

*Queering and querying the Australian suburbs:  
Reimagining (sub)urban identities*

Nicholas Manganas  
University of Technology, Sydney  
[Nicholas.Manganas@uts.edu.au](mailto:Nicholas.Manganas@uts.edu.au)

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**Abstract:** This article takes an autobiographical approach to explore the changes that have occurred in Australian suburbia over the past twenty years. It considers two key queer texts—Christos Tsiolkas’s *Loaded* (1995) and Peter Polites’s *Down the Hume* (2017)—and the manner in which the protagonists of these novels express their class and sexuality in their respective suburbanscapes. Published more than twenty years apart, I argue that the process of queering Australian suburbia that can be read in both novels opens up a space to reimagine how class, ethnic and sexual mobility is negotiated in contemporary Australia.

**Keywords:** queer; suburbia; sexual identity.

## Introduction

I had that Western Sydney patois that divided us two like the M5.  
(Polites 2017, 89)

Australian cities are divided by bridges, rivers, harbours, arterial roads, *motorways*. M1, M2, M4, M7, whatever their coded name, they snake around large metropolitan centres, designed to get the locals from A to B efficiently. They are, in essence, a public good that is supposed to connect us, unite the suburban fringes with the inner city suburbs, and loop us as close as possible to the city centre. Sitting in the inevitable halted traffic somewhere along Sydney’s M4 amid an unrecognisable section of the city’s urban sprawl, I wonder if their real purpose is to divide us.

Growing up in Sydney's western suburbs, the skyscrapers of our harbour city seemed a million miles away. My references were suburban streets, local shopping centres, football ovals and bowling alleys. Churches, civic centres and train tracks. Distance, like time, is vast when one is a child. How my eyes lit up when I saw those tall buildings on the horizon during fleeting moments in my childhood. When I became an adult, it did not take long for me to escape what I considered a suburban hell, to shed the suburban skin that I had become ashamed of. Soon I was living in Sydney's urban centre. Not content with my escape from the suburbs and subsequent resettlement in the inner city of Sydney, I, like many Australians, packed my bags and headed to the dark continent. Europe. There is something about Australians when they step outside of their comfort zones and come face to face with the weight of history; a sort of shame about how slight and quaint Australia really is. But there is much to be said in revelling in the small stuff. After ten years living in Europe, I returned to Australia and I now find myself once again living in Sydney's western suburbs.

In her book *Relocations* (2011), Karen Tongson suggests "one's arrival in or return to the suburbs is more often than not thought to herald the end of creativity" (xii). The perception of the suburbs as an "aesthetic vacuum" was especially true throughout the twentieth century, but according to Tongson, it can be traced back to the eighteenth century in England and the United States (9). The word itself—suburbia—can be traced back to Ancient Rome. As Robert Bruegmann explains, "suburbium" literally referred to what was "outside the city walls" (2005, 23). Australian cities are almost all suburban and I wonder if such invisible walls exist and where they might be located in the spatial configuration of our cities. As the city sprawl continues, it is difficult to focus on these lines as the sprawl becomes one big blur of concrete and power lines.

As a queer child growing up in Sydney's western suburbs in the 1980s and early 1990s in a Greek-Australian immigrant family, I had very little exposure to anything that could be considered queer or homosexual. In a key queer text *Tendencies* (1994), however, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick points out how the ability of many queer people in childhood

to attach intently to a few cultural objects of high or popular culture or both, objects whose meaning seemed mysterious, excessive, or oblique in relation to the codes most readily available to us, became a prime resource for survival. We needed for there to be sites where the meanings didn't line up tidily with each other, and we learned to invest those sites with fascination and love. (3)

As I look back on my own story and consider Kosofsky Sedgwick's words, I recognise that I, too, invested certain texts with queer meaning to survive, even if I was unsure about what it all meant. Glimpses of queer imagery in European films that I caught late at night on SBS gave me the few titillating images I obsessed over in my head. The dark brooding atmosphere of those films contrasted sharply with the scorching sun I arose to.

In 2017, a queer child discovering their sexuality in Australian suburbia has many possibilities open to them, from internet porn and social networking sites, to increasingly more rounded representations of queer characters in film and television. Australian novelists have also sought to explore that queer terrain in the suburbs. Two Greek-

Australians, Christos Tsiolkas and Peter Polites, have given voice to the queer Greek man living on the suburban fringe, reflecting the complexity of suburbia and how it can intersect with a radical queerness.

