



## Introduction

# THE (LONG-DESIRED) REBIRTH OF EUROPE'S "FANTASTIC FAMILY"

On 1 January 2002 several commentators and policy-makers depicted the advent of the euro in European citizens' daily lives as a historic moment, a transcendental step forward in the history of European unification, the dawn of a new era. The elimination of the national currencies and the consecration of the euro as the "holy icon" of the integration process were represented in a way to conjure up the atmosphere of a sacred initiation ritual. Videos and reports were released that testified to the ecstasy of millions of people gathering in the streets of European cities, rejoicing at the *birth* of the common currency, touching for the first time Europe's hottest totem, and staging special celebrations. The atmosphere of cosmic resurrection of the "European family" was further reinforced by the feeling many shared that, as a result of the magic moments of transformation, reunification was occurring.

The sensation of a new beginning was transmitted, for instance, through the cover image of *Europe* magazine (published monthly by the Delegation of the European Commission in Washington), which portrayed the common currency as a lovely newborn baby actively participating in the celebration of its own birth. In the picture, the infant sits comfortably and displays a high level of satisfaction. He is wearing the black hat of an illusionist, alluding perhaps to the magic force that allowed for his birth, and a blue ribbon with the golden symbol of the euro, referring presumably to the EU's colors—blue and gold. The baby is paunchy; his flab may evoke Cesare Ripa's Europa holding a cornucopia as a symbol of fertility, abundance, and prosperity. Inside the magazine, an illustration of another, even fleshier, baby standing on a heap of euro coins and holding in his left hand a pack of banknotes as if they were bays of victory reinforces the importance of the European Union's cosmic triumph. More than as a newborn baby, he is portrayed as a miniature senator from ancient Greece, reflecting perhaps the tradition of identifying Classical Greece as the cradle of the European integration process. His right hand rests on his hip in the classic power pose. His

smile conveys a strong sense of satisfaction, provoked, maybe, by the fulfillment of an archaic and universal yearning.

The colorful whistle in the baby's mouth on the cover might evoke in readers the celebrations that took place in twelve European countries and help them reexperience the atmosphere of the collective revelry. The date 1 January 2002, when the virtual currency turned into reality (removing the uncertainty for those who had doubts about its very existence), assumed for many a cosmic dimension: this special moment was seen as the well-deserved proceeding of Europe's most frenetic Christmas, providing the right motive to transform traditional New Year's parties into special gatherings celebrating the birth of a special child. Many perceived the event as a *European* carnival (in a Bakhtinian sense) that was giving birth to a *European* public space, replacing the dominant culture of a bureaucratic and elitist organization with a democratic atmosphere marked by freedom, equality, abundance, and playfulness. This (supposedly) provoked in more than 300 million European citizens an intense feeling of wholeness, unity, metamorphosis, and rebirth, and renewed their sensation of being part of a collective body. Through these moments of transcendence, the golden age was experienced in thought, on the emotional level, and enacted by the body. The prophecy of the Cumaean Sibyl (the announcement that had been made in Maastricht at the end of a great historical cycle of European integration) was fulfilled in solemn tones; Saturnia reappeared on earth with the advent of a *puer aeternus*.

Similar to the Virgilian *puer*, the European Central Bank's *puer* was of course not a real human being but a (real) political function: it represented (and still represents) the regenerating dream of an all-powerful Europe. As we can learn from the various reportage sources, bureaucrats persevered and managed to win the "psychological battle of the first day" (Solbes 2001/2002: 17); the European Central Bank (ECB) accomplished "the most ambitious experiment in the history of money," the greatest shift in European identity (Coman 2001). As a result of a heroic struggle, Europeans could both discover a "new way of being in Europe" and experience a feeling of being "at home throughout Europe" (Duisenberg 2001). As European Commission president Romani Prodi observed, EU citizens realized that the euro notes and coins in their pockets were a "concrete sign of the great political undertaking of building a united Europe" and were becoming a key element in their "sense of shared European identity and common destiny" (2002). Federalists transfigured the 2002 launching of the euro into an act of redemption that had brought about a metastasis: the "old" world was thus "over"; life had only now become truly real.

Yet no fireworks were launched for the “child’s” tenth birthday. In 2012, the E-day seemed to evoke the V-day of Beppe Grillo’s Five Star Movement—the mild voices celebrating European federalism were overshadowed by populist and nationalist forces shouting *vaffanculo* and promising *vendetta*. By now, the euro has come to be seen as a huge betrayal: the Eurozone is associated with recession and stagnation rather than with prosperity, with the imminent possibility of painful disintegration rather than joyful unity, with death rather than with birth, with mourning (the loss of a dream) rather than with the jubilation of resurrection. As a result of the unfulfilled expectations of perfect unity and pleasure, the ecstasy has gradually faded; the euro has failed to conjure up in citizens a strong affective attachment. The loss of eschatological dreams has triggered Europeans’ disenchantment with the new *home* and reinforced their nostalgia for their old *homes* (the cozy environment of nation-state *families* with all their indispensable components, including the national currency).

