The Father on Display: The House of Jean Monnet and the Construction of European Identity

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Abstract

In the 1980s, the EC engaged in trying actively to construct a European identity, primarily through a 'manufacturing of symbols', such as a common flag, hymn and day of celebration. A lesser-known element of this symbolic construction was the elevation of the recently deceased Jean Monnet to a position as the undisputed 'founding father' of Europe. The 'sanctification' of Monnet culminated in the conversion of his house – purchased by the European Parliament – into a museum of his deeds and of the European project that they served. This article seeks to analyse the construction of Monnet as a founding father for EUrope, first by investigating the context of the acquisition of his house and the establishment of the museum in the 1980s, and subsequently by analysing the present exhibition in it.

Keywords: European Identity, Jean Monnet, Museums, Myth,

Introduction

In the scholarship of the history of European integration, a classical division has long existed between those who afford a substantial role to the 'great men' of early integration and those who seek their explanations more in the wider dynamics and structural changes of the international economy or the nation-state system. In Alan Milward's rendering of European integration as a 'Rescue of the nation-state' (Milward 1992), he famously distanced himself from what he considered a hagiography of the 'European saints' (Milward 1992: 281). However, such a stark dichotomy obscures or excludes a field of enquiry which belongs to neither of these modes of explanation, but which is nevertheless central to the history of the European construction. This is the issue of how the narratives about certain men as Europe's 'founding fathers' – besides and beyond any evaluation of their actual historical roles and actions – has been a crucial element in the attempt to construct a European identity, and thereby to reinforce the popular legitimacy of the common European institutions. It is undoubtedly true – as Milward points out – that there has been a tendency to 'canonise' the so-called 'founding fathers' of European integration (ibid.), even to the point that one can speak of a 'political myth' of these men crafting Europe by the sheer force of their 'vision'. But to treat such mythical narratives of the 'founding fathers' simply as historical lies, needing to be exposed as fiction or fabrication, reduces the analysis to a positivist mode of 'myth-busting'. As anthropologists have long been aware, the myths of a community should be analysed not simply in terms of whether they are true or false, but rather with a focus on how they contribute to the identity of the community.

Among the potentially numerous 'founding fathers' of European integration, Jean Monnet would be considered primary by most. His name features prominently when the European institutions engage in narrating the history of European integration and in EU discourse in general. But his legacy and construction as a 'founding father' is also more directly approachable through the origins and exhibition of the museum established in his honour in his former home in the village Houjarray outside Paris.

In this article I aim to understand the construction of Jean Monnet as a 'founding father' by investigating how the museum in his house was established in the 1980's, as well as analysing the present exhibition through which the memory of Monnet is still today communicated to the public. Drawing on insights from theories about political myth, I argue that the motives behind establishing the museum, as well as the narratives and metaphors of the present exhibition, reveal a clear ambition to transform Monnet from merely an eminent political predecessor into a truly paternal and heroic figure, which would reinforce the overarching project of disseminating a European identity to the wider populous.

Not much interest has been paid to how Europe or specifically European integration is represented in museums and how this connects to issues of European

identity. However, recently a major work by Wolfram Kaiser, Stefan Krankenha-gen and Kerstin Poehls (2012) has sought to remedy this. Analysing a wide range of material and exhibitions they also offer insightful comments on the exhibition at the house of Jean Monnet. The approach adopted here differs however both in its ambition to investigate the origins of the establishing of the museum and by employing insights from theories of political myth in order to retain a deeper un-derstanding of what is necessary in order to transform a real historical figure into the symbolic entity of a founding father.

This requires however, that I begin by assembling a theoretical understanding of the role of such political father figures or heroes in the construction of a com-mon identity.

Founding Fathers and their Myths

A myth, as it is understood here, is above all a narrative of foundation. Archaic and fully cosmogenic myths regarded the creation of the world as coming out of some prior primordial chaos or darkness, often through the activities of gods (Ric-oeur 1987: 273; Bottici 2007: 121-122). Political myths share this basic narrative structure but deal with the creation of a certain political community, still, never-theless, through some radical break with a 'dark' pre-community history. The story of origins determines what is considered to be the community's fundamental and eternal grounding principles or characteristics. It separates the sacred from the profane (Eliade 1954), and thereby tells us which values and principles are to be forever honoured, and what is to be shunned and avoided at all costs (Tudor 1978: 305).

To work with a concept of political myth implies a constructivist approach to history. The past in this view is never simply given to the present as fact, but is rather reworked, reshaped and narrativised, retrospectively, in relation to the pow-er structures and needs of the contemporary (narrating) society. In constructing a communal identity, such a (re)configuration of the collective past is an essential component. Myth is one form through which a community – or more often the political elite of a community – re-appropriates and reconfigures the past to match its present endeavours. Crucially therefore, the time which myth narrates (the time of foundation) is not necessarily the time when the myth was first narrated. Just as Eric Hobsbawm's notion of 'invented traditions' are modern inventions passing themselves of as pre-modern practices (Hobsbawm & Ranger 1983), so political myths are narrations about the community's origins, which are themselves, how-ever, often much later compositions. If we are to understand the function of politi-cal myths in communities we need to both take an interest in the content of their narratives – how the origins of community are constructed – and in the (later) po-litical context which framed the composition of the narrative itself – the needs, power structures, problems and actors which played a part in this particular narra-

tive reshaping of the collective past (cf. Kølvraa 2012a). As Vincent Della Sala has argued also in the case of the EU much more attention should be paid to the ways in which elements of myth underpin political discourse and the legitimacy of various policies (Della Sala 2010).

