Imagining Union: European Cultural Identity in the Pre-Federal Future Perfect[1]

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Introduction

As a generation of former statesmen from the member states of the European Union (EU) has discovered, old politicians don't die, they just go on to become Eurocrats. Thus it is that in June 2003, prior to his ultimate humiliation by the France that—for reasons largely suspected to have little to do with Eurodesires or otherwise—said '*Non'*, the former President of France, a reincarnated Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, presented a draft constitutional treaty for the European Union to a summit in Thessalonica. The subject of continued referenda and wrangling, and in the wake of the 'No' votes in the early summer of 2005 by both France and the Netherlands, perhaps never to be fully endorsed by member states, the document proposed a number of internal reforms in line with the expansion of the Union, notably concerning the election of an *ad hominem* president rather than allocating the position to the head of each of its member states in turn. At the same time, the constitution set a framework for increased cooperation, particularly in the areas of foreign policy and defence. Debate about the extent and parameters of the measures and instruments of the new greater union outlined in the draft began almost instantaneously: at first split predictably around the competing interests of larger versus smaller members, and between federalising Europhiles and secessional skeptics, but by

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2005 becoming much more complex, aligned to resurgent national interests in the wake of the war in Iraq, unmanageable socio-economic situations, and, significantly, an increasingly xenophobic positioning of the Eastern reaches of the Union (former Soviet satellites, a Turkey characterised as un-European on religious grounds).[2] Whether welcomed as a significant achievement, or—more often—critically dissected, the document was largely considered, at least by the EU and its acolytes, as a milestone in the march towards European commonality, a 'constitutive moment' (Chopin 2003),[3] in that it made explicit a concern about European cultural identity, which, hitherto, had been subordinated to economic or political concerns. In particular, the preamble to the constitution attempted to locate a shared cultural identity for all Europeans, or more accurately for all those peoples and nations contained within the supranational entity of the European Union. The unveiling of the constitution, in line with the logoisation of the national political arena, was as much about style as substance. Giscard d'Estaing's media appearances were characterised by a search for the right image to project, something suitably monumental to define the work of establishing a base document for European union. He came up with the metaphor of a building, comparing the draft document to 'an edifice, a construction, an equilibrium, a balance', one which emerged, above all, as 'a synthesis' (quoted in Griffin 2003).

Within a fortnight, the edifice of media spin, if not exactly crumbling, was at least revealing the shakiness of the foundations of cultural unity on which many of its key assumptions were built. First, following the inauguration of his Presidency of the European Union, Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi found himself embroiled in a particularly nasty Eurospat with a number of German members of the European parliament (MEPs). After having been compared to Attila the Hun, Berlusconi took issue with a German Socialist who questioned his political impartiality, to some extent an extension of issues already confronting him in Italian domestic politics. Berlusconi's response, suggesting that the Socialist MEP would be ideal for a role as a concentration

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[2] Throughout France during May 2005 in the lead up to the referendum on the constitution, right-wing parties' political posters urged the good people to vote 'No' in order to prevent Turkey joining the European Union.
[3] All quotations from French language sources have been translated into English by the author.

camp commander in a film (*Guardian Unlimited*, 2 July 2003), opened the way for a series of exchanges revealing that, in terms of culture and identity, the European family home is not quite as harmonious as Giscard d'Estaing would like us to believe. Shortly on the heels of this domestic incident, the European family was confronted with a further split in its ranks, this time seemingly imposed externally. Confronted with divergent responses from its European 'allies' to the Second Gulf War, Donald Rumsfeld elaborated further on his commander-in-chief's 'with us or against us' dictum by redefining Europe as two competing camps: European nations were either 'old' (read irrelevant, overly independent—perhaps even over-partial to cheese—simian and cowardly, as the ideological rhetoric escalated) or 'new' (read largely ex-Communist, ripe for economic and ideological 'development' and about to become imbricated in military debt to the world's remaining superpower). As Claire Demesmay writes in an article entitled 'Do the Europeans exist?', 'However schematic this division may appear, it effectively undermined those partisans of a common foreign and defence policy who wish to see the Union taking up a clear position on the international scene' (Demesmay 2003, 774)—and undermined as well, I would add, the hope of a common cultural home unproblematically emerging.

