



Erasmus and the seal

I HAD JUST FINISHED TO WRITE MY NEW BOOK, THE "DE EUROPA". (1)



I WAS PRETTY SATISFIED BUT ALSO VERY TIRED.



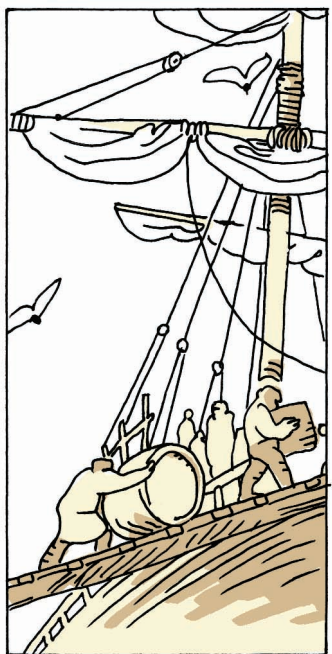
SO I Poured SOME EXCELLENT BEER INTO A MUG AND WENT TO THE HARBOUR FOR A WALK. (2)



MY THOUGHTS WERE STILL TRAVELING AROUND THE BOOK AND I WAS ENJOYING THEM WHILE BREATHING THE SEA AIR.



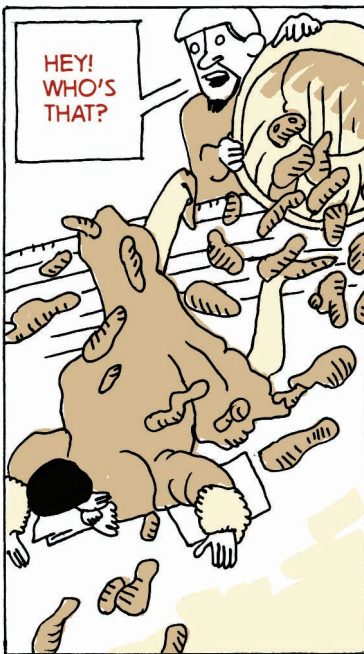
BUT THE HARBOUR IS NOT THE RIGHT PLACE TO GO FOR A STROLL, IF YOU ARE LOST IN THOUGHT.



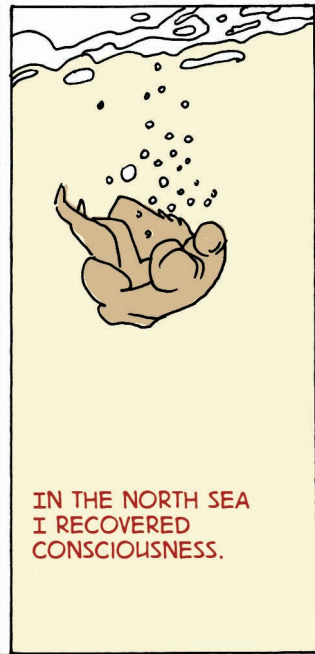
PUAH! IT STINKS! IT WENT BAD!

THROW IT INTO THE SEA.

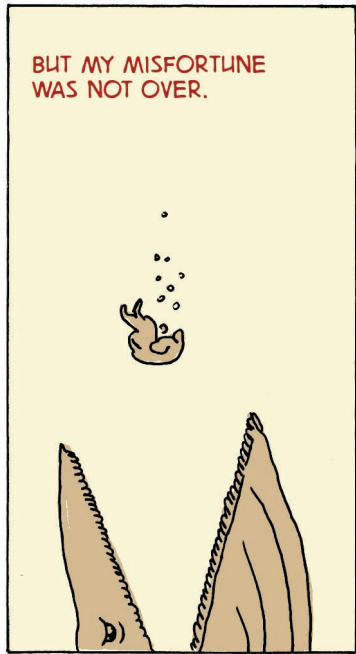
I DON'T WANT FOOD SCANDALS ON BOARD!



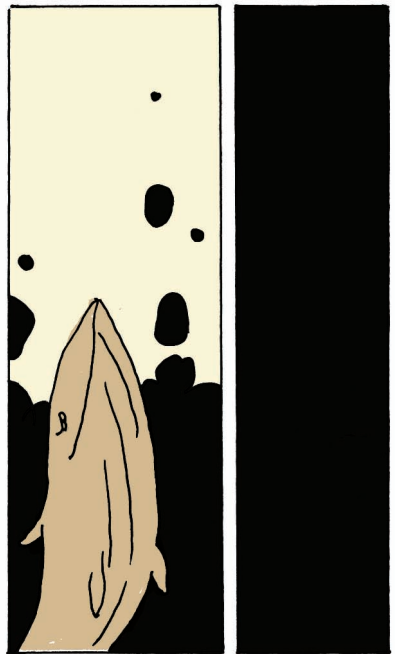
HEY! WHO'S THAT?