Even if modern political myths often take the form of historical narratives, rather than for example of fantastic legends, their strength does not – as is to some extent the case in historical science – rest solely on a claim that they truthfully recount 'what really happened'. Mythical truth is moral, rather than empirical, truth. More than anything, a myth claims what Bruce Lincoln calls *authority*, which is a kind of validity engendered by the fact that they tell the *paradigmatic* truth (Lincoln 1989: 24). Their narrative produces – as Clifford Geertz remarked about religion (Geertz 1973: 93) – simultaneously a 'model of' and a 'model for' the world; it simultaneously recounts a narrative of what happened, and implies a moral imperative of what should happen. Myth recounts the past – not for its own sake – but to set up certain ideals for the present and the future; where we have been is narrated in terms of where we are and where we are going. As Mircea Eliade pointed out, this means that myth – even when taking the modern form of something that looks like a historical narrative – is what he calls '*anhistorical*'(Eliade 1954:46). It does not respect the integrity and particularity of past events or persons. Rather it overrides such historical particularities, instituting as Eliade claims '*categories instead of events, archetypes instead of historical personages*' (Eliade 1954: 43).

The narrative of a founding father or a community hero is – in so far as such figures are constructed in and through mythical narratives – not simply the biography of the 'historical personage' referred to. Rather the actual person of a founding father or a hero is secondary to the symbolic archetype which the myth makes of him. The particularities of political biography, of distinct historical context or of precise ideological preferences are back-grounded in order to allow for such figures to function as ideals to be emulated across history. Figures such as heroes and founding fathers are therefore not simply 'historical characters'. They are paradigmatic archetypes whose actions, ideals and ideas, also much later members of the community are invited to identify with. This kind of identification is as such an element in the construction of 'imagined communities', which – as Benedict Anderson argued – entail that the members imagine not just a common history beyond the time span of the individual's own life, but also a intersubjective commonality of the present and finally a joint trajectory into the future. As Chiara Bottici has argued it is through this narrative construction of a communal trajectory encompassing past, present and future that myth supplies *significance* to communal identities. It supplies not just the *meaning* of community (why or in what we are the same), but the *point* of community (why we should be together, what the common – often utopian – project or destiny is).

Therefore myth necessarily simplifies history to make it fit the needs of the present, and likewise the imagining of political paternity through the construction of 'founding fathers' requires that the political ideas and ambitions of potential founding fathers are simplified and idealised. Most importantly, their political ideas can no longer be marked by the particularity of the specific historical context in which they were formulated and in which they were often opposed and contradicted. Where the historical sciences would insist on understanding the views of past politicians in their own context – as informed by the specific problems, conflicts and ideas of that period – the mythical construction of a founding father does exactly the opposite. It makes universal dictums of particular statements, eternal ideals out of context-dependent priorities, and foundational values out of particular ideological preferences. Once the man becomes the founding father he is no longer himself – he is much more. He becomes less of an individual and more of a symbol, his name referring no longer to the particularity of a life lived, but to the sacred symbolic centre of the community which accepts (and constructs) his paternal authority.

The Making of a Founding Father

Monnet died on 16 March 1979. In the European Parliament the president told the members that it was with great sadness that he had to inform them about the death of the '*creator of the first European Community; the Father of Europe*', and added that '*the European Parliament acknowledges the greatness of this man and the significance of his accomplishment, and it will preserve his memory in grateful recollection*' (EP debates, C241, 16. March 1979, pp. 233-234). Likewise, the Council mourned Monnet as 'one of the community's founding fathers' (569th Council meeting Press release, 19 March 1979, 5632/e79, Presse 25, p. 3a). At the official memorial plenary a month later, the President of the European Parliament further stated that: '*To everybody who is gathered here today, and whose task it is to work for the ideals, which was his* [Monnet], *his message is directed: "I have never had any doubt about which road should be chosen, but how far this road is uncertain. The Construction of Europe takes time, as do all peaceful revolutions"*' (*EP debates*, C242, 23 April 1979, p. 2). Monnet's opinions about the methods, speed and direction of European integration were being presented as the common ideals under which everybody – in the EP at least – were supposed to be working. To be a part of the European Community represented by this parliament was seemingly to accept the paradigmatic authority of Monnet's ideas as common ideals. Indeed as I have argued elsewhere Monnet's symbolic authority as a rhetorical reference in EC political discourse – and especially in that of Jacques Delors – quickly gained force after his death (Kølvraa 2012b). It is of course not irrelevant that Monnet died at a time when questions of a common European identity and the need for unifying symbols were making their way up the European