Christos Tsiolkas is a Melbourne based writer of Greek descent whose acclaimed novels do not shy away from controversy. His debut novel *Loaded* (1995) follows the story of Ari, a nineteen-year-old second-generation Greek living in suburban Melbourne. As a young queer man, he traverses the city in a twenty-four-hour period negotiating his way through encounters with his family, lovers, strangers and friends. The novel oozes a gritty, nihilistic realism. Peter Polites, a western Sydney writer, is the associate director of western Sydney's Sweatshop collective, which, according to Veronica Sullivan (2017), is "a group of writers from migrant and marginalised backgrounds who are challenging and subverting the narratives that long dominated mainstream Australian literature—white, middle-class, colonial." His debut novel, *Down the Hume* (2017), is even bleaker than Tsiolkas's *Loaded*. It follows the story of Bux, another young Greek-Australian man, and his journey through addiction and destructive relationships in a sort of noir narrative of despair and identity struggle.

In Tsiolkas's *Loaded* and Polites's *Down the Hume*, the relationship between cultural practice and suburban life is intertwined with questions of ethnicity, history, class, gender and sexuality. Yet, there is a key difference in these works. In *Loaded* Australian suburbia is a nihilistic 'season in hell' that its protagonist Ari seeks to escape from through the rituals of sex and drugs. Bux in *Down the Hume*, however, is living in a 'reimagined' queer suburbia. Written twenty years after *Loaded*, the nexus between queerness and suburbia has shifted from the abject to the unassuming. Bux's sexuality revels in the suburban experience and far from needing to escape it, Bux is attempting to tame it, to make suburbia adapt to him and his own internal exigencies. It is this twenty-year journey that I explore in this article and suggest that the narrative of queer suburbia in these novels reflects a particular evolution of queer emancipation in contemporary Australian society that leads up to the problematic same-sex marriage postal plebiscite in November 2017.

### **Escaping suburbia: Tsiolkas's *Loaded***

There are myriad approaches to reading suburbia in contemporary Australian literature. Joan Kirkby, for one, highlights the class anxiety apparent in novels such as Tsiolkas's *Loaded* where, she argues, the attack on suburbia is a "slippage" displacing "an attack on industrialisation" (1998, 1). It is a fair question to consider what the suburbs would be if it were not for "the economic conditions that created and maintain them" (1). Kirkby thus considers *Loaded* as a powerful critique of modern industrial capitalism because Ari "has more or less decided to opt out of the conventional world of work and suburb for the warm symbiotic world of casual sex, music and drugs" (11). Mandy Treagus (2013) similarly highlights the hyperreality of *Loaded* and how Melbourne is constantly mapped in terms of class. In fact, *Loaded* is divided into four sections—East, North, South, West—reflecting and commenting on the hierarchies of class and how it intersects with ethnicity and sexuality in contemporary Melbourne society (Hunn 2000, 114).

When thinking about the Australian suburbs we need to ask “what difference social class makes to queer subjectivity and representation, and what difference queerness makes to class hierarchy and value?” (Henderson 2013, 1). What might be the value of reading queer suburbia and class narrative in Tsiolkas’s and Polites’s novels? Their writing is pervaded by a sense of class pathology and gritty realism, shame and excess. You could argue that even that sense of excessiveness nicely fits in with queer imaginaries. As Lisa Henderson puts it:

Even our stereotypical strengths mark us as excessive: too stylish, too expressive, too aggressive, politically uncivil, too shameless or shamed, too vulnerable to mental anguish born of bodily condemnation, too needful of recognition, too funny, and, often, just too angry. It’s a lot of excess to manage on one’s way back to the fold. (2013, 35)

Part of that excess is coupled with illicit drug use. Anna Dunkley (2011) examines how drug use is used in *Loaded* as a conduit to connect pleasure and space with an “escape” from suburbia. In considering “affective spaces,” she argues that Ari seeks sexual freedom in the “liberty of liminal spaces in the city” in order to escape the confining pressures of his home life (8). Recreational drug use intensifies the route of that escape and the performance of his sexuality is both entwined with his drug use and with the spaces that drugs inevitably inhabit (12).

