, in the works of Australian writers such as Robert Dessaix, Fiona Capp, Gail Jones, Rod Jones, Michelle de Kretser and others, Europe and European culture serve "as an inspiration and an enrichment of Australian themes" (Gelder and Salzman 111). As the two scholars argue, however, in revisiting Europe as a place of high literary cultures, these novels oppose Australia's earlier "cultural cringe" (Gelder and Salzman 110) and shift the old paradigm, according to which "fulfilment lies outside Australia in a sophisticated Europe, in favour of unsettling such a dichotomy" (121). As a result, "a more complex notion of Australia (as being far from a cultural desert), and a bleaker notion of Europe (as being far from an untrammelled source of cultural richness)" emerges in these works (Gelder and Salzman 112). Thus, concerning the focus of this special issue, it could be argued that Gelder and Salzman's discussion paves the way for thinking about Europe as an alternative space that offers Australian writers potentially new avenues of (re)thinking difference, identity and belonging beyond the national and the postcolonial.

In the following sections, this article further explores this line of thinking in its connection to Europe's 'first modernity' and the idea of 'multiple modernities.' In so doing, the comparative case study of the three texts under review expands previous research on the three novels, of which some already focussed on the role of Europe in these works but not yet compared them in this respect.[2] Thus, I hope to contribute to existing scholarship on the imagination of Europe in contemporary Australian fiction that is still scarce. Two concepts inform my enquiry: firstly, I draw on Salman Rushdie's concept of "imaginary homeland"—a notion coined by the British-Indian novelist in relation to the diasporic experience in order to capture how physical alienation from one's place of origin fuels a "sense of loss" as well as an "urge to reclaim" and "look back" but inevitably results in the creation of homelands of the mind (10); secondly, my analysis pays attention to the novels' use of 'conceptual metaphors' (e.g. darkness vs. light; the empire as family), which, according to George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's seminal study *Metaphors We Live By*, "structure what we perceive, how we get around in the world, and how we relate to other people" (3). In order to determine how the three novels connect Europe and Australia, my exploration is guided by the following questions: Do the novels challenge or perpetuate the protagonists' desire for Europe as an 'imaginary homeland'? Do references to Europe support the construction of national identity in the works under review, or do these references rather point to the emergence of transnational identities?

[1] The term 'fictions of Europe' was first used in the eponymous article by sociologist Jan Nederveen Pieterse.

[2] For *Jack Maggs*, only Cynthia Vanden Driesen has focussed on the novel's engagement with Europe to date. Presumably prompted by the novel's title and theme, previous research on *Dead Europe*, by contrast, has predominantly focussed on Tsiolkas's depiction of Europe (see Cañadas; Gelder and Salzman 223-227; Hauthal, "Writing Back or Writing Off?" and "Travelling with Ghosts;" Manganas; Marinkova; Ng, "*Dead Europe* and the Coming of Age in Australian Literature" and "Literary Translations;" Padmore; Parlati; Pavlides 104-131; Shek-Noble; Vaughan). Concerning *A Guide to Berlin*, no scholarly article has yet been published.

From European Modernity to Multiple Modernities: Peter Carey's *Jack Maggs*

First published in 1997, Carey's neo-Victorian novel tells the story of a transported convict who suddenly returns to London to reunite and live there with his adopted English son. Once in London, however, Maggs, Carey's version of Dickens's Magwitch,[3] is violently disabused of any illusions of Englishness he may have harboured and required to give up his own 'great expectations.' The novel is set in London in 1837 and, from the very beginning, its representation of space highlights the city's modernity: already the novel's second sentence draws the readers' attention to "the bright aura of gas light" (*JM* 1) noticed by Maggs.[4] Having been introduced in London in the first decades of the nineteenth century, the streetlights suggest that London is an epitome of European modernity.[5] The illumination of London is an indication of the city's modernity all the more since the novel further details and connects the gas lighting to the city's commerce:

> This light had shone *all the way* from the Elephant and Castle: gas light, blazing and streaming like great torches; sausages illuminated, fish and ice gleaming, chemist shops aglow like caves with their variegated vases illuminated from within. The city had become *a fairground*, and as the coach crossed the river at Westminster the stranger saw that even the bridges over the Thames were illuminated.
> The entire Haymarket was like *a grand ball*. Not just the gas, the music, the dense, tight crowds. *A man from the last century would not have recognized it; a man from even fifteen years before would have been confused.* Dram shops had become gin *palaces* …. This one here—it was like a *temple* ….' (*JM* 2; my emphasis)

The emphasized expressions in this quotation specifically underline the extent ("all the way") and radical nature of the change that the introduction of gas lighting had brought about ("A man…"). Notably, the lights transform the whole city into "a fairground," Haymarket into "a grand ball" and dram shops into "palaces" and "temple[s]."