agenda. Already in 1973, a 'Document on European identity' had been issued by the Council (Bulletin of the European Communities 12; 118-127, 1973). And it was soon followed by the Tindemans report (Tindeman 1975) containing a number of suggestions as to how the Community might win the favour of the by now seemingly disenchanted populations, thereby reinforcing its somewhat waning legitimacy. The 1985 Adonnino report engaged fully with the idea that what was needed was unifying symbols around which a sense of common 'Europeanness' might emerge (Adonnino 1985). As part of the so-called 'A People's Europe' project, the Community had, by the mid-1980s, acquired a common flag, a European hymn and a joint day of celebration on 9 May (Odermatt 1991: 217-298). This European 'manufacturing of symbols' is well known. Especially, Cris Shore has covered and criticised what he seems to consider an attempt at illegitimate ideological indoctrination by the European institutions. And Jean Monnet is certainly not exempted here. But Shore is content to criticise the use of Monnet in the context of what he calls the EU's 'rewriting of history' in the 1990s. Here he claims that the EU now began to disseminate the idea that '*The true saviours of Europe from the horror of Nazism, Fascism and military aggression during the Second World War are thus not the leaders of the Resistance or the wartime Allies, but Monnet, Spaak, Schuman, De Gasperi and Adenauer […]*' (Shore 2000: 58). I am not disputing that the EU indeed cultivated such a 'myth' of itself as a grand peace project and that this narrative was tied to the 'heroic' deed of the founding fathers (cf. Kølvraa 2012), but Shore's critique remains at the level of 'myth-busting' – he is interested in revealing the 'myth's' distance from historical fact. Therefore his analysis does not explain in any depth the process through which Monnet became installed in the symbolic position of a founding father. As Peter Odermatt at least acknowledges in passing, the elevation of Monnet was well established long before the EU started 'rewriting history' in the 1990s (Odermatt 1991: 228). In fact, his name and memory had already been given a central place as the EC from the early 1980s onwards.

This is indeed especially illustrated by the early decision and dogged determination – involving several of the European institutions – to purchase the house at Houjarray where Monnet lived and worked during the last thirty years of his life. This purchase can be understood as the acquisition of what Pierre Nora has called a *lieu de mémoire*, a site which would serve to anchor and materialise Monnet's memory, and his symbolic position (Nora 1996:xv-xxiv). In fact, this central piece of symbolic construction predates most of the 'symbol manufacturing' usually covered by scholars of European identity and indeed seems largely to have been forgotten, since few of the scholars so avidly deconstructing the European symbols of the 1980s makes any mention of it. But as is clear from the sources around this purchase, the actors were in no doubt as to what they were doing. They were acquiring a monument, a shrine even, around which and from which the vision of

the founding father could be disseminated to the as yet ungrateful populations of Europe.

The idea to purchase Monnet's house emerged within the European Parliament, but along the way it came to involve all the major institutions of the EC. What the correspondence and documents passing between the different actors implicitly reveal is that even if these actors were engaged in elevating Monnet to the position of founding father, they could not yet take for granted that such an endeavour would be considered legitimate and worthwhile by other parties. Even if those involved were from the beginning well aware that this purchase was made for purely symbolic purposes, there was a constant worry that such justification might not be enough to secure its realisation. In fact, when the idea emerged in the office of the President of the European Parliament in 1980, a first confidential note evaluating it for the director of the President's Cabinet, François Scheer, mercilessly pointed out that '*Practically, one can say that the Parliament does not have any foreseeable use for this house. This situation makes it difficult to underpin an intention of acquisition, for which the Parliament obviously needs to provide precise justifications*' (Note 13. Oct. 1980, Authors translation (AT)). And indeed, on 'practical' grounds, the house in Houjarray left a lot to be desired. Situated forty kilometres from Paris, far from any main highways, at the end of a country lane which became all but impassable in the winter months, the house was small and generally in need of thorough restoration.

This did not however dissuade the forces behind the idea from purchasing the house at Houjarray, as is clear from a series of letters between the President of the European Parliament, Pieter Dankert, and the President of the Commission, Gaston Thorn, leading up to the actual purchase of the house in late 1982. Dankert writing to Thorn in the summer of 1982 informed him that with this purchase '*The European Parliament thus intends to contribute to the safeguarding of the historical inheritance of the Community*' (Letter, Strasbourg 17 June 1982 (AT)) and asked Thorn to voice any objections that the Commission might have to such an ambition. Thorn certainly had no objections but requested that the Council be let in on the initiative, which, in his words '*is undoubtedly of a nature which contributes to the joint efforts of our two institutions, aiming to raise public awareness of the "European idea"* ' (Letter, 23 July 1982 (AT)). Dankert could in turn thank him for his support in moving forward with what he now described as '*a symbolic act which aims to honour the memory of the man which contributed so much to the European construction*' (Letter, 11 August 1982 (AT)). Finally, on 3 November 1982, Thorn could assure Dankert that the legal and budgetary matters had been taken care of and that the Parliament could '*in the name of the European Communities*' (Letter, 3 November 1982 (AT)) safely acquire the house. In late 1982, Monnet's final residence became the property of the European Parliament, but there still was no precise plan for what actually to do with the property. As a monument – which was what it was in symbolic terms – it was of course, as all

monuments, inherently useless for practical purposes. But as a building it seemed necessary that some sort of activity had to be attached to it and unfold within its walls for the acquisition to retain any appearance of 'practicality' whatsoever.