ECB president Mario Draghi had to intervene to end what came to be seen by many as Europe’s “psychological crisis,” to heal the wounds provoked by the trauma of the lost illusion. He recognized that in order to create warm feelings toward the European currency, the time had come to replace the euro’s sterile and neutral design with fertile and evocative imagery to prove, also, through visual representation that the euro’s bridges lead somewhere and its windows open onto the horizon of a new day. He arrived at the conclusion that a new European icon and a fascinating fable about Europe must take the place of national icons and romantic narratives about the nations’ birth and evolution. In 2012 the moment was ripe, he felt, to reaffirm the euro as the “holy icon” of the united and prosperous “European family,” to replicate the transcendental moment of creation of 2002, and to make European citizens reexperience the magic feeling of transformation, rebirth, and reunification. Since the euro’s launch, transcendental attributes have been assigned to the common currency. Described in mystical terms and represented through awe-inspiring images, the euro was seen as a sacred link connecting Europeans to each other and to paradise.

Citizens’ belief in the euro’s *transformative* and *resurrective* power, however, has gradually diminished, prompting Mario Draghi to endorse (discreetly) the recommendation made by a committee of experts of the European Community in 1993: “Mother Europe must protect her children” (De Clercq 1993: 24). Super Mario seems to have recognized the need to complement the celebration of Europe’s *pater familias* with a fest for the organization’s “founding mother.” The ECB president adopted a new communication policy proffering a different way

of ingraining the meaning (and the promise) of the European Union in people's minds. To reach out to people's hearts and fantasies, the much-celebrated hero of the euro crisis came out with a (seemingly) new cosmogony project. In November 2012, the European Central Bank announced that the watermark and hologram would display a portrait of Europa in a blinding array of blue-purple-green on one side of each banknote of the new Europa series. The representation of Europa's fascinating but almost forgotten tale became the special gift to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the euro. It is the seductive face of the mythological princess, the sacred gaze of Europe's mother goddess that we encounter when tilting the banknote to the sunshine.

The ECB could have chosen from thousands of artistic representations of the Europa myth. In the end, an image adorning an approximately two-thousand-year-old vase found in southern Italy, and exhibited today in the Louvre, was selected. Why did Mario Draghi decide to ornament the new euro series with the portrait of Europa? Why did he borrow an image from a Greek *krater*? Why doesn't Dionysus adorn the imagery of the banknotes too (if the god of wine appears on the reverse of the vase)? What goals of the ECB are sealed in this mysterious image and in its evocative representations?

The scarce consideration of the federalist vision of the European Union, as a special space where the promised land of paradise will soon materialize, reveals academics' and policy-makers' disregard of the key role that imagination and fantasy, sacred and profane, play in the top-down construction of the (utopian) idea of Europe. At the heart of this book is not the attempt to solve a mystery but to invent (another) mysterious story. The initial inspiration came not from a "fantastic binomio," as in my previous book (Salgó 2014), but from an image. Nevertheless, my goal has remained the same: I am still keen on following Gianni Rodari's advice (1973/2010) to enter reality from the window. I will ask my readers to engage with the European Union's institutional visual narratives (expressed through banknote iconography and official videos) in the realm of imagination, to participate in a play, and to give birth to new stories about Europe.

Based on the conviction that we perceive reality through imagination and unconscious fantasy and that political communities are tied together by emotional bonds (including both conscious and unconscious elements), this book examines the European Union as a "fantasy community" (a state of mind rather than an objective, external reality, visionary and real at the same time) and Eurofederalism as a project of *palingenesis*, a political "doctrine of salvation" driven by the eschatological dream of creating a new, idyllic Europe through the transformation

of the United States of Europe from dream into fact. Inspired by the interpretative and reflexive traditions and methodologies of the social sciences, it draws upon the disciplines of politics, anthropology, psychoanalysis, cultural theory, esthetics, and cinema studies to present a new way of looking at the “art of European unification,” to highlight the mythical sources of the federalist project, and to reflect on the role played by official visual narratives in the elite-driven creation of the “European family.”

This book offers a new way of looking at the EU’s communication strategy that aims to restore citizens’ lost feeling of primordial idyll and being-at-home experience, thereby strengthening the messianic sources of its legitimacy and people’s emotional allegiance to the European community. The analysis of the visual tools used by the European Central Bank, the European Commission, and the European Parliament will allow readers to gain a better understanding of the supranational elite’s “politics of transcendence”—their endeavors to transport Europeans from the profane overwhelming present to the imaginary realm of pristine harmony with the (implicit) promise of fulfilling citizens’ longing for wholeness and sublime idyll.

By taking seriously the Imaginary, the Playful, and the Fabulous, we will embark on a journey to the domain of the Fantastic in order to explore European federalists’ paradise dream. Readers might find that we can grasp (partially) the underlying meaning of the European Union’s symbol politics and identity-building strategy if we explore them with our imagination. If we endorse Mircea Eliade’s idea, “to have imagination is to enjoy the richness of interior life, an uninterrupted and spontaneous flow of images” (1991: 20), then it makes sense to encourage the activation of creative and imaginative mechanisms in order to better understand the complex nature of the “emotional crisis” of the European Union and to unveil the hidden meaning, the roots, and the sources of official visual narratives.