Rather than offering a detailed analysis of the contents of the draft constitution, a consideration of the extent to which the EU is hampered in its ability to posit a counter-balance to the USAn Empire, or indeed a reflection on the economic and political ramifications of the document's proposals, the aim of this article is to take a step back from the construction that is Europe, and pause to consider the Utopian assumptions about cultural identity which subtend the notion of union, as expressed within the draft constitution and more broadly across discourses about 'Europeanness' as shared destiny which underpin the European project. In order to do so, I draw on theories of national identity and belonging, at the same time interrogating the applicability of the national paradigm to that strange locality, the transnational, pan-regional, post-state, and potentially pre-federal entity which the EU is becoming. In the process, I offer readings of both the constitution, and a less official EU text, namely an online comic entitled 'Captain Euro' which was used to promote the single currency. I am particularly

interested in investigating the narrativisation of culture and identity as a process of unification or union, and in opening up a space to consider the ideological imperatives which suture this master(ful) narrative. Slavoj Žižek's theorisation of the moment of narrative possibility as one which occludes its own foundational basis is then considered as one which applies to a form of status denial inherent within the official European narrative of union, and through suggesting a queer reading of the Euroseminal myth of Zeus and Europa, I trace this Žižekian moment of 'inherent transgression' as a counter force undermining European cultural unification—paradoxically, perhaps queerly or strangely, a concomitant desire for the discrete and the separate, a drive towards distinction and difference which arises as a necessary complement to its signaled togetherness.

Constructing Post-Nation Europe

Benedict Anderson has pointed out the arbitrariness, constructedness and indeed emptiness within the artifact of the 'nation'. In *Imagined Communities* (Anderson 1991), Anderson identified the centrality of historical process of legitimization in securing not just consent, but 'deep attachments' (4) to particular nations, and, one might add, deep antipathies to their 'others'. His definition of the nation as 'an imagined political community' (6) draws on Ernest Renan's description of French villagers sharing the same memories, and equally forgetting the same moments of shame in the nation's history. What Anderson adds is a framework for understanding the work of imagining as one which produces nations as 'limited' (their borders cannot expand indefinitely), 'sovereign' (and therefore immune to competing claims of allegiance) and 'a community' ('conceived as a deep horizontal comradeship') (7). Homi Bhabha (Bhabha 1990) takes Anderson's work one step further, qualifying the imagining of the nation as a set of ongoing sequences of narration. By attending to the 'conceptual indeterminacy' of the nation, 'its wavering between vocabularies' (2) Bhabha allows for articulations of what he calls the 'nation-space':

> where meanings may be partial because they are *in media res*; and history may be half-made because it is in the process of being made; and the image of cultural authority may be ambivalent because it is caught, uncertainly, in the act of 'composing' its powerful image (3).

The effect of Bhabha's work on narrating the nation is to actualise chronologically the symbol, proposed by Tom Nairn, of the nation as Janus-headed, rhetorically looking both backwards to its heritage, and forward to the shape it is willing itself to come.

One version of this shape as it applies in the EU context is already clearly mapped. In Dominique Strauss-Kahn's EU-commissioned report, *Building a Political Europe*, delivered in April 2004 after the deliberations of 'eminent figures from political and academic spheres and civil society' (Strauss-Kahn 2004),[4] the past is succinctly characterised in terms of perceptions of European 'construction' as 'primarily a technical affair'. 'In the future', Strauss-Kahn predicts, 'the challenge faced by European construction will be primarily a political one' (28). More specifically, the threats to the building work, 'eroded from within and attacked from without' (30) are identified, albeit in temporally quite uncertain ways, as twofold. Firstly, the question of legitimacy and the democratic deficit is raised as needing to be addressed. Strauss-Kahn and the Round Table consider the draft constitution as a document which 'aims to' or 'will' (29) answer these concerns. Three paragraphs later however, the question re-emerges: 'Is it legitimate for the Union rather than the Member States to be entrusted with achieving a large part of our common objectives …?' In this form, the question certainly seems a 'legitimate' one still to ask—indeed, it is beginning to sound very much like a Cheshire Cat of the question world: when asked from the perspective of wider concerns about social and political representation, it seems quite realistic; when rephrased from within the internal discourse of the Euroworkshops which engineer the EU's future, it disappears into the realm of the already answered, leaving behind little more than a huge satisfied grin.

