

Preface

In sociological scholarship there is a widespread assumption that either the end is nigh for the nation or that it is an out-dated form of cultural identity in need of overthrowing. This monograph bucks this trend by examining a number of new ritual engagements with national history and identity, arguing that these indicate a possible key role for the nation in a 'global' future. Such a project should not be interpreted as a reactive defence of the nation, nor seen as the romanticising of national citizenship.

My interest in the topic derives from empirical observations of the emergence over the last two decades of various new kinds of rites and remembrances that involve a reviving of national attachment. The monograph does not attempt to engage in dialectical debates around whether the nation has a primordial or instrumental basis. Rather the focus is squarely on the nation in the future by examining the popularity and influence of these new rituals forms, with an in depth analysis of particular cases. This endeavour allows for a reassessment of assumptions about the decline of the nation and national history in Western societies.

A core theme throughout the monograph is that in order to comprehend the influence of these new national rituals we need to attain a greater appreciation of the adaptive powers of the nation. In considering the current deficiencies of social theory in this regard it is a worthwhile exercise to contrast the sociological theorising of nationalism with that of capitalism. Like nationalism, capitalism has its origins in modern social and economic conditions that are vastly different to that that of today. In particular, the consumerist culture which emerged in the second half of the twentieth century poses a strong 'contradiction' (Bell 1971) to the Protestant work ethic. Despite such tensions, few see capitalism in demise. Instead social theories across disciplines note its transformative dynamics and power to remain relevant to the age. Yet in the case of nationalism it is strongly argued that either it has inherent qualities that lack adaptive properties or that any shift away from its modern basis is evidence of it slowly but surely being cast into the dustbin of history. This poses its own dilemma: how to explain the enduring qualities of the nation or the reasons why the nation has, for at least a century, defied predictions of its demise. Scholars have typically explained this in relation to the public's attraction to the regressive identity politics of the nation, with the nation considered unable to incorporate cultural diversity and global realities, something exploited by the state for short terms political power.

In developing the argument that the nation is able to regain cultural relevance by adapting itself to the spirit of the contemporary age it is not my intention to suggest that social theorists of globalization, and more recently cosmopolitanism, propagate a utopian belief about the future in relation to an integrated 'global village' or international governance. Nor do I wish to suggest that this literature simplistically envisions a future in which national identity is eradicated and has no role to play in a revitalised global system. It needs to be acknowledged that important scholarship has been undertaken on the origins of the nation being within a global system (Giddens 1985; Grenfeld 1992) and the ongoing links between nationalism and cosmopolitanism (Fine 2003; Delanty 2006). However, even when social theorists are advancing fairly pragmatic institutional ways of increasing cosmopolitan democracy (Habermas 2001; Held 2004; Kaldor 2003) or analysing cosmopolitan dispositions as they exist within the everyday lifeworlds of national citizens (Lamont and Aksartova 2002; Nava 2002; Urry 2003), there is little consideration of national identity as dynamic and transformative. Rather the national assumes a kind of backstage role in the scholarship on globalization and cosmopolitanism, seen as a functional organisational entity or reduced to the notion of 'local' culture, playing an important role in providing ontological stability in a world otherwise afflicted by an avalanche of global culture (Appadurai 1990; Robertson 1995).

In the majority of sociological scholarship on contemporary culture we find little explicit and separate investigations of national identity. To take an example relevant to the various case studies explored in this monograph, in the last two decades a significant literature has emerged around the ways in which cosmopolitanism is expressed and enhanced through global mobility (Beck 2006; Hannerz 1990; Urry 2000). However, within this writing there is no in-depth exploration of how such exposure to difference may translate to a transformation of nationalism. Rather such work tends to assume that mobility per se automatically advances the trend of indifference to national identity in Western nations (Fenton 2007). For all that globalisation and postmodern scholars have written about sociology being driven by methodological nationalism (Beck 2002, 2004; Urry 2000), this theorising of cosmopolitanism is similar to classical sociology in that the nation is often taken as given, with the dynamics of the nation being assumed and seen as not meriting separate investigation (Smith 1983).