In the novel, a sense of opposition between illuminated London, as an/the epitome of European modernity, and the belatedness of development in Australia is underscored by means of the conceptual metaphor of darkness (as opposed to light) in a way that is reminiscent of Joseph Conrad's famous classic *Heart of Darkness* (1899).[6] Carey depicts Maggs as England's dark, frightening and murderous antipodean Other. From the very beginning, the novel juxtaposes "the bright aura" (*JM* 1) of London with the darkness of the tall stranger, arriving in the city at night. Maggs's eyes are described as "dark" (*JM* 2), and his obscurity is enhanced by his demeanour, for instance, his hiding from the gas lights and his "sett[ing] off into the darkness" (*JM* 3).

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[3] For a detailed exploration of *Jack Maggs* as a postcolonial rewriting of Dickens's *Great Expectations* see, for example, Bauder-Begerow; Savu; and Taylor.

[4] Here and in the following analysis, references to the novel are abbreviated *JM*.

[5] They presumably formed a stark contrast to Maggs's Australian hometown Sydney, where systematic lighting only emerged in the 1840s, more than 20 years after its public use in Britain: "The wattage increased on May 24, 1841, when streets in the city of 30,000 people became the 'first in the eastern hemisphere' illuminated by gas lights. By contrast, gas light had been in use in Britain for more than 20 years." ("How Sydney's Infant Streets;" see also "Manufactured Gas").

[6] The term "conceptual metaphor" was coined by Lakoff and Johnson in order to explain how conceptual metaphors such as "argument is war," which permeate our everyday language, shape the way we think and act (3-6).

In the course of the novel, the contrast between the traveller from Australia and his European destination is further detailed and exploited—often to comic effects. Several scenes require Maggs to enter houses late at night and show him merge with the dark, a quality he acquired at young age, when working as a thief. A hilarious example in this respect is the scene where Maggs returns to his employer Mr Buckle late at night and, having missed his dinner when an errand he had to perform for his master delayed him, he eats a cheese sandwich in the kitchen without turning on the light, because—as a former thief—he "can see in the dark" (*JM* 114). The scene is focalized through Mr Buckle whose fear of Maggs causes him to associate the latter with the darkness surrounding him:

> He [Percy Buckle] stared down into the darkness towards a place where the blackness was knotted hard together, like ink poured into ink. It shifted as he stared at it.
> 'I see you,' said Mr Buckle. 'Defend yourself, for my sword is drawn.'
> 'Begging your pardon,' said a familiar voice.
> 'Maggs? … Maggs, what are you doing in my kitchen?'
> 'I am eating a cheese sandwich,' said the voice. …
> 'But we would feed you, man,' cried Percy Buckle. 'Good grief, we do not mean to starve you. But we don't like you to creep around the house like a thief.'
> 'Now I am like a thief?'
> 'Why did you not light a candle?'
> 'I can see in the dark.'
> Mr Buckle said nothing.
> 'Because I was a thief. …' (114)

Yet, as readers learn in the course of the novel, Maggs has not returned to his "dear England" (*JM* 264) to do harm, but because he considers London as his home and rightful place as an Englishman. Considering himself a Victorian gentleman, he is eager to distinguish himself from the penal country. When Buckle confronts him with his conditional pardon which forbids him to return to England, he replies: "I *know*. God damn. I do know, Sir. But you see, I am a fucking *Englishman*, and I have English things to settle. I am not to live my life with all that vermin. I am here in London where I belong" (*JM* 128, original emphasis).[7] When Mercy, Buckle's maid and Maggs's newly found English partner, advises him to leave and live with his two young sons in Australia, he refuses by saying: "I am not of that race. … The Australian race …. I am an Englishman" (*JM* 312-313). Maggs's emotional attachment to England also comes to the fore when he compares wooden Australian houses unfavourably to the "strong and bright and solid" brick houses in London and their English smells (*JM* 41):

> In the place Jack Maggs had most recently come from, the houses had been, for the most part, built from wood. They strained and groaned in the long hot nights, crying out against their nails, contracting, expanding, tugging at their bindings as if they would pull themselves apart.
> Tobias Oates's house in Lab's Conduit Street was built from London brick. It was newly painted, newly furnished. Everything in it glistened and was strong and bright and solid. This was a house that would never scream in the dark, nor did it

[7] See also: "I'd rather be a bad smell here [in Buckinghamshire] than a frigging rose in New South Wales" (*JM* 230).