Strauss-Kahn's second(ary) threat emerges only in filigree in the introduction to the report—the vexed issue of shared values. Here, the firm belief of the Round Table is that such entities do exist, founded on a model of indivisible dignity for the human. Moreover, 'Europeans are proud of this model and want to set an example by promoting a just world' (30). (Pride comes, it would seem, before a further shift in the status of the

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[4] This description of the composition of the Round Table is taken from Strauss-Kahn's covering letter addressed to 'Dear Romano' (presumably Prodi), which is unpaginated.

legitimacy question, for following fast behind this assertion we discover that 'Europe as a political union is therefore legitimate'). The concern here is less temporal—shared values are taken, perhaps just a little too readily, for granted—than spatial, in that Europeans 'want to set an example by promoting a just world' and 'build a political Europe as a foundation for a world of justice'. Such an elision from Eurovalues to universal ones, although considerably more reflected, is central to Slavoj Žižek's defence of Eurocentralism (Žižek 1998; see also Žižek 2004) in terms of its interplay between the specificities of local injustices and sufferings and their systemic representation of the general. However, as Gerhard Richter points out (Richter 2002), concerns about the Europe projected by Žižek are never fully eradicated from his model. Pertinently, Richter considers the extent to which 'the meaning of the political is always already decided upon in advance', while:

> the vexed connection between the particular and the universal is implicitly and unproblematically cast not as a shifting relation but as a transparently readable one, the political here is always already a metonymic figure for those determined political investments in whose future name it was first put into circulation (54).

Richter goes on to query the necessity for such a pre-determined understanding of the political, discovering, by way of Walter Benjamin and Jacques Derrida, a more fluid politics, one which opens out onto 'a thinking of a multitude of different relations between certain geopolitical spaces and the promise or hope that might still be found in them' (63). For Strauss-Khan, and indeed standing as the very basis on which the endlessly draftable constitution is posited, such a Europe of the 'arrivant', marked by 'an ethics of difference and a culture of heterogeneity' is far from the official EU prescriptive purview. However, by attending to the temporal and spatial discrepancies which disrupt its tendency towards the pronouncement—which are perhaps intrinsic to that very tendency itself as Žižek (wearing another, less Eurofocused, hat) will help us understand—the construction of European culture identity can be considered as a work still very much in progress, and whose common builders might always (already, of course) find their spanners differentially deployed in its workings.

A Constitutive Moment

The preamble to the draft constitution, selections of which are quoted below, can be read, against its grain, as a moment of confident hesitation, looking both backwards to the perceived legacies of earlier Europes, and forward to the post-state it is aiming to will into being. Discussed first as a work of post-nation building, and then reconsidered in terms of its status as constitutive moment, the EU's foundational treaty, I argue, is underpinned by an unreflective, and ultimately quite anti-Universalist form of Eurocentrism at the core of the European project. The key premises of the preamble are introduced by subordinate clauses, situating and enacting the document's 'constitutionality' (that is, it is a *present*ation, an act of constituting in the present):

> [...] Drawing inspiration from the cultural, religious and humanist inheritance of Europe, which... has embedded within the life of society its perception of the central role of the human person and his inviolable and inalienable rights, and of respect for law […]
>
> Believing that reunited Europe intends to continue along this path of civilisation, progress and prosperity, for the good of all its inhabitants, including the weakest and most deprived [...]
>
> Convinced that, while remaining proud of their own national identities and history, the peoples of Europe are determined to transcend their ancient divisions, and, united in an ever closer fashion, to forge a common destiny, […]
>
> Reflecting the will of the citizens and States of Europe to build a common future, this Constitution establishes the European Union, on which the member states confer competencies to attain objectives they have in common.[5]

It is clear from the preamble that forms of imagining, narrating and constructing European identity on which the document is based have much in common with the processes outlined by Anderson and Bhabha. The lead in to the document, characterised by a gerundive pile-up of situating clauses, projects constitution as a work-in-progress, looking back to a past—a constructed past—('the cultural, religious and humanist inheritance', 'embedded within the life of the society') while at the same time keeping an eye on the road ahead ('intends to continue along this path', 'the will … to build').

