TWELVE FICTIONS ON THE FUTURE OF EUROPE

The Tale of the Pig Slaughter

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Pau Badia

In a mountain village in Europe

in the spiritual back of beyond

when icy winter arrives

it’s time to slaughter the pig

up there in a world of their own

locals gather in the street

they’re not from Porto or Geneva

Madrid or Bucharest

they can’t make head nor tail

of European Parliament debates

to them the whole business

all sounds like hogwash

they don’t know the far right has the run of the place

Brexit’s set the cat among the pigeons

even if they knew all this

they couldn’t do a thing about it

governments

and people

out of step

like odd socks in today’s Europe

always wrong-footed, staggering

from one disaster to the next

but they can’t escape the telly

after picking the crops

and checking the chickens are safe from the fox

they spend their evenings on the sofa

watching whatever they find on the box

it’s always the same old rubbish

ranting and raving on every channel

people kicking up an almighty ruckus

they don’t get out much to look at the stars

the earth and the universe

are on first-name terms

but the majesty of the sky

passes them by

surplus to their needs

what hubris the earth the centre of the cosmos

yet

how many still think

there’s nothing but us, the only sense

and sensibility

in an absurdly vast void

they get on well this lot

one wheeler-dealer two tongue-waggers

the usual old-timers

plus the blow-ins from Barcelona

loath to return to the city on Sunday

secretly praying for a downfall of snow

that’ll leave the village smothered in white

sausages and chops grilled over coals

washed down with wine from local vines

bubbling stews with garden vegetables

a handful of beans garlic from the woods

and half a rabbit and a rasher of bacon

from a friendly farmer down the lane

a lettuce that’s never been washed

—a marvel of nature like

fish that have never felt ice—

tongues of fire burst forth from the hearth

warming nooks, crannies

and the cockles of hearts

but it never happens

the German lass Steffi

has made a place for herself here

like past generations of villagers

she’s manged to raise

poultry, tomatoes and three kids of her own

the father’s the shepherd they say

a strapping young man

maybe it’s him or maybe it’s not

Steffi gets on with her stuff

she’s taken in two German lads

boys with issues they say

some love and attention soon calms them down

the mountain air

soothes their troubles and cares

and a spot of hard work

leaves no time for screens

and dispels the screams

of past abuse

they run with the sheep through fields

and valleys

chasing and larking the day away

Agustina and Marcelino

living legends in the village

invite them over to their pool

diving

splashing

basking

in their new life

but when they can

they’re away

off to Berlin

thumbing a lift and cocking a snoot

out of control

fucking who they like

taking what they want

sleeping in the street till they tire

and then they’re back

in the village

there’s a poet with sparks

coming out of his ears

he shapes words with his hands

sowing syllables where others

plant potatoes and up sprout poems

with words in their roots

from distant dells and hidden gorges

words like

griglans

smeech

brock

his tongue on his fingertips

his eager eyes leap up from the page

from *Kill All Normies* to the treetops

from *El cor quiet* to Montmagastre

from Carner’s verse

to the fashionable fascists

who hate everything and everyone

he jots down the thoughts

whispered in his ear

by the buzzing bees

the elm becomes a cloud

of enchanted umeboshi

barking dogs tractors chainsaws

jangling cowbells squawking chickens

the next-door neighbour’s kids

they say if you listen carefully

you can hear the wind being born

an open door lets everything in

an open poem turns nothing away

yes

this isn’t prose

yes

it twists and turns

scattering syllables pairing words

all welcome

yes

this is a poem

where nonsense is also new sense

playing with tongues

curling up words

chewing the cud

you’re reading this in translation

not everything matches the original

some colours are new

some meanings are shaded

some offshoots have run wild

others were nipped in the bud

some turnings were taken by chance

swerving away from the usual path

to a new home stocked with

strange fruit and perky jams

made by crabby grannies

grafted tongues

freed and reborn

if we have to belong to a culture

let it be a sea of tongues