Finally, it was decided that after the necessary restoration had been carried out over the next couple of years, the house should be an *'Information centre on Jean Monnet and the European Construction'* with the purpose '*to make known the European thought and the actions of Jean MONNET, as well as the great moments of European construction*' (Association des Amis de la Maison de Jean Monnet à Bazoches dans la Region de Rambouillet; Statuts, 1986 (AT)). A grand opportunity to engage in this ambition of disseminating Monnet's ideas to the wider public fortunately arrived almost as soon as the restoration work on the house finally concluded in 1987. On 7 July 1987, Council President Martens, speaking in the European Parliament suggested that 1988 – the centenary of Jean Monnet's birth – might be made 'Jean Monnet Year' for the Community and its Member states (EP debates (DK), 2-354, 7.7.1987, p. 30 (AT)).

The Jean Monnet year in 1988 entailed a number of initiatives to underpin the status of Monnet as a founding father of European integration. The Commission had convinced the Member States to issue a joint commemorative stamp featuring Monnet, and more than 1,500 cities had been lobbied to name public places after Monnet. Alongside this, a steady stream of publications, and even a short movie, up to and during 1988, aimed to disseminate the ideas of Monnet to the public. It is interesting here that this material inadvertently displays the kind of *anhistorical* rendering of Monnet's ideas that one could expect of a mythical framing of a founding father. In publications such as Pascal Fontaine's booklet 'Jean Monnet, A Grand Design for Europe' (1988) or the pamphlet entitled 'Jean Monnet: A message for Europe' (1988), there is very little attempt at drawing out the specific historical context for the many quotes, dictums, ideals or principles of Monnet here presented to the public. Indeed – in a section headed 'Monnet's message today' – something of a political programme for the contemporary community, including the completion of the single market, the prospect of a common currency, increased democracy and a European pillar in the Western Alliance, is presented as apparently blessed by the Monnet's posthumous approval. The point was clearly not to deliver a portrait of Monnet's 'life and times', associating him with a specific *and past* set of historical issues and challenges. Rather, the *anhistorical* mythical construction of him as a founding father freed him from any restraining connection to a particular context and allowed him to be associated with issues and events that he could not have foreseen.

Also, in the European Parliament, a mood of reverence and sacred awe found its expression. On 25 February, a motion for a resolution was presented to the Parliament which suggested that the newly started Channel Tunnel between France and Britain should be named the 'Jean Monnet – Europe Tunnel' (European Parliament session documents, 25 February 1988, Series B, Document B 2-

1783/87). Presumably as a gesture towards the national sensibilities of one of the tunnel partners, the motion was sent to the political committee and came back slightly altered; the tunnel was now to be named 'The Winston Churchill-Jean Monnet tunnel' (European Parliament session documents, 3 October 1988, Series A, Document A 2-202/88). In the debate which ensued in the Parliament, only a very few critical voices were heard. A majority instead dreamed that linking the name-of-the-Father to the great tunnel project would '*give Europe soul*', '*enshrine the essential values*', be '*a symbolic contribution to the development of the European idea […]*' and indeed '*all Europeans using the tunnel in the future would be reminded both of Europe's past and of the great idea of uniting our continent, which Jean Monnet, saw as the driving force of European Integration […]*' (EP Debates 13 October 1988, pp. 236-239 (AT)).

The house and new museum at Houjarray served as a fitting frame for a ceremony in which the president of the Parliament planted an oak tree in the garden to symbolise the memory of Jean Monnet (EP Debates 2-371/31. 15 Nov. 1988). And on Monnet's birthday, 9 November, an official ceremony was held in Paris and attended by a wide spectrum of European heads of state. It culminated with Monnet's ashes being interred in the Panthéon, the greatest honour available to French citizens. Despite this seemingly national reclaiming of 'The Father of Europe', the French President, Mitterrand, professed to be speaking to all of Europe when he said, in his memorial speech to Monnet: '*We need to offer great examples to our youth, here is one*' (Lewis 1988).