The magic power and evocative nature of banknote imagery could not but capture Walter Benjamin’s attention:

A descriptive analysis of banknotes is needed. The unlimited satirical force of such a book would be equaled only by its objectivity. For nowhere more naively than in these documents does capitalism display itself in solemn earnest. The innocent cupids frolicking about numbers, the goddesses holding tablets of the law, the stalwart heroes sheathing their swords before monetary units, are a world of their own; ornamenting the facade of hell. (Benjamin 1926/1978: 87)

Following a trend present in many realms of life, visual communication has become the most dominant form of political communication

used by the European Union. Since “images are one of the last bastions of magical thinking” (Mitchell 2005: 128), this book aims to explore the European Union’s “politics of magic.”

Works of art are not simply to be looked at; “they are to be ‘read’” (Burke 2001: 35). To speculate on the factors driving the ECB’s wish to infiltrate citizens’ everyday lives with the symbolic figure of Europa (by placing her portrait on the banknote and publicizing the new series with numerous campaign videos), we will rely on Erwin Panofsky’s model. The German art historian proposed three levels of interpretation. The first level, which corresponds to the pre-iconographical interpretation, reveals the “natural meaning” by identifying the objects and the events. The second-level iconographical analysis serves to define the “conventional meaning” by linking, for example, the supper to *The Last Supper* or the battle to *The Battle of Waterloo*. The ultimate level allows for an iconological interpretation that seeks to grasp the artwork’s “intrinsic meaning,” “those underlying principles which reveal the basic attitude of a nation, a period, a class, a religious or philosophical persuasion” (Panofsky 1939/1972).

Speculative elements are always included in the iconographical analysis and become more and more evident as the observer moves deeper and deeper in the exploration of images’ unconscious meanings (Burke 2001: 171). Peter Burke contends that the psychoanalytic approach is both necessary and impossible when interpreting the use of images. Freud invented a theory and a method that included images, internal and external; gestures; bodies, the body of the hysterics, the sexual body, but also the body of Moses; and symbols, psychic and cultural. “Psychoanalysis drew from and was fed by images that flowed underneath as in a riverbed, a sort of ‘iconsphere’ in which Freud moved and developed his work” (Chianese & Fontana 2010: 33). In the initial period of his reflections on the “invisible” of the psychic life, Freud began the construction of what became an immense collection of statues, animals, and sphinxes. The sensory assault of the Ancient served as an explicit invitation to the patient to undertake a journey back to the past. The fact that in the sacred space of Freud’s studio the singular and the universal, the individual past and the past of civilization, thousand year-old memories and personal recollections overlapped and blurred stands to testify that the psychic life, in order to be alive, must draw from the visible of perceptions and images (Chianese & Fontana 2010: 102–5). Furthermore, psychoanalytic theory helps us reveal more about the relationship between our desire and the visual world, the pleasure we glean from images or the unconscious fantasies that we tend to project onto them. At the same time, if the interpretation of images is based

on a psychoanalytic perspective, the method lacks evidence required by the traditional scholarly criteria: it is inevitably speculative. In order to pass to the third level of interpretation and capture the *spirit* that prevails among the supranational policy-makers and gain some understanding of the fantasies underlying the ECB's decision to incorporate a portrait of Europa in the iconography of the euro banknotes, at the end, one may be inclined to endorse Burke's view: "The best thing to do is probably to go ahead and speculate, but to try to remember that this is all that we are doing" (2001: 171). One might also take Freud's advice:

We must call the Witch to our help after all! ... Without metapsychological speculation and theorizing—I had almost said "phantasying"—we shall not get another step forward. Unfortunately, here as elsewhere, what our Witch reveals is neither very clear nor very detailed. (Freud 1937: 225)

My reflections were initially inspired by the (speculative?) idea that the European Union (just like other political communities) could be viewed as a "fantastic community" that is held together by an affective bond that is formed by its members' shared conscious and unconscious desires and fears, by what haunts them and what they yearn for (Salgó 2014). I will take the theoretical (speculative?) framework that I proposed in my previous book and argue that the driving force behind the European integration process is fantasy—illusions in a Winnicottian sense, phantasies in a Lacanian sense, phantoms as described by Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, and dreams as interpreted by Sándor Ferenczi. From Winnicott's perspective, "we can share a respect for illusory experience, and if we wish we may collect together and form a group on the basis of the similarity of our illusory experiences. This is a natural root of grouping among human beings" (1971: 3). For the French psychoanalyst Jacques-Marie Émile Lacan (1901–81), unconscious phantasies relate to the imago of the mother, the shadow of the bad internal objects. Phantasies are different variants of the same theme. The "fundamental phantasy" places the divided subject in relation to the cause of its desire, the *objet petit a*. The Hungarian-born French psychoanalysts Nicholas Abraham and Maria Torok used the concept of the phantom in a transgenerational sense: it is a formation of the unconscious, an entity that carries unspeakable and undisclosed secrets from one generation to the next. In their theory, the phantom operates through language; it "works like a ventriloquist, like a stranger within the subject's own mental topography" (1994: 173). And finally, according to Sándor Ferenczi, there lives in all of us "an undying longing for the return of the paradisiacal conditions of childhood" (1910:

315), an unconscious yearning for harmony and completeness that existed before the trauma. Dreams' traumatolytic function, he contends, overrides dreams' wish-fulfilling function (1931).