> reek of sap or creosote. Its smells were English smells—polished oak, coal dust, Devon apples. (*JM* 40-41)

The dissimilarities in the way the houses are built, sound and smell clearly indicate different degrees of civilization—after all, Maggs regards the Australian houses as unstable and on the verge of disappearing again. In the final part of the novel, readers learn why London has gained such a significance for Maggs. It was his imaginary place of refuge and future sanctuary: building London in his mind helped him endure his sentence and survive being flogged at Morton Bay:

> As the flies began to tease his skin, the wretched man would begin to *build London in his mind*. …
> Underneath the scalding sun, which burned his flesh as soon as it was mangled, *Jack Maggs would imagine the long mellow light of English summer*.
> The flies might feast on his spattered back; the double-cat might carry away the third and fourth fingers of his hand; but *his mind crawled forward, always, constructing* piece by piece the place wherein his eyes had first opened, *the home to which he would one day return*, not the mudflats of the Thames, nor Mary Britten's meat-rich room at Pepper Alley Stairs, but rather *a house in Kensington* whose kind and beautiful interior he had entered by tumbling down a chimney, *like a babe falling from the outer darkness into light.* Clearing the soot from his eyes he had seen *that which he later knew was meant by authors when they wrote of England, and of Englishmen*. (*JM* 321-322, my emphasis)

The reference to literature highlights the imaginative nature of Maggs's London, demonstrating its significance as a homeland "of the mind" in the sense of Rushdie (10). Accordingly, the quotation also attests to the emotional force of his simultaneously back- and forward-looking imagination. Interestingly, moreover, this passage indicates that seeing another (higher class) world for the first time triggered Maggs's social aspiration. This is aptly captured by the metaphorical description that likens his breaking into the house to being reborn. Further references to England and a gentleman's life as imaginary refuge reveal even more clearly that Maggs's attachment to England is not based on a remembered experience but rather based on an imagined future.[8] As a result of his imaginary attachment to the colonial power, Maggs too—just like the other Londoners he encounters throughout the story—underwrites the juxtaposition between England and Australia. Readers, however, are increasingly prompted to reconsider the characters' views. They soon realize that, despite his secrets and his criminal past, Maggs turns out to be the only genuinely good person in the novel, while, with the exception of Mercy, the English people surrounding him (including, for instance, his foster mother Mary 'Ma' Britten, his brother Tom, his adopted son Henry Phipps, and writer Tobias Oates) are selfish and tend to exploit Maggs to their own advantage. Hence, by "dismantling the colonialist project of … constructing the model of European man as innately possessed of every virtue," as Cynthia Vanden Driesen writes, Carey is "rewriting Europe" (317).

[8] See also the intermedial reference to painting in the following: "When I was imagining my lovely English summers—and I did meditate on this subject an awful lot, my word—I would be suffering the mosquitoes and the skin-rot, to mention two of the least of my discomforts, but I would oft-times *make a picture* of me and Henry puffing our pipes comfortably in the long evenings" (*JM* 291-292, my emphasis).

At the same time, the novel also reveals European modernity to be haunted by its other, namely the occult. Purportedly healing the traumatized Maggs but really trying to get access to Maggs's memory for his new novel, Oates repeatedly hypnotizes Maggs. The role of mesmerism in the novel's excavation of the past contrasts sharply with the notions of modernity evoked through the conceptual metaphor of darkness (vs. light). Together, both features question and undermine the characters' juxtaposition of England and Australia. Eventually, Jack Maggs, too, realizes that London will never be a home for him and returns to Australia. The novel's devaluation of the colonial centre and its simultaneous appreciation of the settler colonial periphery, thus, clearly participates in a postcolonial 'writing back' from the margins. Accordingly, the novel has often been said to depict the emergence of a (hybrid) Australian sense of national identity (see Hassall 128; Maack 229, 241-242; Myers 465-469).

Rejecting the Eurocentric vision of London as an epitome of modernity that the novel's first pages evoke, the ending, moreover, draws readers' attention to a shifting sense of modernity and to the possibility of multiple modernities. As the novel's final pages inform the reader, Mercy and Maggs thrive in Australia. While Mercy "civiliz[es]" (*JM* 327) Maggs's first two children, gives birth to five more children and also oversees the building of their "grand mansion" (*JM* 328), Maggs, in turn, becomes the prosperous owner of a sawmill, a hardware store and a pub. Hence, in Australia, the couple's moral superiority is further asserted by their upward social mobility and their civilising influence. However, they do not just replicate the English model but adapt it to the Australian context. As Myers has argued, Maggs's reconciliation with his Australian sons as well as the succession of his businesses, and his trading bricks (the primary material for building houses in England) for indigenous trees in particular, confirm his ability to accept cultural hybridity. Yet, the Maggs family does not just thrive on cultural hybridity. Rather, the novel also foregrounds how their appropriation of Western ideas and patterns of modernity speaks of the tension between conceptualising themselves as part of the modern world and ambivalent attitudes towards European modernity in the way Eisenstein has theorized. Thus, the novel showcases the emergence of distinctly transnational settler identities.