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[5] Citations from the draft constitution, from http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/politics/2938272.stm. A full, and latest at the time of writing, version of the constitution ("Provisional consolidated version of the draft Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe") can be accessed at http://news.bbc.co.uk/nol/shared/bsp/hi/pdfs/21_07_04cg00086.en04.pdf. One change made between the 2003 and 2004 drafts affects the phrase 'united in an ever closer fashion', which becomes 'an ever closer union'. The twenty-fourth report of the United Kingdom's Select Commission on European Security 'regrets' this change. (Article 66, http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200203/cmselect/cmeuleg/63-xxiv/6307.htm).

Effectively, and according to Anderson's schema of imagining nationality as 'limited', 'sovereign' and 'communitarian', Europe's constitution can be seen as proof that it is already behaving as if it were a nation in all but name. Despite the recent admission of new member countries, the document recognises that Europe cannot keep go on expanding indefinitely by restricting its purview to 'the citizens and states of Europe'. However contested an entity the continent may be—in Bismarck's often repeated phrase it is merely a geographical expression[6]—outer Europe is nonetheless contained somewhere west of the Urals and north of the Sahara by dint of the more culturally specific definitions within the preamble. 'The central role of the human person and his inviolable and inalienable rights' has arguably been mobilised to block Turkish membership on something other than strictly geographical grounds. The universalism implied by the construct of 'inviolable and inalienable' is deployed here as a criteria for exclusion, a foreclosion from the political, based on an appeal to values which emerge as 'properly' European. At the same time, even a perfunctory analysis of the phrase 'religious inheritance', perhaps more vehemently contested than any other in the preamble, reveals forms of political limitation in line with global alignments as a fundamentalist West sets its sights on Islam.

Anderson's second form of imagining the nation, as 'sovereign', despite having been theorised in transnational terms as having application beyond the traditional nation state (Cheah 1998), is more clearly resisted for reasons of political contingency where member states, within their own contexts, attempt to juggle national sentiment against posited federal windfalls. Avoiding the 'f-word' entirely, the careful wording of the final paragraph appears to situate sovereignty at the national level, yet prior to this the concept of transcendence which emerges as the narrative resolution of 'ancient divisions' sits perfectly within a post-Freudian reading of the coming together of warring tribes for a greater good, that 'good of all its inhabitants' evoked as the righteous path. On another level, one might wonder just how ancient are events such as the Second World War, the

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[6] The quotation attributed to Otto Von Bismarck in a 'marginal comment on a letter, November 1876, from the Russian Chancellor Gorchakov' is 'Whoever speaks of Europe is wrong: it is a geographical expression.' (See Andrews, Biggs, and Seidel,. n.d.)

Balkan conflict, the split allegiance to Bush, or the spat between Berlusconi and random German MEPs.

Thirdly, for Anderson, the nation is imagined as a community. The 'common destiny' and 'common future' signaled in the draft constitution indicate the centrality of community within the European project. There have indeed been highly respectable attempts to define the common heritage of Europe as a set of core values, by Paul Valéry for example, who locates European identity within a collective experience of the influences of Christianity, Greece and Rome (Valéry 1957). It is perhaps of note that, despite viable candidates from Africa and Latin America, and real political exigencies for looking beyond Europe, the Catholic Church's 2005 choice of Vatican-based Pope was once again European. Yet, in many ways, this is also the form of Euro-imagining where the most work remains to be done. Given the social, political and linguistic diversity between the member states, not to mention within them and the multiple historical crossings of a continent shaped by trade and warfare, the concept of a shared European identity—especially one which to any real extent supercedes or supplants national identities—is something which is actually fairly difficult to envisage at all, far less imagine as part of the process of pre-federal nation building.