In all forms of human culture (art, science, religion, myth, etc.) we find a "unity in the manifold" (Cassirer 1955: 44). A unity in the manifold can be found in politics as well: "politics is an art of unification; from many, it makes one" (Walzer 1967: 194). I will use the metaphor of the fantastic family as a symbolic representation of the European Union to unveil and explore Europeans' deeply felt desire—the wish to find in public life the resolution, love, and wholeness that were lost; to unite what vanished, or never existed but which was intensely sought after; and to integrate what remained fragmented in private life. Especially in today's transitional period of uncertainty, our feelings may reflect a profound yearning for an ideal family; for a father figure able to protect, create, order, and guarantee prosperity; for a mother figure who holds us in her hands, nourishes and loves us; and for a "house" where we can feel "at home." I will portray Europe as a state of mind, visionary and real at the same time (rather than as an objective, external reality). I will explore the European integration process as a special "art of unification," in which unification suggests people's constant search, also in public life, for phenomena that echo the fantasized realm of wholeness, the "primal union," that characterizes the earliest stage of life when infant and mother exist as a "primary unit," as an "imaginary dyad"; and EU officials' persistent urge to provide citizens with "transformational objects" (Bollas) or with a *objet petit a* (Lacan), which evoke the idyllic conditions of the primordial paradise.

Since ancient times, the human body, the family, and the theater have been used as traditional metaphors to imagine, construct, and describe political communities. Their meanings have transformed, but they are still among the most effective tropes. Today, European federalists make use of the family metaphor as a means to rally popular support for the project of the United States of Europe. Numerous attempts have been made to inject intimacy into the (still embryonic) European public life. There is a belief that emotions, sentiments, sensations, and fantasies can be nurtured through tropes of familial ties, such as "European family," the "European house," "birth," "child," "mother," "father," and "twinning," and can serve to reinforce the feeling of community and a sense of belonging. In the family model promoted by the European Commission, top-down, often aggressive symbolic policies have been launched to prescribe not only who should be intimate with whom but also who deserves this intimacy: who can be considered a legitimate member of the European family. According to Eleni Papagaroufali, "The Commis-



sion's extensive 'investment' in the normative 'distribution of [familial] affections' among its members, as well as its enormous interest in creating multiple microsites of intimate space is best exemplified by the institution of twinning" (2008: 73). For me, among the most important attempts to fill the emotional gap the EU suffers from would be to highlight the Commission's portrayal of the Eurozone through the metaphor of the European family; the ECB's decision to ornament the symbol of a united and prosperous European family, and its most beloved "child," the euro, with the pictorial metaphor of Europe's "mother"; the advertising campaign aimed at reinforcing these fantasies (and implicit promises) and the videos launched to prepare the act of communion that was to take place in occasion of the 2014 elections to the European Parliament.

The transition to monetary union lacked "humanity" and "intimacy" according to the report "Reflection on Information and Communication Policy of the European Community" (De Clercq 1993). The "intimization of politics" (Ringmar 1998), which was an outcome of the French Revolution and served as an engine for establishing a democratic public space where politics would be based on the authentic relations among actors, came to be seen by the European Union as a useful strategy to enhance popular attachment to the organization. European politics of intimacy has been following the model adopted during the nineteenth-century process of nation-state building. Since the tropes of familial ties had not contributed to transform the Eurozone into the intimate space of a European home, the ECB had to invest in the enterprise of taking Europeans on a journey to the maternal womb, back to the era of omnipotence. Independently, whether we see Europa's portrait through the mirror image of Winnicott's mother or through the Lacanian gaze, the initiative can be interpreted as Draghi's attempt to offer, through the visual representation of the idyllic mother-child relationship, the symbolic illustration of the maximum level of intimacy that could be reached between the euro and the citizens. The taking of possession of the mother by the child (symbolized by their reencounter on the euro banknotes) nurtures the hope that the return to paradise can be accomplished, the European "art of unification" can be completed, and common currency can finally become the holy icon of Europe's new-born fantastic family.

In the fantasies of many Europeans, the golden era is associated with the last decades before the outbreak of the First World War. Stefan Zweig writes about Vienna in *The World of Yesterday*: "We shouted with joy when Blériot flew over the Channel as if he had been our own hero ... a European community spirit, a European national consciousness

was coming to being" (1943/1964: 196). In the imagination of many, the First World War is equated with Europeans' expulsion from paradise and signals the beginning of an era characterized by a strong sense of nostalgia for the lost Garden of Eden. According to Heinrich Mann, to accomplish a return to the much-desired state of wholeness and serenity, "we Europeans must build our own church ... For our church depends upon our unshakable belief. The belief is Europe, the doctrine of salvation is its unity" (cited by Orluc 2000: 135).

This book will examine European federalism as a political doctrine of salvation, driven by the paradise myth, and the fantasy of a redemptive end characterized by the transformation of the United States of Europe from dream into reality. Since its beginning, the European integration project's undeclared goal has been to accomplish the project of *palingenesis*—to create a *new* Europe, return to *illud tempus*, rediscover the sacred, and to reexperience idyllic feelings. The term *integration* has the same roots as *entire*; it comes from the Latin *integer*, meaning intact, untouched, whole, complete, impeccable. *Integrare* means to restore or make whole, while *integration* refers to processes of unification of separate units. Following its etymological roots, the European integration process could be seen as the par excellence example for the European "art of unification," consisting in the remaking of Europe's fantastic family as a whole and providing a *new* home for *reborn* Europeans.