Imagining Multiple Modernities within Europe: *Dead Europe* by Christos Tsiolkas

Just like *Jack Maggs*, Christos Tsiolkas's *Dead Europe*, too, rewrites Europe by turning Eurocentric attributions of value on their head. However, as the title already indicates, Tsiolkas's novel may be better described as writing 'off' rather than writing 'back' to Europe.[9] Concretely, *Dead Europe* reassesses Eurocentric views by imagining 'old Europe' as dead, foul-smelling and haunted by ghosts and by opposing it to the youth, innocence and cleanliness of Australia. Various textual markers provide evidence for Tsiolkas's juxtaposition of the two locations. To begin with, characters ascribe notions of decline, exhaustion and death to Europe and causally link these notions to the history of Europe. This can be seen, for instance, when Isaac's cousin Giulia claims: "Greece is dying, she whispered to me, this is Europe now" (*DE* 135).[10] Before the novel's climax, which takes place in London, Isaac too is convinced that "[t]he men of England, of Europe" (*DE* 364) are "at the end of time, awaiting their extinction"

[9] This section builds on my earlier articles (Hauthal, "Writing Back or Writing Off?" and "Travelling with Ghosts"), which compared the novel's imagination of Europe and its use of intermedial references to Caryl Phillips's *The European Tribe* (1989) as well as, respectively, its variation of the tradition of the Grand Tour and its use of ghosts to Bernardine Evaristo's *Soul Tourists* (2005). The present article, however, shifts the focus to the novel's representation of space and engagement with European modernity/ies.

[10] Here and in the following, references to the novel are abbreviated *DE*.

(*DE* 368) and compares them to "a final limp turd squeezed out by history" (*DE* 368).[11] References to Australia, by contrast, evoke a sense of innocence, youth, cleanliness, and vigour, tend to be linked to the sensory experience of light and air and fuel feelings of homesickness in Isaac, as is visible in the following examples:

> [Sal Mineo addresses Isaac] You know that's what they call Australians here? Children. Even Milos senses that, that you're more innocent than anyone he's ever met. (*DE* 203)
> The sunlight … was a tepid European sun. I [Isaac] wanted the harsh bright open light of home. (*DE* 353)
> I [Isaac] want to be home, in pure, vast Australia where the air is clean, young. I was not fooling myself. There was blood there, in the ground, in the soil, on the water, above the earth. I am not going to pretend that there is not callous history there. Everywhere the smell of earth is ruthless but I want to be looking up into a vigorous, juvenile sky. (*DE* 375)

Interestingly, references to (the end of all) empire(s) and to the conceptual metaphor of colonized people as the empire's children in the above quotations clearly show that the novel, even though it focusses on a second-generation Greek migrant, still situates itself in (settler) postcolonial discourse. This discourse also implicitly impacts Isaac's view of Europe. According to him, Europe's stench, shadows, ghosts (evidenced in, for example, "Europe stank, it stank of ghosts and shadows," *DE* 358), are a result of historical sedimentation:

> It [the London air] is thick with layers of sediment. Layers and layers of shit. History, manure, blood and bone under my [Isaac's] feet. The dust of death, life, death, life, endless death and life, repeating repeating, this is what my body is propelling itself through, this is what life on this dirty soil means. (*DE* 374- 375)

In Australia, by contrast, such layers of history are missing: "In the New World we had no layers of history to our architecture, no beauty in our concrete, steel and cement. Beauty was only in our skies and horizons" (*DE* 179). The novel develops a similarly negative comparison when juxtaposing Europe and Australia with reference to blood: while Colin describes the European landscapes in Isaac's photographs as "awash as if in blood" (*DE* 403), only few pages later, Isaac's mother notices a difference of air when stepping out at Melbourne airport, having just returned from London: "When they walked through the sliding doors of Melbourne Airport she felt a gust of biting Antarctic wind and was astonished by its clarity. There was no blood in this wind: it was intoxicating" (*DE* 406). Hence, the novel's juxtaposition of Europe and Australia builds on the colonialist binary thinking but reverses its typically Eurocentric attribution of value.

