

## EUROPE, THE SEQUEL

### HOW EUROPE BECAME UNITED

**Inez Baranay**

I propose to give a paper with the title *How Europe Became United*. It is fiction presented as if it were factual; it is an exploration in the way by a novel writer of the questions in *Europe, The Sequel* about how to find a story for all of Europe. I present a story exploring a fantasy of a Europe united in its best ideals. And then I finish with some comments and questions about my tale.

The story tells:

A spaceship has landed in Europe.

Actually the spaceship appeared in all of Europe's countries at once, all 50 of them, but there is only one spaceship. The usual measures of time and space do not apply.

This story is told through the experience, writings and conversations of a small group of Europeans; these characters are the narrators.

The aliens have ended war and violence; they have restored peace, tolerance, common purpose and empathy where it had previously been known and created it where it had not.

How? The aliens made weapons ineffective, they made violence impossible. The only large-scale actions that are effective are those that promote peace and humanity. People are impotent to act violently or unjustly.

The aliens speak to people in whatever language they know, while also speaking to everyone in English, for there must be a common language, one that co-exists with all other languages rather than replacing them, a common language refreshed and revitalized by the other languages people use.

And now all of Europe has a common story, a common Other.

There is dissent, discussion, there are points of view on all of this, there are tweets and posts and posters, there are factions, there are futile calls to revolt...

... but one thing is unalterable: the only actions that are not thwarted are those that promote the ideals of Europe: liberty, democracy, equality, respect for minorities. Any other actions are made impotent by the aliens' magical power ("Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic" as Arthur C. Clarke once said). Once that is clear, people do discover and rediscover, articulate and share their faith in united Europe, rejoice and affirm their identity as first and foremost European and after that belonging to nations, cities, communities.

And so, eventually, after the aliens arrived, the ideals of Europe and European unity were revitalized.

After telling this tale, I will make some comments and ask some questions:

- Is this too pessimistic, that is, proposing that nothing but this alien invasion is going to make Europe feel united, feel the worth of its traditional values?
- Is this a story of hope, or one of hopelessness that says only in a far-fetched fantasy can there be a story all of Europe will identify with?
- What, then, besides this supernatural intervention would work?
- How, really, can there be "unity in diversity"?

## QUESTIONS AND SECRETS

Marie Silkeberg

*The purpose of art is to lay bare the questions hidden by the answers.*

James Baldwin

In a recent book – *The Good Story* – J.M. Coetzee writes, in dialogue with the psychologist Arabella Kurtz:

There is a sense in which great plot-shapes submit to, or evoke, the notion of justice. That is to say, the story that can be told – the story of the man who tries but fails to bury the past – tells us something about cosmic justice; whereas the story that cannot be told – the story of the man who buries the past and lives happily ever after – cannot be told because it lacks justice. But what if the true secret, the inadmissible secret, the secret about secrets, is that secrets can indeed be buried and we can indeed live happily ever after? What if this big secret is what the Oedipus-type story is trying to bury? In other words, what if our culture, perhaps even human culture in general, has created a form of narrative which is on the surface about the unburiability of secrets but under the surface seeks to bury the one secret it cannot countenance: that secrets can be buried, that the past can be obliterated, that justice does not reign?

This mini lecture will discuss these questions - how the form of narratives relates to justice and truth, and give examples of forms of narratives other than the one J.M. Coetzee describes. It will also raise the question where these forms of narratives now are and can be written.

In the country I live in - Sweden - new statistics was only recently published concerning employment, age and housing. It showed that unemployment among native Swedes are now as low as 4,7%, but among immigrants from outside Europe it is as high as 21,4%. It's an exceptional all time high situation for native Swedes, but not for the immigrants. And still the newly arrived 140,000 immigrants are not counted in these statistics. The native Swedish population is getting older, more than half of it is more than 45 years old, while 90% of the newly arrived immigrants are less than 45 years old. In Sweden, which must be one of the most progressive countries when it comes to equality, integration and anti-discrimination laws, and which now has a very expansive economy - still this picture emerge - a situation similar to Latin American "race-society".

But strangely I can't see this making any distinct imprint on the contemporary literature written in Sweden.

To follow J.M. Coetzee - what if burying secrets is not only a question of past crimes, but also of contemporary injustice and inequality - what new forms are needed to give a truer picture of the world we live in?

Black hole narrative I would propose as its name.

## BREXIT: UNDERSTANDING THE CONSEQUENCES OF STORYTELLING AND THE IMPORTANCE OF FORGING A ROADMAP FOR THE FUTURE OF EUROPE

**Mattia Garofalo**