Symbolic activity can be seen as the most important means of bringing things together, both intellectually and emotionally, thus overcoming isolation and even individuality (Walzer 1967: 194). Supranational policy-makers have identified in symbol politics the ideal tool to reunify European citizens in a strong emotional community. The belief that the EU needs new myths, symbols, and rituals in order to change the nature of familial relationships, reinforce citizens' loyalty to the EU, and attribute transcendental qualities to the organization lies at the base of the federalist agenda and constitutes the main object of inquiry in this book.

With *Images Europe*, Luisa Passerini aims to subvert the traditional interpretations of myth and symbols and find Europeanness hidden in images (2003b). Considering images, in particular moving images, as privileged sites of the imaginary, she analyzes their connections with the unconscious in relation to the Europa myth. Her conclusion suggests that we cannot define ourselves as European without questioning not only our cultural heritage but also our own intimate feelings and attitudes (Passerini 2003a: 27). Jacques-René Rabier contributes to this idea when he points out that the recent renaissance of the various versions of the Europa myth relates both to "mundane factors" and to "phenom-

ena of a psychological nature" (2003: 76). He himself explores the former and leaves the latter to others. With this book, I seek to respond to his invitation and bring in psychoanalytical and anthropological perspectives, along with elements of art theory, film, and communication studies, to explore some of the most novel elements of the European Union's symbol politics, including the revival of the fable of the Phoenician princess. My hope is to show that the reappearance and the various uses of the image of Europa reflect a widespread nostalgia for the golden age, a heartfelt yearning for transformation and rebirth, and the European elite's promise of fulfilling these paradise dreams.

Though the 2007 Berlin declaration officially stated that the dream of earlier generations (a peaceful, prosperous, and unified Europe) had become a reality, today, notwithstanding official celebrations of (alleged) triumphs, the European political elite are seen by many as the "mother of our problems" rather than actors performing the functions of the loving and nurturing *mater familias*. The European Union's failure to fire people's dreams is a self-evident proposition. The collective imaginary is tied to nationalisms and local roots; the European imaginary is weak to reawaken passions for a different, supranational project. Yet EU institutions have not given up the hope of challenging the grip that nationalism continues to hold on the modern imagination. They still aim to take possession of Europeans' fantasies, invent a European culture, promote a new sense of Europeanness that would transcend parochial and nationalistic loyalties, and guarantee a higher level of consciousness based on (unconditional) loyalty to federal Europe. Several questions arise spontaneously: Is it still possible to resurrect the paradise myth? How to appeal to European citizens' emotions? How to make people believe in and feel thrilled about their European family and about the construction of their new European house? How to turn the EU into an intimate space offering a home-feeling? How to transform the nightmare of "a corpse whose hair and nails, wealth, and cumulative knowledge are still growing, but the rest is dead" (Heller 1988: 154) into the paradise dream of a magic land of peace, prosperity, and pleasure?

As George Soros states, "we need to do whatever we can to ... preserve the European Union as the fantastic object that it used to be," because the future of Europe depends on the revitalization of the dream (2012). For Heller, a true metamorphosis requires a "cultural backing, a brand-new cultural mythology" (1988: 148).

One of the results of Jose Manuel Barroso's two-term presidency of the European Commission has been the turning of the "United States of Europe (USE)," "democratic federation of states," "European family,"

“house of the European family,” and “irreversible euro” into “symbolic taboos.” From Ian Manners’s perspective, “symbolic taboos” include those phrases and sayings that are instantly recognizable as the central discourse around which EU politics and policies revolve; they provide a series of inviolable and sacrosanct understandings about what the EU is and what it does (2006). The USE, already a heartfelt desire of many intellectuals and policy-makers in the twentieth century and which was a vision that had been triumphant at the level of political imagination but had always failed to become institutionalized, has reemerged as a powerful state of expectation. The United States of Europe is portrayed as a political utopia with strong mythical connotations. Its advocates are driven by the (omnipotent) fantasy of constructing an idyllic community and by the desire to return to the (fantasized) golden age. Their plans are disguised cosmogonic projects: Eurofederalists strive to repeat the moment of creation by transforming Chaos into Cosmos and also to be recognized as founding fathers of a new European democracy. The word *crisis* comes from a Latin word *cerno* that means “to separate.” Following the 2008 *crisis* (that caused the fragmentation of the European family into several separate pieces), the European Commission set out to create a “new faith” in order to help renew the principles of political life, form a European identity and (re)create Europe’s fantastic family. The supranational elite’s utopia turned into the official soteriology—a federation of nation-states came to be represented as the only salvation, the only way for Europeans to transcend the chaos provoked by the crisis and reconquer the lost idyll. If Europe is to avoid collapse and triumph over those forces that seek to bring back the past, says the mantra of the new political religion, it has no choice but to continue on the path of ever-closer union. The United States of Europe has become the sacred dogma that is to guide Europe’s new visionary leaders in their heroic trials toward redemption and assist citizens in leaving behind today’s overwhelming conditions. Turning the dream into reality has become a holy mission and a moral duty. The supranational elite have constructed a new symbolic world (made of myths, symbols, and rituals), giving the idea of the European community an awe-inspiring aura. European citizens are expected to cherish new dogmas: all need to participate in the single currency’s sanctification as the holy icon of the reborn European family, and all need to internalize the myth of a new, idyllic, federal Europe. The sacred truth of the rebirth and reunification of the intimate community cannot be questioned; the spirit of the cosmogony project cannot be broken.