Writing about suburban communities in the U.S.A., Lynn Spigel in *Welcome to the Dream House* (2001, 33) suggests that the suburbs are designed to reproduce nuclear family life, excluding others such as gays and lesbians, single people, people of colour, etc. who were “relegated back to the cities.” Although Australian cities have never had such a stark city/suburban divide as can be found in many American cities, there was for a long time a similar phenomenon in cities such as Sydney and Melbourne. The inner city suburbs were mainly occupied by ethnic communities such as Greeks and Italians and within the confines of the inner city a small, self-contained gay mecca sprang up. Karen Tongson in her study on queer suburban imaginaries in the U.S.A. suggests: “queer subjects [...] are—for cultural, political, and stylistic reasons—compelled to leave ostensibly homogenous suburban spaces to find more active (and implicitly activist) lifestyles in the urban ‘gay meccas’ of the national imaginary” (2011, 3). In Australia, the inner cities of Melbourne and Sydney represent these “gay meccas,” and I was one of these young gay men who was dying to escape Australian suburbia and flee to them. As Joan Kirkby points out, it is common for commentators on suburbia to remark how suburbia is not fully urban, neither country nor city: “neither at the centre, nor with a centre; neither one thing nor another; it was hybrid, potentially abject” (1998, 2). In *Loaded* and *Down the Hume*, Ari and Bux live in such an in-between zone. They are not quite in an urban gay mecca but not necessarily confined to a suburban space and imaginary. We follow them across the cityscape, wandering in and out of the suburbs, and with that mobility we see them express their sexuality in quite distinct ways.

Tsiolkas’s *Loaded* narrates a particular historical moment, a particular ‘slice of life’ of a nineteen-year-old same-sex attracted young man in suburban Melbourne in the early 1990s. Queer culture then was at a significant historical juncture. Ari, like myself, had few queer role models in his ethnic (sub)urban environment. It was still a few years before international celebrities such as Ellen Degeneres and George Michael would

(unceremoniously) come out. The 1990s was the era of increasing queer visibility on the small and silver screen, yet most of that visibility did not reach mass audiences until the late 1990s in shows such as *Queer as Folk* (1998). Growing visibility on television, however, does not always translate into social tolerance (Dow 2001). Historically, queer culture had always been situated in the shadows and that darkness had a dangerous allure for many queer men. On the margins of respectability, to be *queer* meant subverting mainstream sexuality, and the 80s and 90s were the decades where that dangerous allure was still visible in many urban centres. In her critique of current queer culture, Cynthia Belmont (2017) lashes out at the sanitisation of queer culture in contemporary society: “I came up in the ’80s and ’90s, when queer culture was hot because it was outsider culture, and I like it that way.” Despite queer culture being heavily dominated by white gay men, it had, she argues, glamour. Although these decades were “serious and terrible and terrifying”—it was, after all, the era of ACT UP and Silence = Death—she argues that it was also “a time of joy, pleasure and celebration—a frisky era of Pride symbols, drag balls, Dykes on Bikes, public sex.” Ecstasy was linked to the politics of marginalisation and forms of resistance.

Ari’s sexual misadventures fit within this historical sketch. Queer culture was definitely coming of age during this period but it had still not decidedly been incorporated into the mainstream capitalist machine. For Ari, growing up in the suburbs meant that queer culture was still virtually invisible to him but he could traverse the city and perform his sexuality in the burgeoning gay mecca of inner-city Melbourne. The blurb on the back cover of *Loaded* (Tsiolkas 1995) reads: “Ari is nineteen, Greek, gay, unemployed, looking for something—anything—to take him away from his aimless existence in suburban Melbourne.” The novel is filled with excerpts that directly deal with Ari’s need to escape his suburban nightmare. As a second-generation Greek, Ari’s experience of suburbia in Melbourne is riddled with his sense that he is on the lower spectrum of the hierarchy. His family are working-class and they encompass many of the values that they brought with them from the peasant villages of rural Greece. But his angst is not simply directed at the values of his own family, but against all Australian families and the suburban values that they espouse:

No one, of course, is on the streets. And every street here looks like every other street, every stranger you meet walking along looks like the same stranger you passed blocks ago. The blocks are huge. Big brick buildings, one after another. This could be Balwyn, could be Burwood, could be Vermont. Could be Mitcham. Maybe if you grew up around here all the spaces might mean something to you. East, west, south, north, the city of Melbourne blurs into itself. Concrete on concrete, brick veneer on brick veneer, weatherboard on weatherboard. Walking through the suburbs I feel like I’m in the ugliest place on the planet. (37-38)

If the sameness of suburbia creates Ari’s experience of his season in hell, then it is the intersection of class that makes that hell unbearable:

The whitest part of my city, where you’ll see the authentic white Australian is in the eastern suburbs. A backdrop of Seven Elevens, shopping malls, gigantic parking lots. I was picked up by a guy once, he lived in this shit-hole suburb somewhere, Burwood, or Balwyn or Bentleigh or Boronia, and I wake up in this

strange man's bed, got up and made myself a coffee, went into the front yard, looked down the street and thought oh-my-fucking-god-is-this-America? I didn't feel sane again until I reached the corrosive stench of the city. Lead and carbon dioxide in my lungs to make me forget the Disneyland I had woken up to. East are the brick-veneered fortresses of the wogs with money. On the edge, however, bordering the true Anglo affluence, never a part of it ... (41)

In the East, in the new world of suburbia there is no dialogue, no conversation, no places to go out, for there is no need, there is television. (43)

*Loaded* was published in 1995, well before the advent of marriage equality debates in Australia and firmly at the tail end of the Keating era (Treagus 2013, 3). As Robert Reynolds argues, the official story under the Keating labour governments "was built around the idea of a multicultural, cosmopolitan and tolerant society embracing and invigorated by change" (1999, 58-59). That official story led to a degree of recognition of sexual identity and how it related to national identity (Hunn 2000, 113). But in Ari's experience of suburban Melbourne that official story had not filtered down. It is not surprising, then, that Ari links suburbia with heteronormativity and his wholesale rejection of the Australian suburban dream is, on the one hand, a rejection of where his class is situated: "There is no way out of this boring life unless you have lots of money. [...] Hard work bores me. I ain't no worker" (Tsiolkas 1995, 148-149). On the other, it is a rejection of a society that places his queerness at odds with the working-class values that his friends and family freely adopt. He is drifting apart from his best friend, Joe, because Joe is working nine to five and wants to get married—"Once his parents and her parents offer a house or at least a hefty deposit the deal will be clinched" (10).

Ari, in freely moving between the suburbs and the inner city, is utilising coded cultural markers and signifiers as a strategy for marking one's own place in the suburbs. He is managing a "marked" identity attribute like "queerness" in a culturally "unmarked" identity space like the suburbs (Brekhus 2003, 5). Ari, in freely moving between the suburbs and the inner city, is able to play out a dramatic part-time "satellite self" (6). Ari, like many who live in the suburbs, is an "identity commuter": he lives in a heterosexual space and commutes to a gay space to perform his queer self (50). As Ari tells the reader, "My silence and my secrets allow me to move freely around the landscape of my city" (133). Ari is not ashamed of his same-sex desire, rather there is no space in the suburbs where he can freely express it. His closet is thus one of complex dimensions (Hunn 2000, 116). Mandy Treagus suggests that Tsiolkas is firmly providing Ari a "queer identity" in the sense that the category "queer" resists essentialism and unsettles the categories of homosexuality and heterosexuality (2013, 2). In an oft-repeated quote, Ari says: "I'm not Australian, I'm not Greek, I'm not anything" (Tsiolkas 1995, 115); thus he is "queerly" resistant to "all the subject positions available to him" (Pavlidis 2013, 106). In short, *Loaded* conveys a sense of "multidimensional alienation" (Arroyo 2000, 43). The novel is destabilising because it is not simply about a young Greek man insecure in his sexuality but instead about an "unmanageable queerness" that makes all identificatory narratives problematic (Papanikolaou 2008, 191).

## Suburban accommodation

In *Down the Hume*, Polites has created an altogether different sort of suburban universe. His novel explores the Greek-Australian queer suburban experience more than twenty years after Tsiolkas's *Loaded* and this time the drama has shifted from Melbourne to Sydney. Although both novels revel in the dysfunction of their characters and the anti-hero traits of their protagonists, Polites has reimagined the wasteland of Australian suburbia. On the surface, Bux is similar to Ari in his criticism of the oppressing sameness of Australian suburbia: "I shouldn't be held ransom to sienna roofs, green wheelie bins. This place, it's purgatory, it's shit" (2017, 3). Bux works in a nursing home where the constant questions wear him out: "straight-acting fatigue" (19). And like Ari, he is self-reflective of his position as a young Greek queer in Sydney's western suburbs:

Never said to her that she reminded me of the kind of life I couldn't have. Being some wog fag way out west. Semi drug-addled. Limited money. Housing insecurity. Never having a wedding that my parents would dance at. Never having my own child that looked like the sum total of me and the boyf. (29)

Bux is also just as aware of the class differences in which he circulates. He narrates about his old job working at a western suburbs bowling club:

We had homos come in sometimes. Around Christmas and New Year's, the poofs who came good came home. They wore thin blue polos tucked into tight beige chino shorts with braided patent belts so shiny you'd think the leather was sweating. Their families dared them to drink VB. They came to the bar heroically. (32)