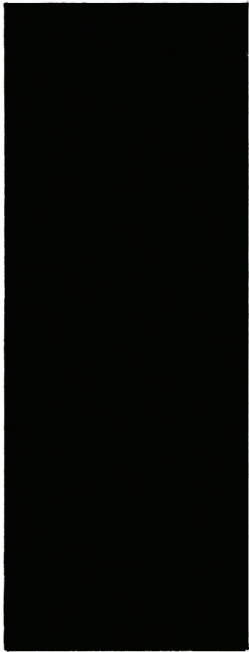
IN THE NORTH SEA I RECOVERED CONSCIOUSNESS.



BUT MY MISFORTUNE WAS NOT OVER.



1) The only traces we have of the *De Europa*, written by Erasmus in 1511 and meant to be the final chapter of the *The Praise of Folly*, have reached us thanks to the typographer Markus Tabloewen of Antwerp (1530). He claims that the other editions make a mistake excluding it, because "since it's about madness, the anecdote is in the right place."
2) According to critic R. Tobilic, the *De Europa* is probably nothing else but an allegory; the fictional travel of Erasmus has to be read as a representation of dialectic issues. Another wing of the reviewers, trusts word by word the Erasmian anecdote, included the talking seal.

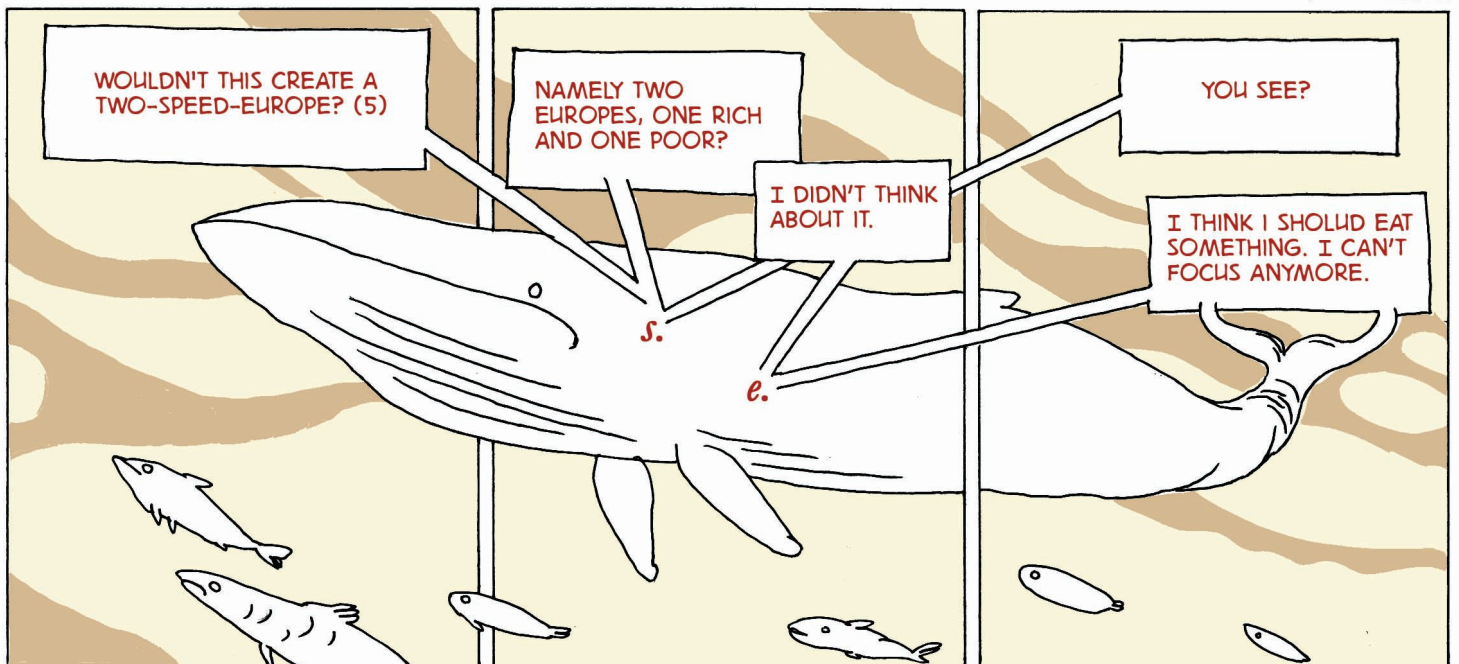
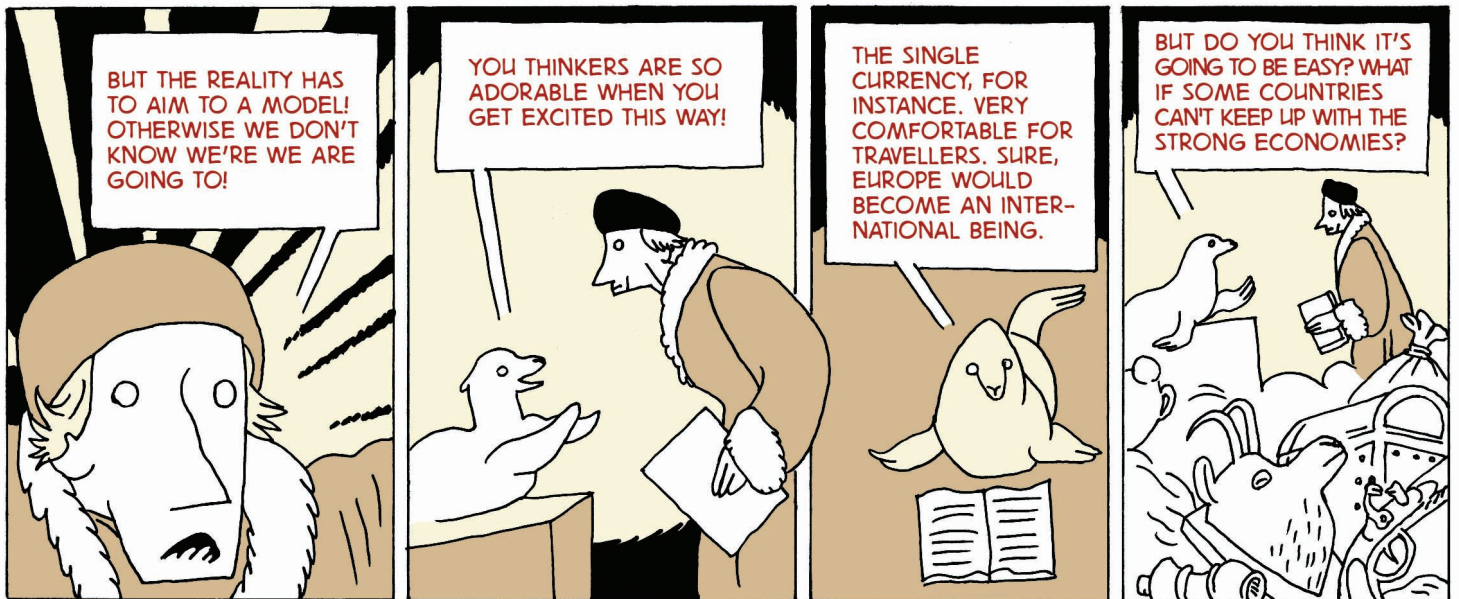