Realistically, the constitution is marked by a recognition that further commonality can only be found once its citizens start to feel a cultural sense of being European, as distinct from Italian, Czech, Greek, Irish or whatever. Stephen Wood, writing in the *Journal of Historical Sociology*, argues that even despite the commission's projects to celebrate and unify the multilingual diversity of the content, national sentiment still clearly predominates individuals' sense of belonging in ways which pan-European roots are far from matching (Wood 1998). Here Wood is referring to the sense that while it is possible to envisage multiple loyalties, so that while a person can be for example, from Leeds, Yorkshire, England, Britain and Europe, each of these identities still needs to be anchored in a common myth or belief system for it to come into play as the deep loyalty required to activate Anderson's sense of community. Wood contends that Europe has no such system of belief or conviction, meaning that a Danish person for example would have no cultural

imperative, no historically embedded obligation to support Greece say, in any potential conflict with, say, Turkey. In other words there is not a strong enough emotive tie to the concept of Europe for any of its citizens to add European identity on to their existing ones.[7]

Recognising the need to construct affinities across national borders, the EU's prioritisation of the Erasmus student exchange scheme encouraging academic mobility between member states serves as much a cultural imperative as an economic one, recreating in small measure the processes of linguistic and cultural homogenization which has occurred in France since the Revolution. The 2003 film, *L'Auberge Espagnole* (Klapisch 2003), with its portrayal of a French Erasmus student exchange in Barcelona, captures the Utopian imperatives of the scheme by assembling in one chaotic shared flat students from across Europe. However, while the educational and ultimately economic imperative of the exercise (he needs near-native Spanish for the job he wants to apply for) are eventually met, the processes of cultural dislocation and the sense of displacement which the student undergoes, and the strength of his bonds to France, evoke uncertainties at the heart of the European project. The microcosmic community of the apartment is characterised by strained relations around fridges, phones and philandering, its inhabitants resorting to stereotyping and mistrust, and forms of linguistic competitiveness which emerge when obliged to cross territories beyond their national or linguistic home.[8]

As Bhabha's reconceptualisation of nationality as a process of becoming indicates, belonging and identity, rather than fixed for all time, are ambivalent, in flux, and, one might add, open to appeal, there for the making. Caught in the act of nation building, the EU is deploying the rhetoric of national imagining and the terminology of the nation-

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[7] In fact, often when the idea of Europe is mobilised it can be seen to be serving the interests of other kinds of identities. One good example would be the rhetoric used by Václev Havel, the ex President of the Czech Republic, who appealed to common European values precisely as a way of trying to anchor his former Communist satellite demi-country within the European family. Havel, V. 29 June 1996, 'The Hope for Europe', *The New York Review*, 40-4.
[8] Moreover, while the film nods in the direction of the Catalan/Castilian divide in the city, the Barcelona it projects is by and large a monoculturally white European space, conveniently cleared of almost all immigrants from the South – ironically so given that the Mediterranean accord between the EU and North Africa is known as the Barcelona Process.

state, precisely because it is not (yet) one. The draft constitution, in this sense, conforms both to the small subset of truly performative speech acts (the Word which inaugurates) and to the paradox of the Utopia, bringing into being a space which is not. In the sense of an appeal, a marketing exercise, perhaps a concession to its member states, to the citizens who belong both to these states, and in some still undefined sense to the European suprastate, the eternal present evoked by the constitution's preamble can be considered to function as both a space of non-definition, the work of reflection which it enacts, and a defining moment—it seizes a particular version of Europeanness which does not (yet) exist, and works backwards from its willed existence.