When Bux begins a flirtation with a young doctor who also works at the nursing home, the class differences are more visceral:

The different ways we spoke came and sat next to us on the plastic chairs. Our body shapes we inherited and fought for laid out on the table. Our money, the places we came from, ideas we picked up were all around us. In that shitty room. On display via our bodies. The accents when we said stuff. And the fact that I smelled like a deodorant that comes in a man can and he smelled like something that started with the words Eau de. (90)

Yet, for all his troubles, Bux is living, more or less, as an openly gay man in Sydney's western suburbs, out to his troubled mother. Whereas Ari in *Loaded* has a troubled identity that negates any self-identification with his ethnicity or sexuality, Bux is a troubled young man with an untroubled identity. His relationship with Nice Arms Pete mirrors his parents' destructive relationship. And like his mother, Bux is addicted to painkillers. Yet, the domestic abuse he suffers in this relationship is downplayed, just one more aspect of the complexity of his character. The narrative of *Down the Hume* makes clear that Bux is firmly integrated into the western Sydney suburbanscape. Unlike Ari, who seeks to escape suburbia, Bux is at home on the streets that the novel pays homage to: Burwood Road, Haldon Street, Auburn Road, Brunner Road. Bux is comfortable expressing his sexuality in the suburbs when he cruises the Middle Eastern young men

on Haldon Street, Lakemba, or when his mother fends off a female admirer of Bux at Canterbury Leagues Club by exclaiming that her son is gay and to leave him alone. Bux is also painfully aware how eastern suburbs men fetishise the young ethnic men from the western suburbs who wear tracksuits that cover their hard muscles. Bux is living the suburban dream. Only in his case it is a suburban dystopia.

There is a significant difference between Ari in *Loaded* and Bux in *Down the Hume* and that is that despite Tsiolkas's apparent motivation to efface Ari's identity, to *queer* his experience, to destabilise the concept of identity altogether, there is no escaping the fact that Ari is in effect *representing* that rejection of identity. In denying him an identity ("I'm not Australian, I'm not Greek, I'm not anything") he is paradoxically given an identity. It might be a troubled identity, but he is a representation of a particular historical moment when there was *so much* overloaded meaning (displaced diaspora, desire and masculinity) that he cannot effectively escape it, despite disavowing it. With Bux, on the other hand, we read him as *being*, as opposed to *representing* (Uhlich 2015). Although his existence is even more grungy and gritty than Ari's, there is a sort of 'artful artlessness' in Polites's description of his narrative journey, his existence merely commonplace and anthropological; in short, suburban. Tsiolkas's *Loaded* has spurred an eclectic array of academic literature on how Ari subverts fixed ethnic and sexual identities and even challenges Benedict Anderson's conception of "imagined communities" (Pavlidis 2013). *Down the Hume* does not lend itself so easily to think pieces on queer representation because it revels in its matter-of-factness; it constructs a universe where queerness is banal.

Much has changed in contemporary Australian society in the period between the publication of these two novels, and these changes are also readily apparent in Australia's suburbs. As recently as 2004, only 38% of Australians supported same-sex marriage. In the ill-conceived same-sex marriage postal plebiscite, 61.6% of Australians voted in favour of same-sex marriage (Karp 2017). Cynthia Belmont's (2017) concern that queer culture has lost its edge, points to the anxiety many queers like herself have about the changes that are currently occurring in many western societies such as Australia as queer culture increasingly becomes incorporated into the late capitalist machine. Gay bars, such as Sydney's iconic Midnight Shift, are increasingly closing down (Jones 2017), sex-on-premises venues and gay cruising areas have now made way for smart phone apps, and gay, lesbian and transgender visibility on television has increasingly become unexceptional. With these steady changes in such a small time span, inevitably, the "gay meccas" have also begun to dissipate. It is now not so extraordinary to see same-sex couples leading open and ordinary lives in the suburbs. Polites, despite his 'artful artlessness,' has perhaps unintentionally reimagined what suburbia might mean in contemporary Australian society.