(3) The meaning of the seal has being a disputed theme for a long time. Some say it's a maieutic demon, a counterpoint of the philosophical proposition in an animal form. Other insist on the zoological concreteness of the animal, whose fussiness is well-known by the naturalists.



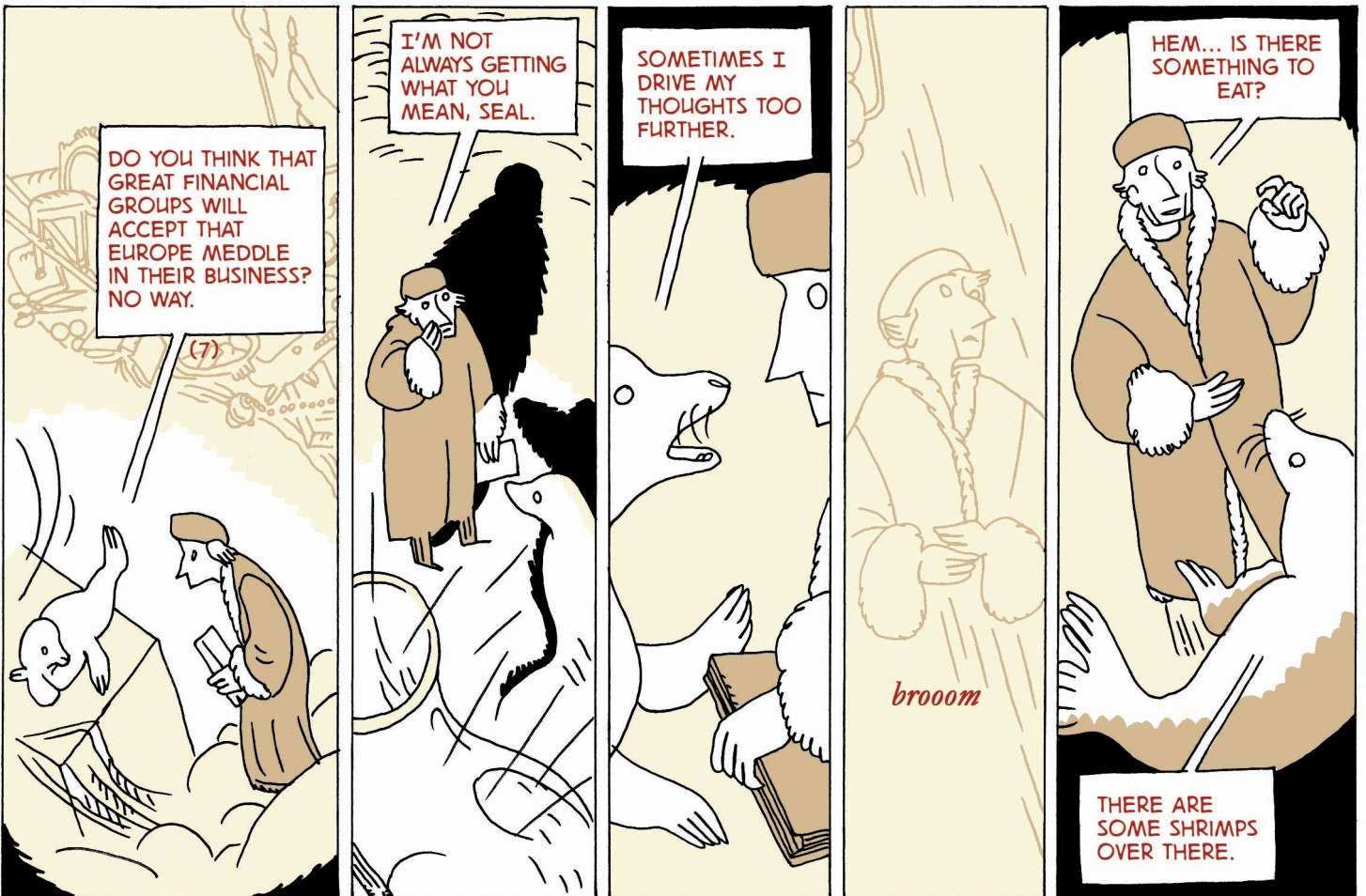
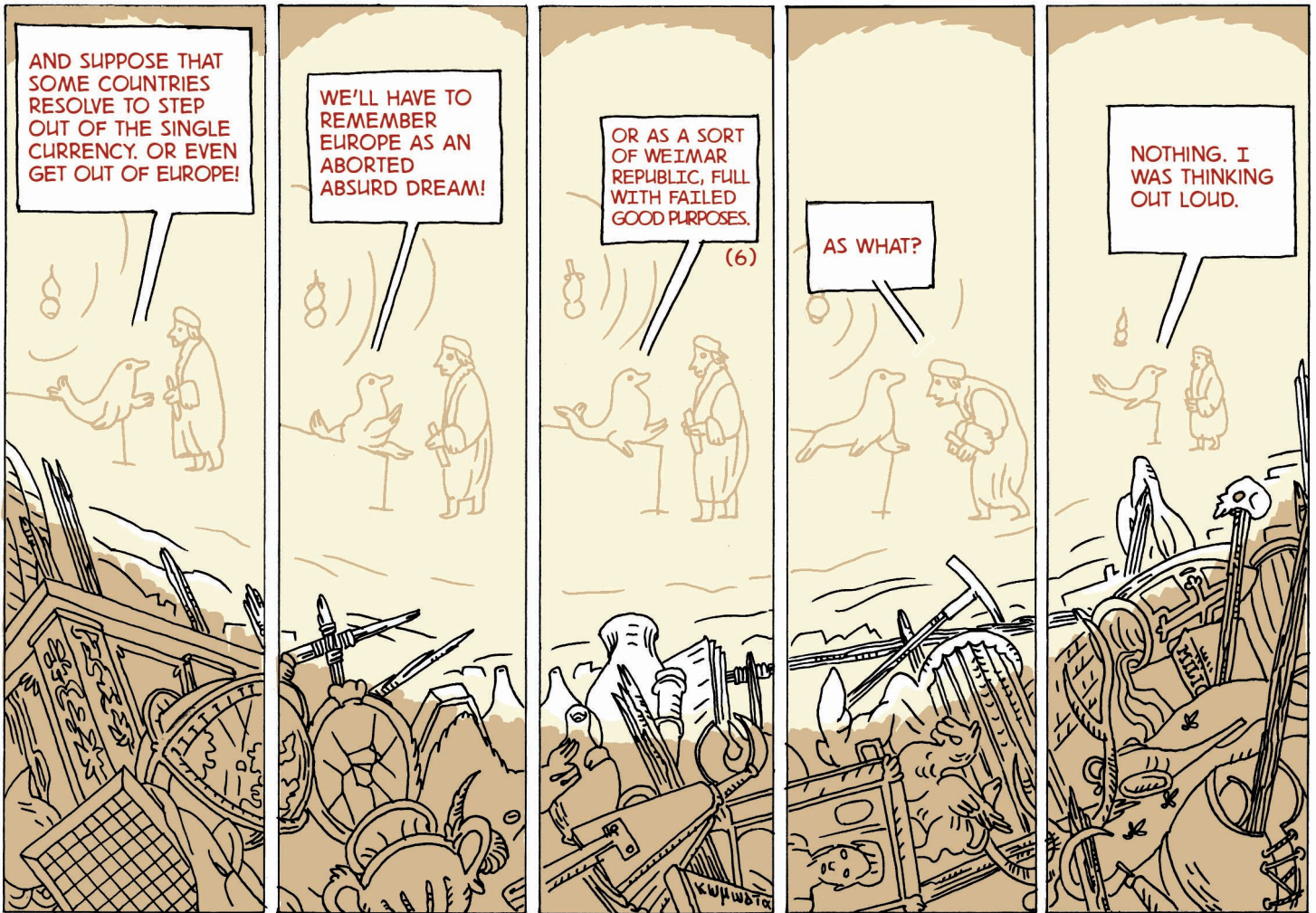
NO.