The museum in Monnet's house at Houjarray was thus hardly born from an ambition of engaging neutrally and objectively, not to say critically, with the life and times of Jean Monnet. It was born in and from a mood of enthusiastic optimism about the possibility of spreading the European idea and the legacy of Monnet as a founding father to a wider public. Although it is certainly true that, as Kaiser, Krankenhagen & Poehls remarks (2012), the myth of the founding fathers was not invented by museums, the museum at Monnet's house – as well as those in other houses of founding fathers such as that of Robert Schuman – remains a venue in which this mythical construction is delivered in something of a 'concentrated' form. As Kaiser, Krankenhagen and Poehls illustrate, the theme of the founding fathers and thereby references to Monnet and his legacy has become widespread in attempts at narrating the history of European integration both in museums and beyond (Kaiser, Krankenhagen & Poehls 2012). This has to do partly with the challenge of exhibiting European integration as such. This historical process is somewhat devoid of the kind of drama that national histories highlight. European integration might at first sight seem '*like a story of tedious negotiations by men in grey suits*' (Kaiser 2011: 386). Retelling the history of such tedious negotiations as the heroic and uncertain endeavours of a central figure (Monnet) delivers a narrative coherence and potentially a dramatic dimension which is not otherwise easily constructed. But this requires that Monnet is treated *anhistorical-*

ly; that he is made into the archetype of a founding father, that he avoids being tied down or tied to closely to a specific historical context. The exhibition in the museum in Houjarray is eminently interesting, not least because it accomplishes this mythical de-contextualisation of the founding father in the one place where it would seem most difficult to achieve; in his own home.

The Father's Home: Jean Monnet's House at Houjarray

The following draws on a trip to Monnet's house undertaken in January 2011 and an interview with the director of the museum, Julien Gascard. He is responsible for the exhibition and seminars held here. He is supported by an academic staff of three, located in the association's main office in Paris, but at the house he is assisted only by a gardener and a receptionist. According to Director Gascard, there are about 12,000 visitors a year, the vast majority of these come in groups – mostly in the form of classes of schoolchildren. The funding comes from the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Region of Ill de France. The House is run on a yearly budget of €250,000.

Before analysing the exhibition as it stands today, it is necessary to offer a few remarks on how the analysis of such a historical exhibition might be approached.

The collections on display are most often the product of two selective processes: 'natural' selection, which means that only a fraction of 'past objects' are still available to us, and the intentional selection of what to display and how to display it. As regards the former, it can be argued that it is exactly the scarcity of objects from the past which inscribes those which are, nonetheless, available and on display with value, and whose rare authenticity therefore becomes the legitimating basis of the unified statement, narrative or message that the exhibition seeks to communicate to the visitor. It is because the visitor believes that he is confronted with this kind of material authenticity that the implicit message of the exhibition is taken to be truth (about the exhibited past), rather than being (ideologically) marked by contemporary intention. But this regards only the *validity* of the message implied by a given exhibition. It is the second kind of selection which impacts on what is actually being communicated. The message of the museum displays cannot be reduced to that explicitly stated in the textual extracts accompanying the objects. The message is conveyed in the choices of what to exhibit, in what order and in which combinations. As Krzysztof Pomian has argued, a certain interplay between presence and absence is at the heart of all displayed collections. The display of a multiplicity of objects in a collection becomes meaningful only if it organizes an exchange between the fields of the visible and the invisible (Pomian 1990). The visible display is meaningful if and when it offers access to a grander realm of significance which is not directly representable in itself, e.g. 'the Order of Nature' or 'the National Culture'. The materiality of the objects on display substitutes metonymically for the true object of interest which is itself absent,

and only in this way does the true object become accessible. As regards the message of an exhibition, its collection, as Tony Bennet remarks, should be analysed with regard to the way it supports the viewer 'seeing through' the metonymic surface of the collection, and how the display itself invites a certain view and certain viewers, and not others (Bennet 1995: 34-36).

This first means that it is necessary to describe in sufficient detail exactly what is displayed in Monnet's house, in which configurations it is arranged, and which explicit or implicit claims to authenticity are made. But furthermore it means that the aim of our analysis should be to identify what kind of 'seeing through' we are invited to engage in, what message or imagery of Jean Monnet is being offered to us through the metonymic surface of the objects on display.

The exhibition at Monnet's house was originally a rather traditional display of the kind of limited materiality that a political process like that of European integration leaves behind. It was a display of central documents, photographs and letters between central actors, in other words, apparently an invitation to 'see through' these – perhaps in themselves rather unengaging objects – and thereby gain access to the unrepresentable and abstract truth of 'Monnet's role in European integration'. However, in the late 1990s, it was decided to recalibrate the exhibition and instead show the house furnished and decorated seemingly as it could have looked when Monnet lived there. In fact, this form of exhibition – where we are seemingly given access to Monnet's private and personal space – potentially challenges the kind of dynamics that we have associated above with his construction as a mythically 'disembodied' founding father. If the *anhistorical* construction of a founding father involves exactly stripping the man of his distinct historical context, his particular ideological preferences, his idiosyncrasies, in short his individuality, and making of him instead a pure symbol, universally applicable and transferrable across time and space, then would not displaying his private space, with all the manifest particularity and even banality of a personal life, seem to run directly counter to such a paternal canonisation? How can the 'sacred awe' of 'Monnet, the founding father' be maintained, if we are allowed to experience so explicitly 'Monnet, the private individual'?