To help the prophets of the federalist doctrine of salvation spread the creed and enlarge their community of believers, to build brand loyalty

and transform united Europe into a legend, an idol, an object of adoration, and a cult obsession, the Norwegian Nobel Committee in 2012 awarded the Nobel Peace Prize to the European Union. The EU was sanctified for its triumph in the struggle for reconciliation, democracy, and human rights, and for helping to “transform most of Europe from a continent of war to a continent of peace,” thereby representing a “fraternity between nations” (Nobel Prize 2012). In his speech, Commission president José Manuel Barroso expressed pride for those “European values” that “the EU promotes in order to make the world a better place for all” and for which “people all over the world aspire,” but in particular for the organization’s soft power that allowed for the reunification of most parts of the European continent (Barroso 2012c). The implicit message of the celebrations was that the EU, through its transformative power, had accomplished the European dream by reunifying the members of the European family (who were feeling more and more separated as a result of a series of traumas and disillusionments). The same power eliminated the remnants of the dark era of war, destruction, poverty, and fragmentation, allowing for the metamorphosis of the continent, and again turned Europe into the paradisiacal land of Cockaigne.

The European Commission has also done its part in the intimidation, emotionalization, dramatization, and sacralization of European politics. Following the nineteenth-century model of nation-state building, it set out in the 1970s to invent new symbols for family membership and homecoming. In the following decades, it revisited its symbol repertoire, reformulated the concept of citizenship, and changed its communication strategies with the hope of solving the organization’s legitimacy crisis. In the mission of top-down identity manufacturing, the common currency came to play the role of the protagonist. The journey toward a federal Europe, based on a common monetary policy, became symbolic of an imminent individual and collective rebirth—Frenchmen’s, Greeks’, Danes’, and Germans’ transformation into enlightened (and enlightening) “Europeans” and the Eurozone’s metamorphosis into a secure and cozy home. Yet the journey back to Europa’s maternal womb turned out to be much longer than expected. In an effort to expedite the process, European commissioner for communications, Margot Wallström, decided to change course. A new strategy was proposed to make the European home more intimate and attractive. A “fundamentally new approach” was adopted to make the “inhabitants of Planet Brussels more human” and easier to love (Wallström 2007). Wallström was resolute that the superficial American method—“Make up a slogan, double the advertising budget and come up with a nice campaign”—should be abandoned as a point of reference, opting in-

stead for “a more difficult path of actually changing structures” (2007). She recognized that the lack of a European story lies at the heart of the EU’s problem of “emotional deficit.” Although understanding that the previous generations’ popular narrative of the peace argument was not sufficient anymore to fire Europeans’ imagination, the European commissioner for communications was not poetic enough to invent a new story for the “Erasmus generation.” A different route was proposed, but no compass was offered as a guide to the destination.

Europeans had to wait until Mario Draghi assumed the role of the superhero with determination to triumph where others had failed. For the celebration of the tenth anniversary of the construction of the house of the European family, he launched what he called a “new product”—the Europa series of euro banknotes—and propelled an advertising campaign to *sell* it to “Europeans.” Portraying the euro through the verbal and visual metaphor of the newborn child of the European family in 2002 was meant to help citizens give meaning to something difficult to grasp and attribute affects to something difficult to love. In a similar way, decorating the new euro series with the image of the Phoenician princess (Europe’s “founding mother”) in 2012 was intended to provide significance, hope, and healing in a painful period. This visual metaphor was supposed to offer people a secure and intimate shelter in the chaos of the European crisis and act as a compass for their individual and collective journey.

To transform Europeans’ passionless relationship with the euro into a magical love affair, the ECB president decided to blow life into a seemingly dead currency; to attribute a sense and desire to the inanimate euro; and turn it into a maiden with an irresistible seductive power and a mother that protects, nourishes, and is loved by all her children. By placing the image of “seductive Europa” on the new series of banknotes and transforming the euro into a female figure, he sought to make people accept the notion of the European family as part of their own universe and to kindle hope and faith in an imminent European transformation and rebirth. Yet citizens holding the new banknotes in their hands might decode the image in a different way. Most likely, the portrait in the hologram would remain unnoticed, and among those who would recognize the face of a female figure, only a very few would be able to link it to the Europa myth. To make sure that Europeans would get the message and make it their own, Draghi launched a new (only *seemingly* less aggressive) communication campaign. In order to convey to citizens the desired (encoded) message, to sell not just a new product but the meaning and connotations that producers attached to it, video ads were released with precise explanatory (both written and audio) texts. Following the

central tenets of advertising strategy, these ads invite viewers to imagine themselves within the world of advertisement: the euro is “your money” (i.e., “seductive Europa” is also yours). They encourage citizens to “touch, feel and tilt” (i.e., to love *her*), thus experiencing, as a result of mystic reunification, the idyllic feeling of paradise and homecoming. This book seeks to unveil supranational institutions’ attempts to sell infinite pleasure and to perform a traumatolytic function.