(4) From this disputed point some academics start to cast doubts on the authenticity of the erasmian anecdote: "It's not probable that a carnivorous marine mammal had an empiricist and realist approach", they say.

(5) And about this passage: "This is a typical concern of a south European – they say – but the seal is a nothern animal! It doesn't make sense!"



(6) And this allusion to the Weimar Republic is inexplicable. Besides the fact that it comes four centuries in advance (the academic M. Kuntaroba has calculated 408 years), the comparison definitely doesn't fit.

(7) Oh, this part is clearer: a seal wary of (financial) sharks sounds probable.



THE WHALE HASN'T DIGESTED THEM YET.



THEY ARE DELICIOUS!



WOULD YOU MIND TO FEED ME?



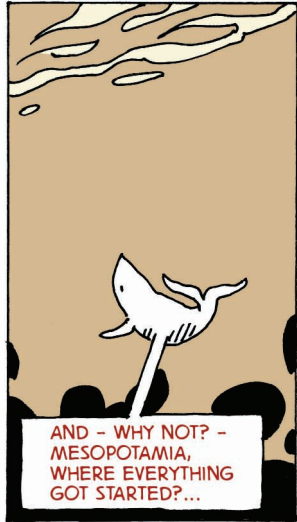
DISADVANTAGES OF HAVING FINS.



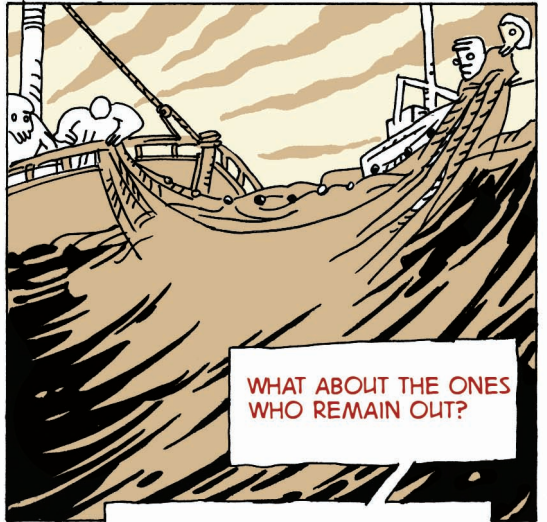
THEN WHERE ARE THE BORDERS SUPPOSED TO BE? A CORE EUROPE LIKE CHARLEMAGNE'S EMPIRE?