out with the maladies

of perfect pure lives

the poet doesn’t go to the slaughter

but others arrive the day before

early morning still dark

the cock’s too sleepy to crow

lights come on

coffeepots whistle on stoves

stirring

lazy lie-abeds

wiping sleep from their eyes

a hop, skip and a jump out into the cold

following their own frozen breath

an umbilical premonition

like Donnie Darko’s

they head for Steffi’s house

an ancient tradition

gathering in the square to kill the pig

a public event for the last 500 years

since the Reconquest

since the Jews were expelled

proving one’s Christian credentials

pigs that divide

pigs as animal borders

give us this day our daily pig

for ever and ever

and yet before

it was simply a kind of meat

with no special meaning

not a symbol

but merely a beast

and also to test

the skills and fears of the village youngsters

who baulks at cleaning the innards

who licks their lips at the bubbling pot

who covers their ears from the dying squeals

who ties up sausages with their teeth

there were no pigs in America until

Christopher Columbus brought eight

from La Gomera in 1493

they ate lizards

pineapples cassava walnuts and birds

they soon multiplied

and the flu virus they carried

killed a million and a half Indians

Steffi brandishes the knife

she knows what to do

she’s won over the village elders

now she leads the slaughter

and sets everyone to work

the struggling pig knows what’s coming

it takes six to hold it steady

the knife cuts true

out spurts blood

gushing and gurgling

into the black bucket

they sear it with the blowtorch

the smell of scorched skin

the stench of burnt animal

fills the cold air

now they skin it while

the children clean the innards

with the hosepipe in the field

inside the adults

skin, cut and separate

first head feet and spine

out with the innards

heart and liver

hung up high

next fillets, chops and tenderloin

from the shoulder and belly

then cheeks ears and snout

from the head

the bones are cut from legs and shoulders

the fat for making sausages

and lard

then

chop up the meat and mix together

“on their knees

with two hands

till it sweats from its arse”

as Mesquida said in *Llefre de tu*

salt and pepper

herbs and spices

stuff the sausages

hang them up

set the table

for a celebratory feast

after the slaughter

celebrate the slaughter

after the slaughter

no one asks

what’s left of the pig

everyone’s full

after the story

no one asks

what’s left of the world

we just live here that’s all

after the war

no one asks

what’s left of the country

we struggle to get by

after Europe

no one asks

what’s left of Europe

everyone’s dreaming distracted dreams

the answer’s always everything and nothing

everything’s used, nothing goes to waste

everything changes shape and name

you can’t making sausages

without any blood

meat will be meat

cooked in its own fat

we’ll throw a great party

to celebrate whatever

victory or fall

what’s left or what we’ve lost

maybe we’ll become vegetarians

perhaps there’ll be no more pigs slaughtered

they’ll roam freely

no longer our borders

perhaps Europe will lose its name

skinned to get through winter

maybe we’ll survive on sausages

from the slaughter

on the cured meat

of hope

learning forwards

to tip the scales

to counterbalance past sorrows

and withered cultures

when the cupboard’s empty

just crumbs of the past

when all our meat’s but a memory

when we’ve forgotten it all

when a continent is once again just

fertile land

shelter

possibility

then we’ll have another tale to tell

Diari rellegit i reescrit en primera i tercera persona
Mireia Sallarès

El mar gris
Eluned Gramich

Dos bitllets a Namíbia
Djaimilia Pereira de Almeida

Reflexions sobre el futur d’Europa des d’una avioneta laosiana
Irene Solà

La ficció europea
Cristina Morales

El sistema de signes de Sala-Babot
Borja Bagunyà

L’odi
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Dues lletres
Nina Yargekov

Poemes sobre Europa
Juana Adcock

Cap a Europa
Petar Matovič

Europa està perduda
Kate Tempest

Rondalla de la matança
Martí Sales



Martí Sales
Martí Sales és llicenciat en Literatura Comparada. Ha fet discos amb Els Surfing Sirles i ha dirigit festivals de poesia com el Festival de Poesia de Barcelona i el de la Fundació Palau. També ha traduït John Fante, Kurt Vonnegut i John Berger, entre d’altres autors, i ha escrit cinc llibres (*Huckleberry Finn*, *Dies feliços a la presó*, *Ara és el moment*, *Principi d'incertesa* i *La cremallera*).