What is perhaps most frightening about the purpose revealed in the marginal space of the document's preamble however, is the claim for cultural supremacy which it repeatedly makes, and against which Bhabha's focus on transversal readings of national narratives is positioned. Europe as an imagined unity is here far from neutral. Instead, this is a constitution for superlativity. Allowing the process to congeal for just a moment, we find ourselves in the territory of lofty abstract concepts such as 'Inspiration' 'Belief', 'Conviction', 'Pride' and 'Will'. Much could be said about each of these values in turn, or about their combined potential as pillars of something more akin to a new age religion. To do so, however, would be to give further credence to the official monolith of European nation-building, take its words at its word. The aim instead is to move further into the margins of its text, its marginalised texts, as a way of exploring the ambivalence of the project.

United Untied

If the Zeno's paradox of the draft constitution is tucked away adverbially in the marginal clause, 'united in an ever closer fashion', a pre-realisation of its coming together, then so too do the marginalia of the EU machine make explicit the assumptions underlying its posited narrative of cultural identity. Emerging online as one component in the familiarisation campaign accompanying the marketing of the Euro, a comic series with a serious intent provides an amazing adventure in imagining the Union. The 'Marketing and Licensing' section of the website attempt to make its aim perfectly clear: 'Millions of

people are keen to identify with what they perceive as the future: A united EUROPE'.
Employing a similar tricksiness around temporality as the constitution, the future already
actualised in 'keenness', the comic's mission seems to be to successfully eradicate any
possibility for divergence from the common vision. Captain Euro to the rescue indeed.
However, far from a redundancy, the strategy appears expressly designed to convince
readers to join the Eurobandwagon, aligning their perception with the constitutional
conviction that secures the 'ever closer fashion' of union.

The first frame of the 'Intro' section of Captain Euro shows 'the rest of the world' in
clouds, the sun shining on Europe, and—no joke—storm clouds brewing over Turkey. In
the next frame, a mysterious light emanates from Brussels. The text reads:

> As the 21st century dawns the world is changing more rapidly than ever before. The old structures
> are disappearing as new ones take their place, bringing with them uncertainty for the future. / In
> this climate of constant change the European Union, a union of prosperity and innovation has
> emerged as a global superpower. (*Captain Euro*, www.captaineuro.com, Frames 1 and 2; see also
> Allatson et al, 2002)

The metamorphosis from old to new is set up as already in place, and it is the role of the
EU to secure peace, harmony and unity. The comic, following where Captain America
left off, enlists wholeheartedly in this cause, in the time-honoured epic genre central to
nation-building enterprises, by forging a myth, one which pulls together in superhuman
(and 'ever closer') fashion the peoples from across the continent—a myth about pan-
European identity. The good captain's adventures take him from the frozen Baltic, to
sunbaked Greek islands, and giant caves in Majorca, as he discovers a mysterious force
which transforms, Krypton-like, plain Adam Andros (no commentary needed) into the
first all European superhero.

The message is of unity across the continent, as the captain and his team discover a runic
text and other clues which, they comment, 'throw […] all our ideas about European
history into doubt'. Rather than discrete national trajectories, the European heritage
which the stone tablet reveals…but at this point the message is erased as the tablet
smashes to the deck of a mysterious Viking vessel, smashing appropriately into 12 gold
stars, with the message left to be reinvented by the powers in Brussels. 'Thousands of

years of history smashed…No, it looks like it was meant to break like that'. Andros's nemesis, the evil David Viderus, better known as Dr D Vider, chuckles gleefully in the margins. The explicit message was lost.[9] All that remains, in the European symbol into which it transforms, is the trace of its function—foundational, transcendent, a moment of re-constitution, of re-vision.

When not making leftist pleas for Eurocentrism, the Slovenian cultural theorist Slavoj Žižek is interested in moments such as this. In *The Plague of Fantasies* (Žižek 1997), he illustrates how the ideological fantasy scenario is always ambiguous—much like the in-flight safety demo, in which, he finds, 'fantasy conceals [the] horror [of the Real], yet at the same time it creates what it purports to conceal, its "repressed" point of reference' (7). The expression of fantasy in ideology, he continues, follows a schema of Kantian transcendence. 'Fantasy constitutes our desire, provides its co-ordinates; that is, it literally teaches us how to desire'. Moreover, for Žižek, fantasy as narrative:

> […] emerges in order to resolve some fundamental antagonism by rearranging its terms into a temporal succession. It is thus the very form of narrative which bears witness to some repressed antagonism. The price one pays for that narrative resolution is the petitio principii of the temporal loop—the narrative silently presupposes as already given what it purports to reproduce. (Žižek 1997, 10-11)

The 'public text' on which power grounds its appeal as natural, is structured phantasmatically. 'Split from within', '[p]ower is always already its own transgression, if it is to function, it has to rely on a kind of obscene supplement' (Žižek 1997, 26-7).