I will argue that such a tension is in fact never allowed to emerge in the house of Jean Monnet, because what the visitor is offered is not a metonymic multiplicity of banal everyday object, through or behind which we might see Monnet as the private individual, but instead a range of material metaphors which always lead us back to his status as the founding father.

Already on the garden wall next to the entry gate is a plaque stating that Jean Monnet – honorary citizen of Europe – lived here from 1945 to 1979, and that it was here in 1950 that the project of the European Community was conceived. This is from the onset marked as a place of origins – *un lieu de mémoire* for the European Project and its primary architect.

The house is in fact very small. The ground floor consists only of a hall, a living room, a dining room and a bedroom. On the first floor there is a small room with posters narrating Monnet's role in European integration and a larger room with a screen and a movie-projector. Visitors are equipped with a pre-recorded audio guide.

On entering the hall visitors are immediately confronted with some of the most personal emblems of Monnet: his cane, his hat and his summer jacket hanging casually on a coat stand by the door. They are recognisable from one of the most famous photos of the elderly Monnet which has been used as front page illustration on several editions of his memoirs (cf. Monnet 1976/1986). The dining room is visible from the hall. It contains little other than a mahogany table set with six plates. In the living room there is a low table surrounded by comfortable-looking chairs. Here, as in the bedroom, the visitor is not allowed to move freely among the objects, but must observe them from behind a thick red rope at one end of the room. On the table is a bottle of Monnet cognac and a couple of glasses. The walls are covered with low bookcases and floral motifs painted by Monnet's wife, Sylvia. An easel next to the fireplace supports a picture of Monnet made famous as a Time Magazine front page in 1961 (Time Magazine, 6 Oct. 1961). There are two classic black telephones, one on each of the room's two small tables. They are barely a couple of metres apart. Books on the idea of Europe and European history litter the tables and bookshelves. This theme continues in the combined bedroom and study. This room is dominated by a large bed. On the bedside table a copy of Thor Heyerdahl's book on the Kon-Tiki expedition is propped up to draw the viewer's attention. This small room also has two telephones – one by the bed and one on the desk. Again, books on Europe, newspapers whose front pages speak of significant events in European integration, and official-looking documents and letters are everywhere. Situated somewhat awkwardly in the middle of the room is a small writing desk. This is the only piece of furniture which disturbs the illusion that one is observing an authentic personal décor. It seems to be positioned highly impractically for the purposes of everyday life, and is instead thrust towards the viewing position of the visitor. The reason for this soon becomes apparent. On the writing desk is a copy of the Schuman declaration, with Monnet's hand-written notations; this is clearly organised as the central artefact in the room – if not in the house. The audio guide drily remarks that 'Schuman published the declaration', but emphasises that the content comprised Monnet's ideas.

At first sight, the exhibition does achieve the appearance of a personal space. The multiplicity of objects large and small seems immediately to offer a view of an authentically 'lived space': a metonymic surface through which something more of the personal individual who apparently lived with these objects might become visible. But on closer reflection one realises that truly private objects are in fact few and far between. Except for a small photograph of Monnet and his children – and perhaps the floral motifs by his wife – there is almost nothing here

which offers us any sense of the intimacy of Monnet the private man. If one is familiar with Monnet's public persona – the character traits ascribed to him as the father of Europe – the ultimate surprise is how unsurprised one is when allowed into his personal space. There is no trace of any idiosyncratic oddities, of any desires, practices or pastimes unconnected with his political preoccupations. This might achieve the appearance of a private space, but it is never an intimate one. 'Seeing though' this metonymic surface of his private space does not in fact seem to offer us much that we would not expect or already know. And even attempting such metonymic access is only possible if one manages to staunchly ignore the audio guide's continual disciplining of the viewer's experience. The audio guide is clearly an integral part of the exhibition; it is distributed to the visitor immediately on entry, and is made available in all European languages. And its voice goes far beyond offering additional information about the objects described. It introduces from the onset a very manifest frame for 'reading' the exhibition as such – a frame with relates to the objects displayed as individual metaphors, rather than as a unified metonymic surface. What it delivers is a constant metaphorical conversion of the 'private' objects of Monnet's house into his political project and ideas.

This frame is indicated immediately by the opening remark that 'the house is light and open like Monnet's thoughts', and goes on relentlessly to capture object after object. Monnet's hat, jacket and cane are described as those worn on his garden walks during 'which he refined his ideas or came up with solutions to the problems encountered'. The set dining table is not allowed to signify the everyday occurrence of family meals, but is where 'European statesmen came to dine and discuss with Monnet'. The cognac in the living room first serves as an opportunity to narrate Monnet's initial occupation as a sales representative for the family cognac company, but is summed up with the claim that 'the quality of Monnet's cognac is equalled by the quality of his thought'. But these are only the most overt instances. Once this metaphorical frame is introduced, one soon realises that it is not simply an exterior overlay or 'reading principle' confined to the audio guide, but the organising intention of the entire display itself. The 'realism' of a truly private space has everywhere been sacrificed in advantage of the construction of 'material metaphors'. Most obviously perhaps is the conspicuous presence of the Schuman declaration, but the intrusive overabundance of books on Europe is also easily readable as a (not so) implicit equivalence between Monnet's thoughts on Europe and other great or classical treatments of the same subject matter. The ever-present volumes on European history or the idea of Europe seem thus to have been selected for their metaphorical potential – their ability to implicit signify Monnet's ideas as being among those of the great thinkers of Europe – rather than because of any claim to an 'authentic' relationship to Monnet. Indeed it is well known that Monnet was no great reader of academic literature. In the same vein, it is clear that the telephones are not simply part of a natural backdrop constituting a