All the symbolic totems, captured so often through familial and non-familial metaphors and re-presented more and more frequently as images, are poetic devices that serve to reinforce the mythical dimension of the European integration project and to contribute to the sacralization of European politics. Metaphor is not a special trick used in verbal and visual communication but a natural form of expression. For the Italian political philosopher, rhetorician, historian and jurist Giambattista Vico (1668–1744) all the first tropes are corollaries of the poetic logic; in line with metaphysics, they give meaning and passion to insensate things, and each one of them could be seen as “a fable in brief” (1725/1948: 116). Additionally, the world in its infancy was composed of poetic (heroic) nations where the first poets, like children who take inanimate things in their hands and talk to them in play as if they were living persons, attributed to bodies the being of animate substances—reason and passion—and in this way made fables of them. Vico recognizes in this poetic wisdom the crude beginnings of all human activities: it is the poetic or creative metaphysics out of which morals, economics, and politics developed. For this Italian intellectual, poetic truth is metaphysical truth, and physical truth, not in conformity with it, should be considered false.

Since the verbal and pictorial metaphors used in politics activate in their audience unconscious responses and reinforce the emotional impact of the political message, they should not be viewed as stylistic ornaments of political rhetoric but rather as illustrations of fantasies, as the symbolic (figurative) expression of unconscious desires and fears. The word *metaphor* derives from the Greek *metapherein*, which means “to transfer” or “to carry” from one realm to another. Karsten Harries’s *Metaphor and Transcendence* (1978) suggests that, in modern poetry, metaphors express a pursuit of unity, a yearning for a magical presence. As this philosopher and art historian underlines, metaphors imply lack; they speak of what remains absent: “God knows neither transcendence nor metaphor—nor would man, if he were truly godlike” (1978: 84). Through metaphors we express our striving for words that would be the “creative words of God” (1978: 90), which could create a poetic (sacred) world out of the fragments of the world, let us rediscover where

we belong, and allow us to leave the familiar reality for the sake of a more profound transcendental vision.

Metaphors in the political discourse have a similar function. The imagery used in political speeches and in visual messages allows the storyteller to take leave of the ordinary world, to carry his or her listeners from painful reality into the realm of fantasy, from the profane to the holy. Verbal and pictorial metaphors become an additional instrument for sacralizing politics and reinforcing the emotional bonds. Today, the official discourse in supranational institutions is overwhelmed with metaphors, symbols, allegories, and analogies. By interpreting this imagery, we may gain some insight into the sealed kernel of Euro-federalists' *palingenetic* agenda, their desire to leave behind the profane (painful) reality and let a new, *sacred* community emerge. Conscious of the fact that complex or overly abstract images would not be internalized easily by European citizens, and therefore would not fulfill their political-communicative function (they would increase rather than diminish Europeans' sense of confusion and uncertainty), the architects of the European cosmogony project have opted instead for familiar representations already present in European rhetoric for several decades. By reviving the terminology of the ancient family-politic, they have further enhanced the fantasy dimension of their political narrative; the illusion of a return to the idyll of the primordial mother-child relationship and the feeling of the communal rebirth and magic recreation of the fantastic family have become even more powerful.

Convinced that familial tropes and images represent respectively the principal linguistic and visual means of our imagination, this book explores the use of these metaphors in the elite-driven project of building a new community and constructing a European identity. Since "psychoanalysis is essentially a metaphorical enterprise" (Arlow 1979: 373), I will act psychoanalytically and attempt to unearth and interpret the consciously conveyed metaphors and translate into words the unconsciously enacted ones. This publication must necessarily be divided into three parts—necessarily, because every good book is divided into three parts (Hamvas 1945/2007: 209). According to this great Hungarian metaphysical thinker, the perfect division is three: three is the manifestation of the divine, and three is the number associated with wine (which the *krater* chosen by Draghi contained in ancient times). This publication explores the sacralization of European politics through the analysis of visual communication—how the European elite have turned the political ideology of federalism into a soteriology, how they have appropriated from religion the function of myths (part 1), symbols (part 2), and rituals (part 3) and thereby sought to attribute a tran-



scendent quality to the vision of United States of Europe. Official visual narratives claim to display the *real* image of Europe. This book shows how the illusionary character and even the logic of forgery underlying the elite-driven cosmogony project of giving birth to a new Europe is illuminatingly exposed in the currency iconography of the new series of euro banknotes and in the communication campaigns launched to raise awareness of the new sacred totem (the new euro banknotes) and of the sacred ritual (the 2014 EP elections). While trying to sell the European Union's cosmogony project, these visual tools reveal the authoritarian nature of European utopianism and the betrayal of the promise of building together with citizens a new democratic Europe.

Similar to nation-states, the European Union requires institutional narratives to create a basis for legitimate political authority and members' allegiance. In the first part, "Numinous Stories about Europe's Rebirth," I will discuss the many ways Europe's official storytellers have been narrating the paradise myth, preaching about the spiritual renewal and rebirth of Europe to convince citizens that the European integration process will conclude with the restoration of pristine unity. I will portray federalism as the European manifestation of what Roger Griffin portrayed as "*palingenetic* ultranationalism," a political religion that conducts what Slavoj Žižek defined as "politics of *jouissance*," with the fantasy of the "ever-closer union" constituting a *objet petit a*. I will explore the soteriology that conjures up a fantasy world, where all obstacles that hinder the realization of the paradise dream are disregarded and where there are no limits to what the EU can achieve. We will discover why the Europa fable is still relevant for today, how the human yearnings concealed in this story reflect the spirit of our time, and why it can be seen as a perfect visual metaphor for federalists' *palingenetic* myth of the United States of Europe. We will speculate on what drove the ECB to embellish the new banknote series with the face of Europa and discard the ambivalent figure of Dionysos. I will highlight the similarities between the two protagonists' stories, focusing in particular on their homeward voyages and on their seductive and transformative power. An iconological interpretation of the rich symbolism of the Europa myth's artistic representation on the vase will be offered.