At the core of the draft constitution, the imagination of unity in common destiny, is situated as such an act of transcendence, an overcoming of ancient divisions. It is a determination, rather than a *fait accompli*, in other words, a desire, a fantasy about union, necessarily incomplete, but shot through with the true horror at its heart. In the same way, in the legend of Captain Euro, at the centre of the moment of revelation of united destiny,

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[9] In fact doubly so, since the website appears to have altered since originally accessed and this episode written over with a somewhat different version of the same story. I have been unable to find any information regarding the revision, or to locate any remaining traces of the earlier version which contained the storyline and quotations in this paragraph. Various internet searches however unearth a level of underlying concern about the comic, including accusations of propaganda, racism and poor quality, across a range of blogs and other sites.

is an act of destruction, the narrative is lost, to be rewritten, its only remnants the splintered segments of a text once set in stone but now never to be known. In its place, the star-shaped fragments evoke the divided nations always again to be reunited in the work-in-progress of imagining Europe as a union. The phantasmatic foundation of European power as unity aims to suppress the horror of ancient, or not so ancient division. Yet, in line with Žižek's reading, the split is 'mirrored back into the power edifice itself, splitting it from within, so that the gesture of self-censorship is consubstantial with the exercise of power' (27).

The fantasy of pan-European harmony, then, can only be founded at the same time as it calls into being a concrete manifestation of division and destruction, precisely the formative horror it purports to avoid. What then is concealed within the draft constitution's transcendental moment of imagining 'union', the 'ever closer fashion', exactly what horrors are censored, and simultaneously constructed as supplement, by the division it evokes only to disavow?

The Myth of Europa - Queering the Union

In order to pin down the object of the EU's horrors, the aim of this section is to investigate the notion of union more closely, and in so doing unearth a further moment of constitution, that is the concealed metaphor of marriage, of coming together as man and wife. Long before the advent of 'Captain Euro', legend has it that Europa, following a dream in which she is drawn away from her mother, personified as Asia, was playing by the beach, when Zeus fell in love with her (as was his wont). In order to win her, he disguised himself as a bull, and carried her away through the seas to a cave in Crete, where he cast off his bull appearance (throwing it into the sky where it became the constellation Taurus), and made Europa his wife. 'She that had been a maid forthwith became the bride of Zeus and bore children'. This union is greeted as one of great moment—Europa is told, 'thou shalt bear famous sons and all shall become kings among mortal men' (Moschus [of Sicily] ca. 150 BCE, quoted in Hassan and Dadi 2002, 418). Zeus's abduction of Europa is, while still an act of patriarchal violence, also a natural progression away from the maternal towards the matrimonial, even a rescue from an

overwhelming relation with the mother. The joyous Nereids and dolphins which accompany the bull and Europa on their journey across the sea seem to be celebrating Europa's awakening to her sexuality, however brutally this is enforced. The abduction of Europa, in the words of the West wind who witnessed the event in Lucian's retelling of the myth (Lucian 1961), is 'a magnificent pageant', 'a most delightful spectacle, the likes of which you'll never see again'. Read in this way, the founding myth of Europe becomes a legend which inscribes a particular form of patriarchal heterosexual union, and a particular attitude to marriage, as central to the way in which the continent sees itself.