An exception to this neglect has been the field of nation and nationalism studies that has long engaged in detailed studies of national contexts, an empirical approach that has been well placed to appreciate the diversity of national forms and the resurgence of nationalism in particular cultural contexts (Brubaker 1992; Kumar 2003; Smith 1995). While such work has pointed to the plurality of nationalism and avoided assumptions about the decline of national consciousness, it has generally not engaged with postmodern theories about the decline of grand narratives and the role of new consumption, leisure and travel identities. As elaborated upon Chap. 1, this is in part because of an intellectual concern with the origins of nationalism and its inherent qualities rather than national futures. While large scale national and world value surveys have monitored attitudes towards the nation and attempted to map issues of pride in one's nation, this approach has various problems in compre-

hending the future of the nation. Firstly, it tends to find high levels of national pride throughout the developed world (Evans and Kelly 2002) which is counter to other empirical findings and theories about national sentiment (see Chap. 1). Secondly, the dominance and homogeneity of questions asked in the surveys, often justified for purposes of comparative validity, has meant that there has been a lack of analysis of how changes in self-identity connect with attitudes towards the nation (Phillips 2002). The result is an ambiguous and monolithic conceptualization of the nation and national identity, failing to appreciate the diversity of national culture and forms of cultural attachment to the nation and national history (Kim and Schwartz 2010). Finally, survey data can only tell us about shifts in national sentiment and attitudes towards the national, not the mechanisms by which change occurs. It is these limitations which I address through proposing a cultural approach to understanding the ways in which the national through ritual might be rejuvenated in the West, what I refer to as national re-enchantment.

The new ritualistic ways that the public are engaging with the nation and its past offer re-enchantment through providing forms of participation and expression that differ from that offered in conventional state-sanctioned rituals, forms which continue to dominate the study of nation and nationalism. The social and political influence of these emerging ritual forms though is not only through the level but the type of engagement that they allow and how this facilitates new comprehensions of national identity. In making this argument it is important to acknowledge that the emerging rites analysed in this monograph are not essentially unprecedented and have not been completely neglected by cultural scholars. However, when these rites have been examined they are taken as evidence of national decline or the short term vested interests of elites rather than a potential basis for genuine national rejuvenation. For example, scholarship that is connected to the classical theory of Max Weber on disenchantment (1958 [1904]; 1968) frequently undertakes analysis of cases where national commemoration interlinks with popular culture. However these conclude about a broad desacralization of history and routinization of historical charisma. This is most prominent in the analysis of historical engagement in the United States which is often assumed to act as a forerunner for cultural shifts in relation to nationalism (Smith 1995). However, assumptions of disenchantment equally appear in contexts that have far different histories of national identification. For example, Rogers Brubaker and Margit Feischmidt (2002) in their analysis of the 150th anniversary remembrances of the revolutions of 1848 in Hungary, Slovakia and Romania argue that there has been a shift from the 'holy to holidays' where people's engagement with history is more detached.

At times critical theorists also examine cases not dissimilar to that analyzed in this monograph. The emphasis in this work is often on national history being propagated in populist ways for political gain (Berezin 1997). A great deal of scholarship in this tradition borrows from understandings of nationalism as something that is 'invented'. Ernest Gellner (1964, p. 169) used the term 'invent' to show how nationalism is not the primordial awakening of nations to self-consciousness. It became more popularised though by the widely cited book *Invention of Tradition* edited by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (1983). For Hobsbawm and Ranger,

an invented tradition is a set of practices which inculcates certain values and norms by repetition. As the term is used, it refers to two phenomena. Firstly, ‘traditions’ which can be shown to have been actually invented by elites. Secondly, traditions whose origins are more difficult to establish, but which have been seized upon to symbolise membership and social cohesion. Reflecting the growth of the production of culture perspective in sociology, such notions have been widely illustrated in cases of Western nationalism. More recently they have been globally applied to various post-colonial contexts, although in a slightly broader frame appreciating greater levels of agency and hybridity than the term had originally allowed (Bhabha 1994, p. 247). We have also seen a hybrid perspective emerge between the Weberian and critical traditions whereby the nation is seen as a site of identity exploited for political and economic interests though in the process trivializing it (Gottdiener 1997; Sturken 2007).

In addressing such perspectives I do not discount their empirical findings but challenge their conclusions about the inevitable direction of our engagement with the nation. While the aim of the monograph is to engage in the profiling of rituals which suggest that national attachment can be re-encharmed, I differentiate my position from literature which suggests that the nation remains vibrant by acknowledging the decline of the nation. For example, the French cultural historian Pierre Nora is indeed correct to argue that much of the study of national commemoration and collective memory has been on contexts and remembrances of the past, which can easily be seen as “fleeting incursions of the sacred ... vestiges of parochial loyalties...” (1996, p. 7). Nora is wrong though in thinking that these are the “rituals of a ritual-less society”, forever condemned to be a disenchanted world currently “busily effacing all parochialisms” (1996, p. 7). The waning of certain beliefs I take as a natural part of national identity as it operates in what Geertz (1973, 1983) refers to as a cultural system. Similarly I do not discount critical scholarship that points to the ways in which economic interests and entrepreneurial activity symbolically shape the nation. However, to limit ourselves to these understandings of national attachment is to suggest that national myths and traditions can be reducible to other social or material forces. In contrast, this monograph argues that the national has its own logics and power which can see it not only endure but become re-encharmed by being reimagined as a source of identity in the contemporary age. This is not to argue that the nation will automatically remain relevant or the dominant identity in the future, only that it is reductionist to suggest that it is inevitable that the nation cannot re-attain cultural significance.