In the second part, "The Promise of a New Symbol," Europa will be portrayed as a totem, a condensation symbol, the holy icon of the European integration process. It will attempt to explain the pictorial turn that has taken place in the EU's communication strategy and how Europa has become the visual metaphor of the euro and the protagonist of many of the official visual messages of the Commission and the ECB. The imagery of the European currency will be compared to the

iconography of national currencies, with an emphasis on their function and power. The analysis of the visual communication strategy of the ECB (centered around the “sacred gaze” of Europa) will allow readers to gain a better understanding of the supranational elite’s politics of transcendence and its political marketing strategy—their endeavors to *sell* Europeans a new story of abundance, fulfillment, and homecoming by creating the (illusion) of a carnivalesque atmosphere for the occasion of the euro’s tenth anniversary.

The third part, “European Festival Tales,” will seek new answers to the question “What the devil does a man need?” that Czesław Miłosz posed in *The Captive Mind* (1953) by further elaborating on the theme of political allegiance, in particular on citizens’ *affective* attachment to the European Union. The meaning of citizenship will be redefined, relying on Arpad Szakolczai’s concept of home and on psychoanalytic interpretations centered on people’s longing for home. Popular attachment to the EU will be seen as a relationship that evokes the mother-child dyad in order to highlight the importance of the emotional dimension of political allegiance versus its rational, interest-based counterpart. Events, celebrations, and rituals will be analyzed as novel pillars of the EU’s politics of transcendence in relation to 1) their function of provoking liminal moments: short periods of collective effervescence during which the EU may turn into a true fantastic family, a *communitas*, based on authentic interpersonal relationships; and 2) their function of evoking the atmosphere of a carnival-like performative democracy. The 2014 Eurovision Song Contest and the 2014 European Parliament elections will be analyzed as possible liminal sources of a new European democracy. The ritual of the direct election of the members of the European Parliament had been introduced in 1979 with the hope of contributing to the creation of a European demos and a European public space, thereby enhancing the organization’s democratic credentials. The 2014 elections were portrayed by the prophets of the federalist soteriology not just as a tool to reinforce the affective dimension of European citizenship but also as a sacred rite of passage—an opportunity for citizens to swear allegiance to the holy mission of the United States of Europe, enact citizenship, and become actively involved in the federal project of palingenesis. I will explore the information campaign and the various video ads that aimed to awaken unenthusiastic EU citizens and carry them in a purifying carnival that would renew all. Readers will discover how these tools are revealing of the authoritarian nature of the federalist ideology and why the plan that foresees the purging of evil (the fight against “populists” and “nationalists”), the merging with mother Europa, and collective rebirth could end in a painful fi-

asco. Based on the belief that music, more than other tools, can enhance a sense of individual and collective purification and rebirth, the unofficial prophets of European federalism have entrusted the Eurovision Song Contest (ESC) with bringing forward the art of European unification. It is as if the organizers of the festival, the performers, and even the viewers were all invited to participate in a European carnival and make the fantastic European family resurrect and become *whole* and *home* again. I will suggest that Conchita Wurst's song "Rise Like a Phoenix," winner of the 2014 edition, embodies today's zeitgeist (longing for rebirth) and the federalist ethos—"nothing is impossible." The part will bring evidence to claim that the Austrian singer's performance offers a powerful musical and visual interpretation, a suggestive ritualization of the supranational cosmogony myth, and that therefore it may be recognized as the sacred anthem that supranational policy-makers have been long searching for.

In my concluding remarks, I will invite readers to consider Eric Voegelin's political theory when reflecting on the reasons why federalists have not succeeded (and will not succeed) in persuasively playing the role of the magic bridge-builders, why their cosmogony project has failed and is still doomed to failure. I will argue that the politics of artificial intimacy, Barrosó's authoritarian family model, must be transcended, and that Donald Winnicott's concept of "transitional space" should inform the European elite's parenting technique for strengthening citizens' home-feeling. The EU should not be seen as a "community of interest" or as a "community of identity" where there are no limits to what can be achieved. A playful European public space is closer to being a precondition of a democratic polity. Mario Draghi is not a superhero, but the EU needs no heroes to become a *cosmion*, or a true *communitas*. One of the greatest endowments of the Europa fable is that the story (just like the meaning of European family) can be narrated, interpreted, and re-presented in innumerable ways depending on time, space, the cultural priorities, necessities, and imaginaries of various peoples and epochs. The "destiny" of the myth can be considered analogous to the destiny of the Freudian drive (Passerini 2002b: 157) and the destiny of European identity—none of these can be determined a priori; they are elastic with respect to their scope and can assume very different and unexpected physiques. The most important legacy of the Athenian democracy (what is seen as the cradle of European democracy) is not (just) the pan-Hellenic identity construction but diversity-management, the ability to go along together (Ober 2005). In this vein, I will contend that a democratic political order must leave room for the Dionysian dimension.