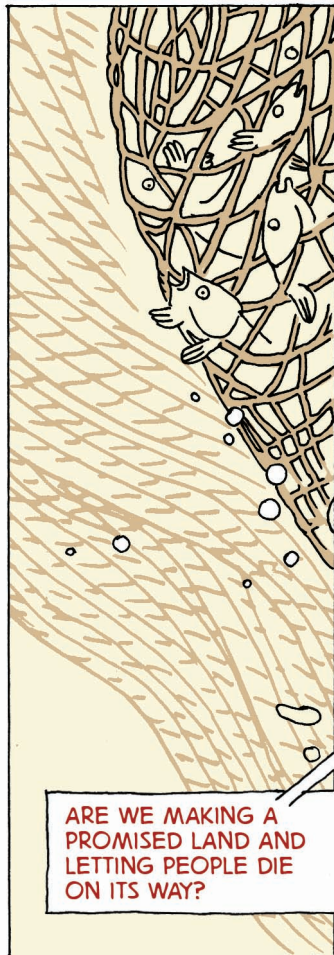
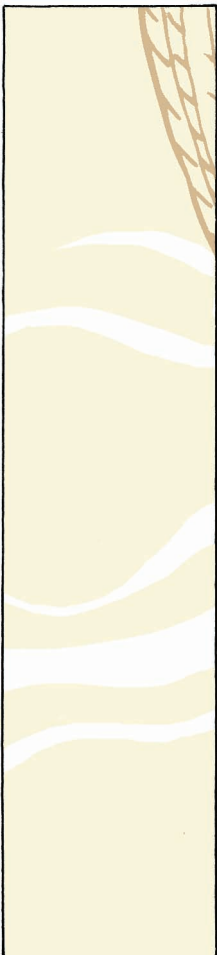
OR SHOULD IT COMPREHEND THE TURKS OF CONSTANTINOPLE AND PALESTINE OF JESUS?



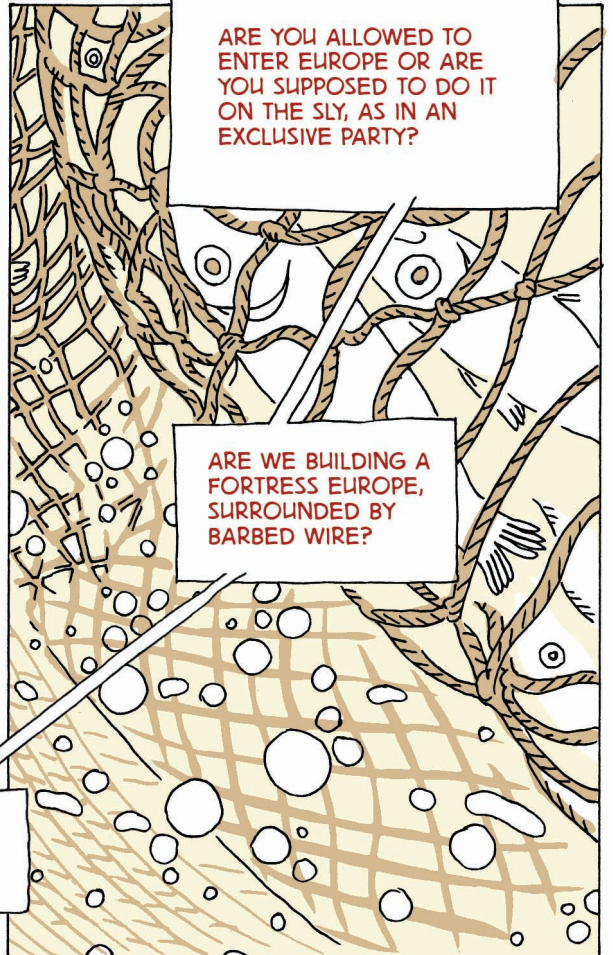
AND - WHY NOT? - MESOPOTAMIA, WHERE EVERYTHING GOT STARTED?...



WHAT ABOUT THE ONES WHO REMAIN OUT?



ARE WE MAKING A PROMISED LAND AND LETTING PEOPLE DIE ON ITS WAY?