domestic interior of the period. The way in which their number so overpopulates the very limited space makes them rather obvious metaphors for Monnet's ability to communicate with and utilise a vast political network – as is also pointed by Kaiser (2011: 390).

The exhibition, however, actually goes even further than metaphorically revering its object as a founding father. Monnet seems eventually to become the acting subject behind its expression; he enters into the role of its author. The conspicuous presence of *Thor* Heyerdahl's account of his Kon-Tiki expedition in the bedroom is – as director Gascard points out – justified by the fact that it is mentioned on the very last page of Monnet's memoirs (Monnet 1976/1986: 360). In his memoirs, Monnet does not however claim to have read the book but only relays an anecdote about how he had displayed, in his office in Luxembourg, a photograph of the raft named Kon-Tiki on which Heyerdahl and his crew crossed the Pacific. Monnet himself describes how he would explain to visitors that Kon-Tiki to him was a 'symbol' for the European project, because Heyerdahl and his crew also did not have the option of turning round. By the placement of the Heyerdahl book in his house, Monnet is de facto allowed to dictate the metaphorical framing of himself and his project posthumously. This impression of Monnet as the author of his own exhibition is further strengthened as one moves upstairs. Entering a small room with posters, which at first glance seem to tell the story of Monnet's endeavours to create a European Community, one soon realises that the texts accompanying the black-and-white photographs are in fact passages from Monnet's memoirs. Monnet is allowed to narrate his own history – the founding father is apparently working on his own myth.

The tour of the house concludes with viewing Daniel Wronecki's 12-minute film *Monnet – the Father of Europe*. This establishes a direct intertextual relationship between the contemporary exhibition and the construction of Jean Monnet as a father figure in the 1980s, because the film was originally produced for the occasion of Jean Monnet year in 1988. The movie certainly follows the basic mythical plotline of a European Community suffering from the ruins of war and arising though the vision of Monnet as the father. The image of Monnet is distinctly heroic. His central role in the victories of both World Wars is highlighted, as is of course his paternity of the emergence of the European Community. Also here, however, the floor is often yielded to allow Monnet to narrate the story himself. The whole movie is interspersed with shots from an interview with Monnet in his old age. Especially, the latter half of the movie is oriented less towards describing historical events and more towards constructing a link between Monnet's ideas and a contemporary setting. It is repeatedly stressed that Monnet's ideas still leave a lasting imprint on the European Community. The date of Monnet's death is noted in passing, but by emphasising Monnet's continued presence in the ideas of the European Community, his physical death is almost marginalised. As the movie close with shots of Monnet walking in his garden (with his hat, jacket and cane),

the speaker informs us that he, after retiring, 'had the pleasure of seeing his policies pursued by others'. The final word is (of course) given to Monnet himself. Still with shots of Monnet as an old man walking in his garden, we hear his much younger voice exclaim: 'we are only at the beginning of the effort that Europe needs to make to finally find unity, prosperity and peace' (Wronecki 1988). The fact that this statement can, without notice, be moved from the context of the speech where it was actually made to a film production in 1988, and again to the present of the visitors viewing it in the Jean Monnet House, is a poignant example of how the figure of the founding father becomes freed from any constraints tying him to a certain and limited historical setting, context or period.

The exhibition in Monnet's House condenses and explicates the discursive moves and strategies which – as part of the endeavour to elicit a legitimating European identity in the 1980 – transformed him from a political personality with distinct and by no means uncontroversial or incontestable views on the aims and methods of European integration, into something quite different. Also for the exhibition in Monnet's house, it is true that – as Kaiser, Krankenhagen and Poehls point out – the presentation of the founding fathers in museums are generally depoliticised. There is in other words usually very little attention paid to the particularity of their ideological positions – for example as Christian Democrats (Kaiser et. al. 2012, Kaiser 2007). This lacking attention to the particular politics of a founding father is as I have argued part of the necessary *anhistorical* character of such a construction, but it might also serve to background both historical and present opposition to the political project for which a symbolic paternity is claimed. Of course this lack of politics is perhaps less surprising in the case of Monnet – who was not strictly speaking a politician – than it is in the case of Schuman's house and exhibition. But one could argue that this form of museum – one residing in the home of the founding father – should legitimately be more concerned with allowing visitors a glimpse of the private man behind the myth of the founding father, than with delivering a detailed account of his political biography. The fact is however that the exhibition does not do this either; it does not actually serve to afford the visitor a view of the truly 'private' Monnet. What is displayed is neither Monnet 'behind the scenes' nor Monnet on the political scene of the 1950s to the 1970s, but as argued only the metaphorical imagery of 'Monnet – the founding father'.