First of all, there is an act of choice, of preference, as Europa is selected by Zeus from among her companions as desirable. Moreover, the selection is characterised by celebration, a sense of pride and value in identity over other alternatives. The South Wind, which has been blowing aimlessly over parts of India, on hearing of Zeus's exploits congratulates the West Wind on his attendance at the nuptials—'How lucky you are, Zephyrus, to have seen all that! All I saw was griffins and elephants and black men' (Lucian 1961). Here is the founding moment of Orientalist thinking on which much of Europe's history has turned, depending on a fantasy of the continent as privileged, civilised compared to the barbarians outside its borders. Europa's destiny is secured, and celebrated, as a sexual union with the Gods, carried off from other parts by the appearance of a white bull, and taken to Zeus's Cretan homeland. In many ways, then, the myth of Europa stands as the cornerstone of Eurocentric thought, ultimately the establishment and preservation of racial purity as lineage, as a barrage against the fear of undifferentiation, a heterosexual male fantasy of defence against the merged maternal identity of her dream.

For, at the same time as a coming together, the foundation of a common destiny, as marriage, the union of Europa with Zeus is also a moment of differentiation. The Western paradigm of marriage as monogamous and indissoluble serves to bring the private relation into the public domain, marking it symbolically, as Foucault discovered and queer theory has elaborated, with ideological functions which normativise particular forms of heterosexual identity within specific, often national, contexts. To the extent that

a public union with one chosen Other formally occludes the possibility of other sexual relations, marriage is as much a process which differentiates, distinguishes, delineates according to the patriarchal system of heritage and inheritance, as an egalitarian merger, a coming together, or union.

Returning to the text of European union, the censored supplement which has been straining behind the official version, emerges as an occluded narrative of differentiation and privilege. The 'ever closer fashion' in which union is imagined has, as the 'inherent transgression' which it occludes, an equal and opposite instance of separation. Yet, rather than the stated obstacle of internal division, the founding myth of European cultural identity is one which locates its horror externally—in the same way as Europa's abduction saves her from the threat of undifferentiated otherness, the establishment of the EU narrates its coming into being in terms of a separation from those Others (to the East and South) which are excluded from the party. In other words, the hidden narrative of the draft constitution's preamble contains a story intended to secure Europe's position in the world as naturally pre-eminent, select, and beyond question. The EU's nation-building rhetoric, as it utopically imagines union, far from moving towards universal harmony, is engaged in a supplementary and ultimately statist construction of its limits and sovereignty as barrages against alternative models of diasporic allegiance, unofficial displacements, and local autonomies which threaten its predominance. Such an unimaginative and inappropriate vision of the federal future of Europe, as the recent referendum rejections in France and the Netherlands illustrate, fails to chime with the more diffuse desires of its citizens, and reinforces the need for more complex, consent-based models of covenant or confederation, as identified by political theorists such as Daniel Elazar (Elazar n.d.). While the concepts of conjunctions, unities, congruencies and collectivities could be imagined in forms which pave the way for real and effective social change (in the areas of labour mobility and the conditions of employment, migration and asylum, diversity and equal rights, cultural policy and education to name but a few), as argued by Etienne Balibar (Balibar October 4 1999), the model of union subtending the constitution fails to accommodate such visions, or live up to more multitudinal visions of politics such as that inherent in Richter's response to Žižek's 'leftist plea'.

It is in this light that recent contributions to the European debate from outside the framework of the European fantasy can best be understood. Dipesh Chakrabarty's call for the provincialization of Europe (Chakrabarty 2000), for example, is positioned as a bid to:

> write / over the given and privileged narratives of citizenship / other narratives of human connections that draw sustenance from dreamed-up pasts and futures where collectivities are defined neither by the rituals of citizenship nor by the nightmare of 'tradition' that 'modernity' creates (193).

Chakrabarty recognises that '[t]here are of course no (infra)structural sites where such dreams could lodge themselves', but that 'they will recur so long as the themes of citizenship and the nation-state dominate our narratives of historical transition, for these dreams are what the modern represses in order to be' (194).

By interrogating the place of cultural identity beyond the official text of European Union, the aim of this article has been that one such alternative dream-time, telling of the horror at the dark heart of constitutional identity—rather than yet another draft future perfect, unrealised in its erasure—has been given the space to recur.

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