Despite the continuing prominence of Weberian and critical theories in sociology, it is postmodern scholarship towards which this monograph concentrates its critical lens. The engagement with this paradigm is in part because in many ways it is most recent and influential manifestation of the death of the nation thesis. However, it is also because it has made important advancements in comprehending historical variability in cultural attachment and identified the cultural prominence of new forms of ritual engagements. It is argued that postmodernists through appreciating the decline of grand national narratives; the increased social and political significance of consumption, leisure and travel; and the emergence of new ritual engage-

ments with national history have, largely unknowingly, pointed to the conditions around which we may see a re-enchantment of national identity in the West. While postmodernists have rightly pointed to a ‘waning of affect’ in relation to modernist engagements with the nation, they have been wrong in dismissing the possibility of new ritual forms allowing for its re-enchantment, and as a consequence the nation re-attaining strong cultural and political significance in an era of globalization. In making this case I do not attempt to engage in a detailed epistemological critique of postmodern scholarship or conversely spend any considerable effort to develop a case for its relevance within sociology. There has already been a significant amount of literature about postmodernism as it intersects with sociology (Lemert 2005; Mirchandani 2005; Seidman 1991; Woodward et al. 2000). Rather, working from the perspective of cultural sociology, my argument is directly focused upon the need for sociology to appreciate new forms of national ritual. In this I engage in more grounded ‘middle-range’ cultural theorizing (Alexander and Smith 2010).

The starting point for such a perspective is to establish some definitional specificity. Critics have argued that the breadth of the ways in which the postmodern is used and applied to different dimensions of social life makes it more of a “buzzword” and useless for anything but the most general descriptor of contemporary culture. While this is somewhat true, such breadth also means that in critiquing the field of postmodern studies it is also important to refer to the term in an inclusive manner. As such in this monograph the concept of the postmodern is used to describe the social, cultural, political and economic forces which have been thought to be oppositional to the central tenets of modernity. When reference is made to postmodern social theories I generally refer to scholarship and paradigms that hold the West has or will move into a new social era in which the modern basis of identity is dismissed or greatly diminished. This definition means that the postmodern here applies both to scholarship that celebrates the spectacle and irony of the postmodern worldview as well as those that point to its dangers. This includes that which emerges from a Marxist critique of postmodernity if it argues that the aesthetic codes of postmodernism have become dominant (eg. Jameson 1984). The descriptor of postmodern as used in this monograph is also inclusive of scholars who predate the widespread use of the term and those that have attempted to replace it with a litany of similar terms and theories. Despite important differences between them, here I refers to concepts like post-industrial (Bell 1973, 1976); late capitalism (Jameson 1984); reflexive modernization (Beck et al. 1994); liquid modernity (Bauman 2000).

Generally I use the notion of postmodern scholarship to refer to a certain intellectual consensus around the future of the nation as it relates to globalization, risk and uncertainty, global ethics and social movements (Mirchandani 2005). It is worth noting two of these in this opening section given the prominent position of their authors within recent sociological scholarship around globalization: Anthony Giddens’ conceptualization of de-traditionalization and Zygmunt Bauman’s ideas about “liquid” society. Both scholars could claim not to be postmodern in that they have argued that there has not been a complete severing from modernity, but apart from a matter of degree there is a similar emphasis in their work to scholars who more dogmatically argue that the contemporary age is completely divorced from the modern.

Giddens, for example, argues we have moved into a “post-traditional social order” in which the disintegration of culture as a guide for behavior has meant that individuals now must “negotiate lifestyle choices among a diversity of options” (1991, p. 5). This has occurred through a process he refers to as de-traditionalization. It has two referents, the impact of globalisation under which “Western societies are being opened up from the hold of tradition” while other societies “that remained more traditional are becoming detraditionalised” (1999, p. 4). As outlined above, I do not deny that this process is occurring and Giddens’ theories provide important insights into the contemporary age. For example, the de-traditionalization thesis provides a useful alternative to past Durkheimian ways of conceptualising tradition that emphasise its universal functions. Edward Shils most notably defined tradition as anything “handed down from one generation to the next.” (1981, p. 12). This included “material objects, beliefs about all sorts of things, images of persons and events, practices and institutions” as well as “buildings, monuments, landscapes, sculptures, paintings, books, tools, machines” (Shils 1981, p. 12). The problem with Shils’ schema is that everything becomes tradition and thus takes attention away from varying degrees and forms of engagement with history. At the other end of the spectrum though Giddens and his followers pay little attention to the circumstances under which such tradition might regain cultural significance. Giddens does discuss ‘re-traditionalisation’ but this is limited to the past becoming a fundamentalist refuge from the complexities of the contemporary world. He has little to say about ways in which history can become re-enchanted for society as a whole and instances where it is a resource for the advancement of progressive politics.