Just like Carey's novel, *Dead Europe* attests to Eurocentrism and challenges its legitimacy. Towards the end of the novel, the protagonist's mother claims that there is a fundamental

[11] Isaac's thoughts when quoted in their entirety read as follows: "Will someone fucking kill the lot of them? The men of England, of Europe: working class, bourgeois, lumpen, aristocrat; all of them bloodless and effete" (*DE* 364); "[T]his is what men descend to at the end of all empires, this whimpering effeminate posing. They disgust me …. They are at the end of time, awaiting their extinction. … They are obscene, a final limp turd squeezed out by history. A fire, just and swift and magnificent, should rage through all of Europe" (*DE* 368).

difference between Australia and Europe. While, initially, she had expected that England "would be exactly like Australia. Only older" (*DE* 397), she eventually realizes:

> This was not Australia. … She had been born in a remote corner of damaged, destroyed Europe but it had still felt like the centre of the world. … She could tell … that Londoners too knew that they were at the centre of the universe. She could not help wondering what it would be like to … have migrated here instead, to have remained in Europe. She would probably not feel that hunger for *something else*, which, for her, was the meaning of being Australian. … She realised she envied these cold dour Londoners. But she also marvelled at their acceptance of the little that Europe now offered them. (*DE* 399-400, original emphasis)

Isaac's mother perpetuates Europe's centrality, while, at the same time, asserting her Australianness: despite being born in Greece, she does not identify as Greek (anymore). Yet, her diasporic self-identification as Australian is characterised by a "hunger for something else" (which resonates oddly with the vampiric being her son Isaac turned into in the course of his journey through Europe). Indeed, it is exactly this kind of hunger and a belief in the cultural centrality of Europe that also brought her son to Europe: Isaac first travelled to Europe in search of his 'imaginary homeland.' Stressing the fictional nature of these 'homelands of the mind,' Rushdie points out how memory and fragmentation lend a resonant and evocative quality to the diasporic imagination of homelands that are "imaginatively true" and to which one is "willing to admit [one] belonged" (10). In the case of Australian-born Isaac, this desire had been sparked and nurtured by his 'European education' and his reading of European classics.[12]

This prevalence of Eurocentrism in *Dead Europe* shows how—irrespective of the novel's contemporary setting and focus on 20th-century Eastern European migrants rather than 19th-century English convicts—a colonial mind-set still informs the characters' thinking about the relationship of Europe and Australia. What is more, in the act of writing back, Tsiolkas's novel actually re-confirms both the myth of Australia as *terra nullius* as well as Europe's central position—after all, the novel's vampiric ghost originates in Europe and accompanies the Greek characters to Australia.[13] Yet, as the final sentence of Isaac's mother's reflection already indicates, and as the above-quoted sections equally forcefully suggest: after the fall of the Berlin Wall, global capitalism has changed Europe beyond recognition, leading to its moral demise and spiritual exhaustion, and it is for this very reason, the novel argues, that Europe can no longer lay claim to be the centre of the world. As Marilena Parlati has argued, rather than conforming with Isaac's "wished-for recovery of a desired all-rounded sense of identity and belonging", the present reality of Europe is, in fact, "as materialistic, consumeristic, voyeuristic, and trashy as many other parts of the globe" (44). Subsequently, Isaac's earlier search for Europe as an 'imaginary homeland' as well as his quest for a transnational identity are disappointed and replaced by repulsion.

While the novel's critique of European consumer society has been widely discussed in previous research on the novel (see McCann; Ng, "*Dead Europe* and the Coming of Age in Australian Literature;" Sornig), critics so far have paid little attention to the novel's second storyline. In these xenophobic folk tales, superstition prevails. Set in the Greek countryside during World

[12] For a more detailed analysis of the novels re/thinking of home, see Hauthal, "Travelling with Ghosts" (39-41).

[13] For detailed discussions of Tsiolkas's vampiric ghost, see Hauthal, "Writing Back or Writing Off?;" Huggan; Marinkova; Padmore; Parlati; and Shek-Noble.