The practice employed of selectively choosing how and what to display therefore clearly reveals a manifest intention to render Monnet as a mythical *anhistorical* figure, rather than to reveal anything of the private man behind this symbolic construction. There is no tension between the intimate particularity of the individual and the universal symbolism of paternal or heroic authority. The latter seems simply to totally consume the former. The exhibition is in fact strictly speaking not the result of a set of intentional choices about which of Monnet's things to display and how – because these are not actually Monnet's things. The original

authentic content of Monnet's house could not be secured. But furthermore, as Wolfram Kaiser points out, the interior of the house is not even an attempt at a 'realistic reconstruction' of its original interior (Kaiser 2011: 390). As the director explains, the décor of the house – furniture, books, newspapers, phones, paintings – is not actually realistically those who might have been here with Monnet. Rather, the objects were donated by friends of Monnet – not as replicas of things known to have been owned by him, but as elements which, it was thought, would help construct the right 'atmosphere' for the house. Crucially however this is *not* clearly relayed to the normal visitor. In fact the audio-guide serves to fully underpin the illusion that one is moving about in the space 'where Monnet lived and worked'. Even if there is no real authenticity here, authenticity is still implicitly claimed by the very fact that the totally 'imagined' nature of this interior is concealed from the visitor. On closer reflection this privileging of 'atmosphere' over 'authenticity' has in fact sums up the core strategy of the exhibition. What ultimately is offered in the Monnet house is not the private 'reality' of Monnet's personal life in potentially interesting contrast to or tension with the political imagination of him as a founding father. Rather the exact opposite is the case. We are offered a totally imaginary private sphere, shaped with an admirable attention to detail so as to perfectly underpin the 'reality' of Monnet's legacy as the founding father. In Jean Monnet's house the private man becomes a fiction in order to underpin the authenticity of his symbolic role as a founding father.

As such the last shadow of 'Monnet the private man' seems to depart from the exhibition. It is not, and never was, an access point to the individual Jean Monnet, before or separate from his collective appropriation as a father figure for the European project. Instead it is – and can be appreciated as such – an entirely retrospective construction of a purely imaginary individual worthy of serving as the bodily referent for the paternal metaphor. We are here taken beyond any tension between the 'ideological construction' of the founding father, and the 'lived reality' of the individual. Even as an individual, even in the seemingly private and intimate space of his home, Monnet is today a purely symbolic construction.

Concluding Remarks

Of course the symbolic construction of Monnet as a European founding father could be claimed to have met with limited success, if the ultimate goal was to engender a truly popular and deeply felt European identity. By most accounts, neither the construction of founding fathers nor the 'invention' of a host of other communal symbols, in the end, achieved this. Even today, European identity does not go 'all the way down', in the sense that it is often imagined to be the case for national identities. If we demand – erroneously I believe – that the validity of studying identity constructions can be justified only in terms of their popular extent, then European identity can, as such, be written off as a marginal and irrele-

vant 'élite phenomenon'. And I do indeed make no claim that the rituals and texts of Jean Monnet Year in 1988 have reverberated across the years and throughout the European populous. Neither has the house in Houjarray become anything like the pan-European rallying point that was imagined.

What can instead be gained from analysing how Jean Monnet was elevated to the symbolic position of a European father figure is an understanding of an underappreciated dimension of the kind of identity politics that the European institutions engaged in in the 1980s, and is still supporting through funding today. In this sense, the museum in Jean Monnet's house offers a high condensed view of a kind of strategy employed in the continued effort to spread a European identity, and further illustrates that even if the EU is often criticised as a cold, disengaging, rationalistic and technocratic power structure, it has and does continually engage in initiatives to foster a feeling of Europeanness going beyond the realm of interest-based rationality, hoping to engage Europeans in emotional, non-reflexive and enduring adherence to common values and symbols, or indeed select founding father. Jean Monnet has become part of the 'political imagination' of the EU, and it is this field of ideological images which can be partly approached through an analysis of the strategies through which it has attempted to relay his symbolic paternity to the wider populous. The ideological adherence to a full European identity – and even more so to the image of Monnet as a founding father – may be an élite phenomenon, but it is certainly not a phenomenon associated with an irrelevant élite. By approaching Jean Monnet through the lens of a theory of political myths we can appreciate that his role in European integration goes beyond the concrete contributions made by him during his lifetime. Monnet's 'second life' was one in which he – his name and his memory – posthumously became central to a set of legitimising discursive and symbolic strategies through which it was imagined – and is still imagined – that the ungrateful populous of Europe might finally 'fall in love with' a political community which is now much more than a 'Common Market'; to paraphrase Jacques Delors' famous remark: '*you don't fall in love with a common market; you need something else*' (Delors, quoted from Bideleux 2001: 25).

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