## **Conclusion: Queer reimagining**

Tsiolkas's *Loaded* reminds us of a historical suburban moment when class and queer shame came together to stifle a young generation of queer youth. *Down the Hume*, on the other hand, begins a project of reimagining the Australian suburbs. Such a reimagining,



Polites challenges us, should include a queer reimagining of them. A reimagining is a project of recognition, which as Lisa Henderson explains, asks:

[...] whether one can calm class and queer shame by socializing it, not by denying or dispelling it or by displacing it with a shaky or assertive pride, but by imagining and politicizing a communal form rooted in the vulnerabilities, privileges, and relations of economic, cultural, and sexual hierarchy. (2013, 100)

It is such a project of recognition that these novels bear witness to. In *Loaded* and *Down the Hume*, we can see Henderson's project of recognition take shape: the vulnerabilities, privileges, and relations of economic, cultural and sexual hierarchy. *Loaded* is essentially a coming-of-age story that never occurs. Ari needs to escape from suburbia but there is nowhere for him to escape to. He is trapped in a moment in time where his sexuality is a challenge to his family, where his family suffocates him but he does not really have anything to hold on to. Returning to Kosofsky Sedgwick, Ari still needs for there to be sites where "the meanings don't line up tidily with each other and to invest those sites with fascination and love" (1994, 3). Bux, on the other hand, is living on the cusp of a new queer suburbia. He has reconfigured the suburban space, carved a space for himself to live his life openly. There are no untidy meanings for him. He has tried to adopt the new gay dream of finding a muscly stud and settling in a suburban home. Yet, the suburbs, as an intermediary space between the rural and the urban, are an ephemeral dream. Just like the Sydney housing bubble, Bux's dream bursts as he negotiates the physicality of love, lust and desire on the arterial roads that criss-cross the Hume Highway.

A reimagining of queer suburbia is more necessary than ever in light of the recent postal plebiscite on same-sex marriage. Only 17 electorates voted against supporting same-sex marriage and 12 of those electorates were located in Sydney's western suburbs, including the suburbs that Bux in *Down the Hume* navigates (Overington 2017). Although we can now begin talking about how queer visibility is increasingly becoming banal, the sorts of suburbs that Ari and Bux come from are still populated with ethnic and religious minorities who, for whatever reason, cannot bring themselves to vote in favour of same-sex marriage. The ensuing debate on why western Sydney was lagging behind the rest of the country will certainly prove fraught with tension in the coming years. Andrew Jakubowicz, professor of sociology at the University of Technology, Sydney, has already commented:

These communities are socially conservative and very family focused. Some of them are religious and, let's face it, the religious leaders for the Russians, the Greeks, the Jews, the Muslims, they were fierce on this from the pulpits [...] This was a day for asserting their authority when it's been gradually eroding. (Cited in Overington 2017)

Andy Marks, assistant vice-chancellor at Western Sydney University, however, was more circumspect, highlighting socioeconomic factors and arguing that race and religion were just background noise:

In western Sydney, you have hundreds of thousands of people all dealing with the same issues. Their manufacturing jobs are disappearing. You have

people stuck in traffic, paying huge tolls, or jammed like sardines into train carriages. You have wage stagnation, and crowded schools and soaring electricity prices. You have childcare fees. Then the political class comes along and says, 'Excuse us, what do you think about this issue, gay marriage?' And western Sydney says: 'Are you kidding me? With all the challenges we face, this is your question?' (Cited in Overington 2017)

In *Loaded* and *Down the Hume* we are witness to a generation of queer youth that straddle mainstream Australia and their local ethnic and religious communities. In Tsiolkas's and Polites's suburban universes we see that the argument is not whether the suburbs are too poor, or whether they are too ethnic or too religious. The suburbs are complex sites of conflict, accommodation, struggle, desire and alienation. I am convinced that part of the reimagining of queer suburbia is evident in Australian literature. *Loaded* and *Down the Hume* are two historical and geographical novels that document very specific moments in time in the history of queer suburbia. Despite their bleak outlook, they reflect the changing faces of Australian suburbia by queering the streets where class and ethnicity are socially reproduced. The reimagining of queer suburbia is also evident in our own experiences. Now that I am once again living in suburbia, I am forced to become self-reflective on my place in these suburbs as a queer man. I have to wrestle with the fact that my home on the whole voted against validating my queer identity. *Loaded* and *Down the Hume* may not be sites of resistance. Within them, though, there exists potential to honestly reimagine Australian suburbia in all its narrative complexity.

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**Nicholas Manganas** completed his PhD in International Studies at the University of Technology in 2010. He currently teaches at both the University of Technology, Sydney and Western Sydney University. He is the author of *Las dos Españas: Terror and Crisis in Contemporary Spain*, which was published with Sussex Academic Press in 2016. He has published extensively in various disciplinary areas including International Studies, Contemporary Spanish Studies, Cultural Studies and Queer Theory.