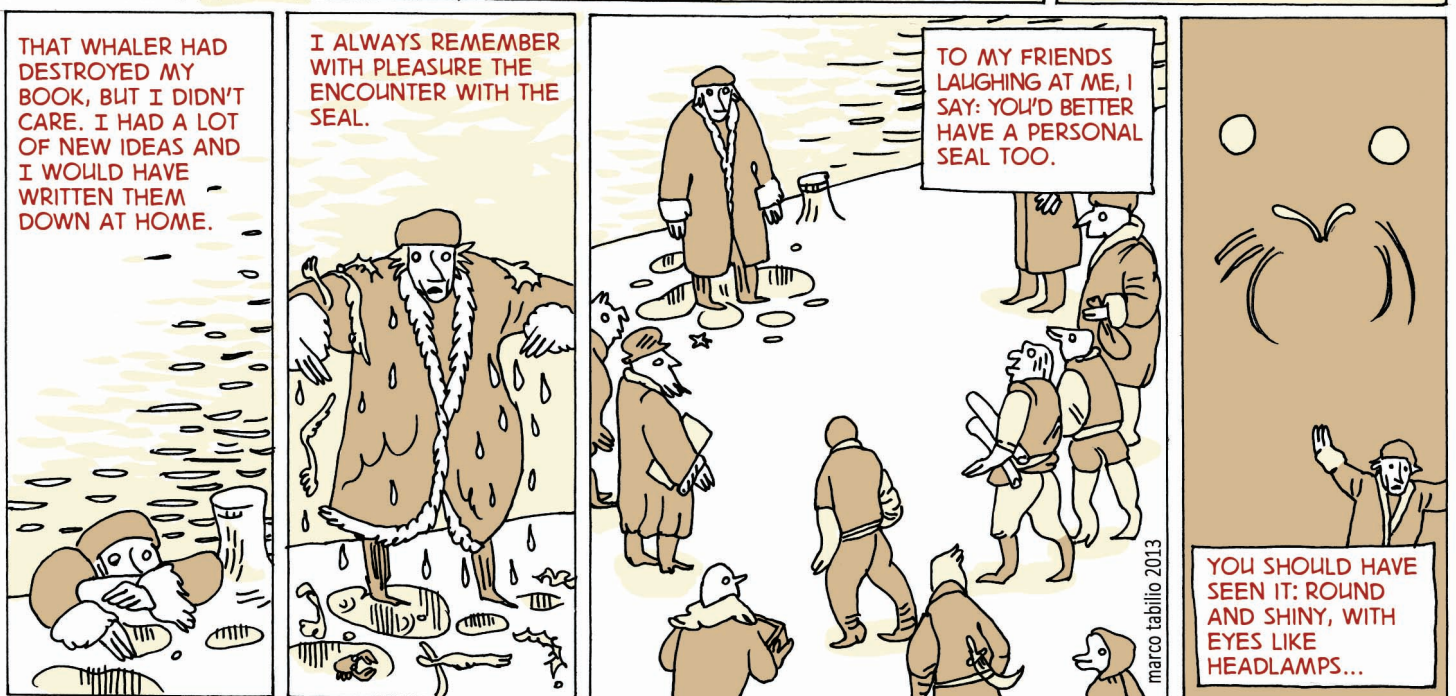
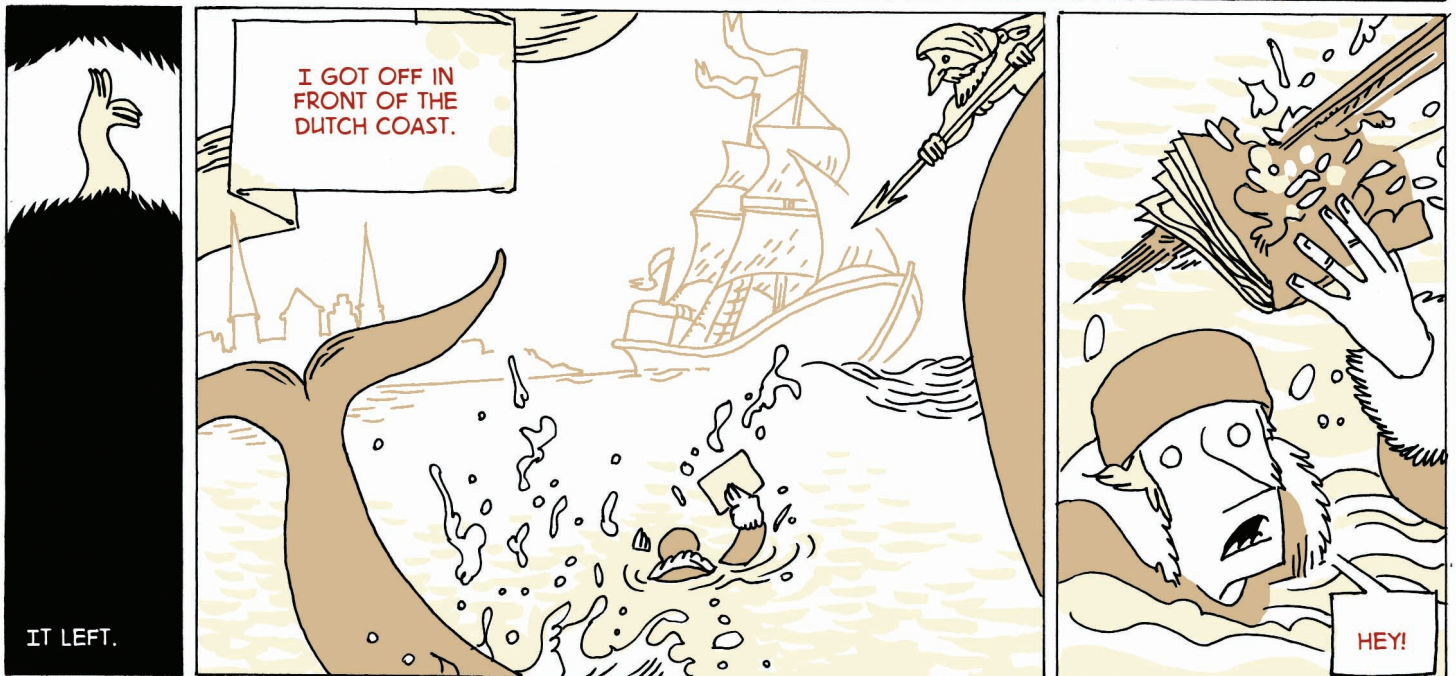
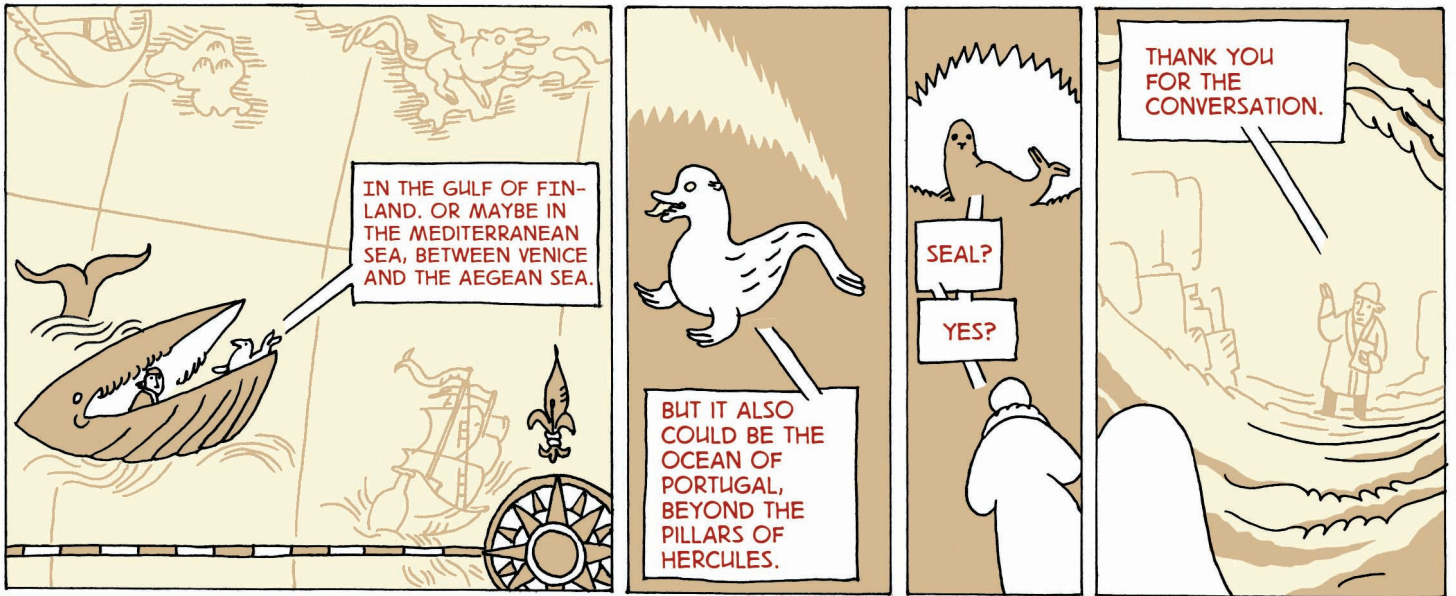


ARE YOU ALLOWED TO ENTER EUROPE OR ARE YOU SUPPOSED TO DO IT ON THE SLY, AS IN AN EXCLUSIVE PARTY?

ARE WE BUILDING A FORTRESS EUROPE, SURROUNDED BY BARBED WIRE?



(8) At this point of the story we don't remember anymore: we were debating about the authenticity of what? Of the disappeared book, the *De Europa*? Or of the anecdote of the whale itself?...



(9) ... or we were talking about the comic about the anecdote? And who made the comic? Erasmus was not a cartoonist... was he?
 (10) And finally: who wrote the footnotes?