Like Giddens, Bauman associates historical engagement today with fundamentalism, failing to comprehend it as an enduring source of guidance for social action. While the nation was once a ‘solid’ basis for “the comfort of ... universal guidance (and) ... self-confidence” (Bauman 1992, p. xxii) it is now, according to Bauman, metaphorical liquid (2000), being a source of instability, uncertainty and as a consequence fear. Like other postmodern theorists, Bauman sees consumerism as a key part of this process. It is not only the act of consumerism which is consequential but also it as a worldview. Again metaphorically Bauman points to the tourist outlook, an individual driven by the pleasure principal with a desire to escape the everyday but finding themselves in a world where tourist signifiers are infiltrating the everyday (cf. Urry 2007). In this scenario our relationship to the nation shifts, with home becoming a “mix of shelter and prison” (Bauman 1996, p. 31); a mere transitory place to recharge batteries before the next journey. As will be highlighted through case studies in this monograph, contemporary tourism is indeed both an experience and a way of seeing the world, something to have emerged from the process of de-differentiation involving the meshing of the boundaries between leisure, work, education, religion, and science (du Gay 1993; Lash 1988; Rojek 1995). However, this does not necessarily result in the disintegration of historical consciousness, but can be something that re-enchants the nation, not simply through an alternative mode of engagement with the past but by prompting reinterpretations of historical narratives.

Just as with postmodern scholarship, the study of nations and nationalism has been involved in various definitional debates with important distinctions made be-

tween the nation, nation-state, national identity, various different sorts of nationalism and related terms such as civil society and cosmopolitanism. Many of these definitions are underpinned by assumptions about the origins and nature of contemporary nationalism and as such their particular utility will be discussed throughout the book as my argument about national re-enchantment develops. However, it is worth laying out some initial parameters in regards to these terms for my analysis. I refer to the nation as a society of people who, despite diversity, perceive themselves, and are perceived by others, to share some common cultural characteristics and to whom there is an attachment to a physical homeland. The nation-state is the geo-political entity that by whatever means institutionally governs the nation. Civil society refers to that part of society that is beyond the family and local sphere but is short of the state and largely autonomous of it, including religious, economic, academic or political institutions. Nationalism involves a patriotic attachment to the nation and the perceived commonalities of its people. Civic nationalism is a form of nationalism that is associated with the traditions and ideals of civil society in contrast with the state. National identity is the form through which nationalism is expressed in terms of common myths and beliefs about the national character and the symbolic expression of the relationship between the land and its people. I take cosmopolitanism as referring to openness to the world and cultural differences within it. From this perspective I refer to a cosmopolitan form of nationalism. However, this is different from references I make to cosmopolitan theorists that represent the dominant philosophical usage of cosmopolitanism, equating it with the possibilities for a world citizenship and the need to abandon national attachment in preference to international law and governance.

The emphasis of the monograph, as indicated in its title, is to explore the plurality of nationalisms and their transformations within new ritual forms rather than debate the supposed inherent qualities of nationalism. Whether it was ever possible to think about nationalism in the singular, in a world where globalization is producing a plurality of cultures rather than a bland uniformity, such intellectual endeavors lose some of their relevance. The continuance of these debates though is consequential. As argued above, a focus on national origins by nationalism scholars has taken them away from seriously looking towards a range of possible futures that exist independent of the 'real' happenings of yesteryear. This is not to argue that the origins of the nation are not significant but that greater analytic attention needs to be given to how these different origins feed into possible futures. Even within Western nationalism we see a great deal of differentiation in how countries at various levels are able to embrace globalisation, immigration and contemporary identity politics. The empirical focus of this monograph is consistent with such a comparative tradition, focusing on nationalism in Australia and the United States while appreciating their global dimension such as in relation to the influence of populations in Asia and the Middle East. I do not argue that the pairing of Australia and the United States is representative of either nationalism or even Western nations. As settler societies the nationalism found in both cases is strongly focussed upon nation-formation and foundation moments, typically more so than in countries with a more primordial ethnic imagining (Spillman 1997). While both forms of nationalism involve de-

marcating and enforcing both real and symbolic boundaries, the ideological basis of civic nationalism in Australia and the United States arguable involves a more active policing and debate about the national in relation to its more inclusive notion of citizenship (Brubaker 1992). However, the analytic focus of this monograph is not distinguishing between national forms but broadly highlights the potential of new ritual forms to re-enchant national identity. As particular cases Australia and the United States provide a valid basis for challenging the dominant assumption in social theory that global and postmodern forces will inevitably result in the demise of the nation.

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