

Alice Puritz

The Eagle and the Eunuch

The lights are out, the power is gone  
Europe lies in darkness  
Its shadowy shroud huddled to its bony frame  
In the agonizing attempt to clutch together  
The last warmth of the day

Crushed at last by the tiger and dragon  
Trampled by the camel, slashed by the sickle  
It lies there groaning  
Willing the oceans to swallow it up  
To begin afresh, with a new kind of world

But within the mask, a last light gleams  
Reflected in its eyes  
The flight of the Eagle, strong and sturdy still  
A guiding force that pushes it on  
The last sign of life in a dying continent

It didn't have that in mind did it  
When it caged the Eagle, taught her humiliation  
And clipped her wings at Potsdam and Versailles  
That she would forge ahead, overtake, promulgate  
Leave it behind to struggle and flounder

Somehow the tables have turned, the sands shifted  
It hardly knows how, it happened so quickly  
While it was busy demonstrating against capitalism  
Busy fighting against crime, there was another enemy  
Skulking in the shadows, preparing to pounce, awaiting the time

The Eagle saw with her keen beady eyes, she understood the signs  
She matched her strength with the tiger, the dragon  
She made bargains with the camel, the sickle  
For the slow decline she planned, thought ahead  
And built a future for her people, a future for her land

## Explanatory notes

The poem imagines what Germany's position could be in forty years' time in relation to the shift in world powers away from Europe and America towards the Asian economies as well as the well-positioned, oil-rich nations such as Russia and the Gulf states, at a time when the decline in fossil fuels, and in particular oil, will be at crisis point.

The poem uses the current position of Germany emerging as the powerhouse of Europe, and extrapolates to portray how it will be well placed to use its economic success and sustainable forward-thinking strategies to maintain a position on the world stage, whilst the rest of Europe has been dragged down by fuel poverty and uncontrollable debt. The Eunuch of the title refers to the powerless, emasculated Europe, juxtaposed with the strong Eagle representing Germany.

It also explores the irony behind the Wirtschaftswunder after World War II, Germany's current position of strength and its imagined position of power in the future, in light of historical events and especially given that Germany was forced to pay heavy reparations according to both the Versailles Treaty and the Potsdam Conference. However, I would like to take this opportunity to state that this poem is not condoning Fascism in any way, nor does it criticise the acts of the Allies, but simply seeks to draw a stark contrast between Germany's economic position then and its imagined position in the future.

The Germany of the future has successfully used its economic strength to co-operate with the new world powers and to maintain a comfortable lifestyle for its citizens. It has achieved this using a combination of renewable energy resources, in which Germany has already heavily invested and has continued to do so over the next few decades, and economic strength which it has used to maintain links with oil-rich countries during some of the last years of fossil-fuel availability.

Germany's relationship with Europe is somewhat ambiguous in the poem. It appears at the beginning that it is still part of Europe, using its strength to offer support and guidance. However, the poem states that the Eagle is merely 'reflected' in Europe's eyes – perhaps Germany has felt the need to break away from Europe to maintain its strength and protect its people, whilst still offering the rest of Europe all that it can. There is a lot of uncertainty about the future of the eurozone at the moment: the poem illustrates this both through content and an almost total lack of punctuation, representing a future where rules are being put to one side and things in general, including the supply of resources, are more sporadic, fluid and volatile than at present.

The poem does use strong, sometimes exaggerated imagery to get these points across. It is a pessimistic portrayal of the future in many ways (whilst hinting that Germany may avoid such a bleak future) where the fight for survival seems almost to have superseded international co-operation. It is designed to shock, and does not necessarily mean that, in forty years' time, the whole of Europe will be in turmoil apart from Germany. It is supposed to be a warning about what could happen, how quickly it could happen, and an

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illustration of Germany's real ability to face these issues and plan for them. It is simply one possible vision of the future for Germany and its position within Europe.

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