War II, this storyline recounts Isaac's family's 'cursed history' and reveals how the demon of a Jewish boy, murdered by Isaac's grandfather, came to haunt Isaac's ancestors. Based on its magical realism, it could be classified as a 'ghost story.' Characterised by a language of fairy tale and fable, the stylistic and generic elements of this storyline clearly differ from those of the storyline set in the present, which is narrated by Isaac in the first person and uses realist techniques of narrative representation. Eventually, however, the two narrative strands merge, and supernatural elements suddenly appear in both storylines. In this way, *Dead Europe* imagines the past and the present as intertwined. While the demon Isaac encounters when visiting his mother's home village at first seems to be restricted to roam in peripheral locations only, he eventually follows Isaac on his travels through Europe, accompanying him on his journey to Venice, Prague, Paris, Amsterdam and London. As a consequence, Europe emerges as a heterogeneous space where multiple modernities exist side by side, thus complicating earlier conceptualisation of modernity as one homogenous, European project. Instead, the novel reveals European modernity to be haunted by its other, i.e. death, superstition and ghosts. Sensing this with the help of his camera, Isaac's alienation steadily increases in the course of the novel and reaches a first climax during his journey through Berlin. There, his repulsion for "the grim city" (*DE* 260) grows into a misanthropy that culminates in the following passage: "I walk and I wander, a huge smile on my face, aware as I have never been before of my separation from the mass of bodies that throng this metropolis. The whole human species exudes a foul, bitter stench" (*DE* 261). Interestingly, as the following section will show, Tsiolkas's portrayal of the German capital is strikingly similar to that of *A Guide to Berlin* by Australian writer Gail Jones, even though the two novels at first do not seem to have much in common, with the latter's focus on "a new internationalism" (*GB* 72)[14] being far removed from the vampiric Gothicism so prominent in *Dead Europe*. I will now compare and contrast Tsiolkas's narrative representation of Berlin with that of Jones.

European Spaces as Catalysts of a 'New Internationalism': *A Guide to Berlin* by Gail Jones

Published ten years after *Dead Europe*, Gail Jones's *A Guide to Berlin* (2015) centres on a young Australian woman named Cass who had come to Berlin hoping to write. The assumption that coming to Berlin/Europe will enable her to write may imply that Cass shares with Isaac and Maggs an initially Eurocentric attitude which implicitly infers Berlin/Europe as cultural centre and 'imaginary homeland.' Moreover, just like Isaac, Cass too initially encounters a capitalist metropolis "devoid of colour" (*DE* 260). Jones emphasizes the city's greyness even twice in the first sentences of her novel: "Before the snows truly began, the city was a desolating ash grey, and bitterly cold. Cass had never before seen such a grey city" (*GB* 3). A few pages further into the novel, another reference to the city's greyness can be found: "Blue U and green S signs seemed everywhere suspended, faces were not entirely distinctive, the same yellow bus roared everywhere between orange LED-lit signs. Colour drew her attention; any interruption to the overall grey caught her gaze" (*GB* 17). Isaac juxtaposes electric colour lights with the city's greyness in a strikingly similar way: "Berlin seems devoid of colour. The only splashes of brilliance that pierce the night are those emanating from the plasma television screens that dominate the shop facades. Otherwise, the streets are bleak and dark" (*DE* 260). Moreover, the two protagonists both describe the city as "bleak": it is "bleak and dark" in *Dead Europe* (260) and "grievously bleak" in *A Guide to Berlin* (35). For them, Berlin lacks humanity and acquires a ghostly character: for Isaac, "[t]here is nothing organic" (*DE* 260-261) in the city's smell (or, rather, stench); for Cass, the city feels "stiff and dead" (*GB* 3). Equally similar is how Cass and

[14] Here and in the following, references to the novel are abbreviated *GB*.

Isaac experience the "banal modernity of the city" (*DE* 261) and how both connect it to the erasure of history. For Isaac, "[i]t is as if history refuses to be trapped in this sterile landscape, as if history never happened" (*DE* 261.). Cass, in turn, perceives the various building sites in the city's centre as "omens … of sorrowful times to come, … [as] symbols of disrepair and ruination" (*GB* 36). She wonders whether they and the "[w]reckage, waste, sense of corruption or crime" (*GB* 38) they exude are "the way of the world, perhaps, that the dignity and sobriety of old public buildings, their temple facades, would be assaulted and covered over by indiscriminate modernity" (*GB* 38-39). Yet, as readers learn, the representation of space in both novels, first and foremost, reflects the protagonists' views and state of mind. In the case of Isaac, his depiction of Berlin fits into his larger picture of Europe as 'dead' and 'exhausted.' Jones's novel, initially, depicts Berlin in an equally bleak way: to Cass, Berlin seems "collectively frozen" (*GB* 3), and she admits that she "sensed herself frozen inside" (*GB* 16).

In view of Cass's "relentless wish for connection" (*GB* 110), however, it is not surprising that her depiction of Berlin changes in the course of the novel. Indeed, the internally focalized narration reveals that Cass herself is aware of how her shifting attitudes influence her experience of the city: "Now, right now, she cherished the city she was in, saw how Berlin supplied and allowed her this tipsy elation, this clever conversation, this sense of participating in a new internationalism" (*GB* 72). Here, Cass ascribes a central and active role to Berlin: according to her, the city facilitates the "speak-memory" group (*GB* 16) she has recently joined, a temporary community brought together by "happenstance" (*GB* 8) and a shared love for the writer Vladimir Nabokov.[15] All members of this group exchange small stories—also referred to as "narrative pact" (*GB* 107)—in a way that is characterised by "kindness" (*GB* 46), "commitment" (*GB* 55), "sympathetic listening" (*GB* 56) and "tenderness" (*GB* 141). Next to Cass who hails from Sydney, this truly international group includes Victor from New York, the friends Marco and Gino from Rome as well as Yukio and Mitsuko, a couple from Tokyo. It is through this community that Cass, who had come to Berlin to "find a foreign sense of purpose" (*GB* 33) but also—and more importantly—to "recover her own presence" (*GB* 34), is able to confront a traumatic memory. As readers learn later, Cass carries a family secret, namely her youngest brother's death. Alexander died in a storm when he was running outside to save the family's dog and was struck by a falling tree. Cass feels ashamed because she found the wreckage that the storm caused alluring and because she had felt an appalling excitement while the storm was raging. Since her parents implicitly had forbidden the family to speak of the death, Cass had not talked about her feelings before. Talking about her brother's death for the first time to Marco in Berlin (see *GB* 181-183) has a therapeutic effect on her and makes her feel "recomposed. Almost sane, she thought wryly. She was now almost sane. Alexander could rest in peace and she could fall in love with Marco. It felt as if she had scooped at a pond of icy water, dashed her face clean, felt a shock of intake of breath, and then suddenly come alive" (*GB* 189-190).

While, through her protagonist, Jones thus attests to the healing power of storytelling, the development of the plot soon complicates such straightforward cause-and-effect thinking. Even though the other members of the group equally use their 'speak-memory' to come to terms with

[15] An intertextual analysis of the novel's connection to Nabokov's eponymous short story from 1925, especially in relation to modernity/ies, could further explore both texts' occupation with trains (trams and S-/U-Bahn respectively), which, according to Jones, signify "speed, industrialization, even the holocaust—and …, seen at night, resemble old-fashioned film-strips" and which thus function as symbols of Western modernity (qtd. in Belleflamme 3).

uneasy memories and childhood anxieties,[16] events take an unforeseen turn when Gino, in a heroin-induced state, kills Victor by pushing him over the railing of Cass's balcony. Aided by Cass's neighbour Karl and his son Franz and prompted by Gino's friend Marco, the group decides to drown the dead body in a river and obliterate all traces of the killing. The next morning, Marco discovers that Gino committed suicide. With the Japanese couple returning to Japan and Marco leaving Berlin, the group breaks apart. Only Cass remains, having learnt about "the failure of any tale" (*GB* 254), but nevertheless carrying with her the other people's stories and the memory of the events as they unfold in the novel. That Cass could indeed be the fictionalised writer of the novel is implied by the metanarrative reflections at the outset of the events that eventually lead to the group's break-up: "How then would she describe it all, if she was compelled? // It had begun well enough. … She will remember the shine of hot water in his [Yukio's] teacup, a perfect circle of shine, one of those entirely incidental images that in retrospect returns as a small certain thing. // So, what did they speak of?" (*GB* 198). That the novel is a rendition of Cass's memory in the third person does not just implicitly confirm that she may indeed have ended up writing during, or at least about, her stay in Berlin, it also makes it possible to read the novel as a whole as a sort of 'speak-memory,' as Cass's way of coming to terms with what she experienced in Berlin. Moreover, opening with another metanarrative comment, the novel's final chapter—set in the aftermath of the two deaths, on what is called "the final day" (*GB* 255)—confirms again the intricate link between the novel's portrayal of the city and the protagonist's state of mind when grey and dark Berlin appears radically transformed in the "snowlight" (*GB* 255):

> How did it seem to her, the next, the final day? Cass will remember that when she woke, there was illumination again: daylight was snowlight. She had slept late, and overnight the snow had wondrously returned. It pleased her to see anew the draped quality of the air, the muslin white descending, the animation, the plenitude. The symbol suggested itself—that there might be a white-washing now, and a more complete covering over. Snow is consolation, she thought; snow is padding and cladding, this lush erasure of signs. She was surprised at how rested and serene she felt. (*GB* 255)[17]

In both Jones's and Tsiolkas's narrative, the city functions as a catalyst. However, while in *Dead Europe* the journey through Berlin triggers Isaac's transformation or, deterioration, from human to vampire, in *A Guide to Berlin*, by contrast, Cass's (longer) stay in Berlin initiates a healing process and enables her to come to terms with the personal trauma of her brother's death as well as with the tragic events that led to the dissolution of her speak-memory group in Berlin. Consequently, in Jones's novel, Berlin becomes a utopian place as it facilitates a new transnationalism in the albeit temporary shape of the international community of Nabokov devotees.

Conclusion: European Modernities in Contemporary Australian Novels

All three novels position themselves towards a range of European modernities, which they predominantly locate in urban environments, and thereby testify to the role of European

[16] In her review of the novel, Crispin comments on the stereotypical nature of the other members' stories: "each person has managed to become the victim of their nation or city's largest calamity. The Jewish American is the son of Auschwitz survivors; the Japanese man is *hikikomori*, socially reclusive, because of the Tokyo subway sarin gas attacks; the father of the man from Bologna was killed in the 1980 train station bombing" (Crispin).

[17] See also the symbolism of Jones's use of snow in her earlier trauma narrative *Sorry* (2007).

modernity as a point of reference in the Australian literary imaginary. All three narratives feature protagonists who refer to England or Europe as an 'imaginary homeland' and whose homing desire is fuelled through the reading of literature—as Cass puts it when it is her turn to address the 'speak-memory' group: "I am the black sheep of the family, I am the one who left [the provincial certainty of existence in Australia's North-West]. I am the one who was captured and taken away by words" (*GB* 161). Interestingly, two of the three protagonists travel to Europe from Australia with 'European business' to attend to. Jack Maggs returns to London from his involuntary transportation to Australia, while Isaac Raftis travels to his parents' country of origin at the invitation of the Greek Ministry of Culture in order to participate in a photography exhibition featuring artists from the Greek diaspora. Only Cass comes to Europe as a tourist (on a writing retreat). By writing back to the colonial centre (Carey) and reversing Eurocentric devaluations of Australia as a peripheral space (Tsiolkas), both writers engage with postcolonial discourses on nation, belonging and identity. Only Jones, by contrast, imagines Europe, or rather Berlin, as a truly alternative space beyond the postcolonial, i.e. as a space that enables the emergence of a transnational community and allows individual crises to heal.

In all three novels, the engagement with Europe coincides with a telling historical silence concerning the settler nation's Aboriginal pre-colonial and colonial past upon which the conservative invention of Australia and of Australianness is ultimately founded—in other words, a silence both reminiscent and exemplary of the "cult of forgetfulness practised on a national scale" (Stanner 189), which historian W.E.H. Stanner, in his seminal 1968 Boyer Lectures, called "the great Australian silence" (182-192). Not only does this silence become striking in the case of *A Guide Berlin* where the prominence of (individual) trauma could have prompted an engagement with collective trauma in a specifically Australian sense—as it did in Jones's trauma novel *Sorry* (2007); it is equally remarkable in the case of Carey's and Tsiolkas's gothic-inspired novels and their depiction of Europe as a haunted and haunting space. As numerous critical works that have engaged with the postcolonial Gothic in general and in the Australian context in particular (see, for example, Sugars and Turcotte vii-ix; Turcotte 17-20; Renes 76-79) have shown, one of the characteristics of the Gothic is its questioning of, and resistance to, enlightenment humanism and its "tyranny of reason" (Kilgour 3), which sets up, and relies on, clear-cut binary oppositions between rationality and its other (the irrational, wild, savage, non-civilized/primitive/barbarian). The pairing of the postcolonial and the Gothic in an Australian context aptly figures in the post-Mabo condition of "uncanny Australia" (23-42), explored by Ken Gelder and Jane M. Jacobs as a result of Aboriginal claims for sacredness, which made what once seemed familiar (from a settler perspective, or on the basis of the colonial idea of *terra nullius*) disconcertingly unfamiliar. If, as Martin Renes claims, the spectres and ghosts that inhabit contemporary Australian imaginative fiction "inscribe themselves into a novelistic trend that responds to the growing awareness of Indigeneity as Australianness" (77) and convey the Australian national project as inherently haunted, Carey's and Tsiolkas's attempts to pit the European metropolis—decrepit and haunted by ghosts—against a young and innocent Australia may be perceived to be equally haunted by the evocative silences of their efforts to rehabilitate the postcolonial settler nation. Ultimately, it is up to the reader to decide whether the novels and their engagements with Europe run counter to, or rather embody, the idea of "uncanny Australia" (Gelder and Jacobs).

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