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MARCEL MAUSS ON NATIONHOOD: OBJECTIVISM AND ITS LIMITS

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1

It is often observed that classical social theory has remarkably little to say about nations and nationalism (Smith 1983; Vujačić 2001). This relative neglect is especially surprising for the period between the revolutions of 1848 and the outbreak of the First World War. During this period, throughout much of Europe, the 'national question' was every bit as significant as the 'social question'. Yet social theory was overwhelmingly concerned with the latter. Neglecting the tangle of problems posed by the proliferation of nationalist claims and counter claims, social theory was preoccupied with the problems and contours of the distinctively modern society that was seen to be emerging, within largely taken for granted national and state boundaries, as a legacy of intertwined commercial, industrial, scientific, technological, and democratic transformations.

Yet, the point should not be overstated. Important, albeit non-systematic contributions to the understanding of nationhood and nationalism were made by social theorists as diverse as Rousseau, Herder, Hegel, J. S. Mill, Renan, and others (Smith 1983; on Rousseau see also Benner in this volume). Max Weber's brief discussions of ethnicity and nationalism in *Economy and Society* are among the most penetrating pages ever written on the subject, anticipating the sophisticated constructivist formulations of the last two decades (Weber 1968, vol. I, pp. 387–98, vol. II, pp. 922–926). Although Emile Durkheim did not write about nationalism as such, his observations on the state, on patriotism, and, especially, on religion as 'social self-worship' capture important aspects of the nationalist phenomenon (Gellner 1983, p. 56; Guibernau 1996, pp. 21–31). And in the Habsburg lands, the *locus classicus* of the national question, numerous major social thinkers devoted sustained attention to nationhood and nationalism: the works of the Austro-Marxists Karl Renner and Otto Bauer in particular, remain of great interest even today, although they are little-known in the English-speaking world.

Marcel Mauss's rich reflections on nationhood have been equally little-known to Anglophone readers. These consist of two posthumously published texts, the first (and far more substantial) comprising fragments of a manuscript that Mauss wrote in 1920–1921, the second a lecture he presented in 1920.¹ Untranslated until recently, these are now available, in part, in two English versions (Woolf 1996, pp. 85–101; and a considerably fuller, though by no means complete, version in Wacquant [forthcoming]). Yet problems of accessibility remain. Mauss's texts were never prepared for publication by their author, and his overall argument must therefore be pieced together

1. Published under the titles 'La nation' and 'La nation et l'internationalisme' in vol. 3 of Mauss's *Oeuvres* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1969), pp. 573–625, 626–641.

from fragments of widely varying richness and density. In the following, I seek to reconstruct Mauss's argument and to assess it in the light of contemporary understandings of nationhood and nationalism.

Mauss begins by noting that the word 'nation' is of relatively recent vintage, both in the 'technical language' of social, legal, and philosophical analysis, and in the language of 'the peoples themselves' (p. 573).² Here Mauss adumbrates, without highlighting, a key distinction between two very different uses of the word 'nation': the first technical or analytical, the second vernacular or practical.

Mauss's own theoretical interest is decidedly in the former. Although he does not say so explicitly, it is clear that he is not interested, as a theorist, in vernacular idioms of nationhood – in the ways social and political actors use the term 'nation' in practice. He does not consider how lay actors – cultural and political 'entrepreneurs' – claim the status and dignity of nationhood for particular populations in whose names they claim to speak; nor does he consider, except in passing, the ways in which that asserted status underwrites various (and often conflicting) claims to territory, sovereignty, autonomy, independence, resources, jobs, loyalty, recognition, parity, self-determination, linguistic purity, 'ownership' of the state, and so on. In short, Mauss is not theoretically interested in the multifarious forms of nationalist *politics*, although, as an intelligent and cosmopolitan observer writing in 1920–1921, around the apogee of nationalist politics in Europe, he could not help but be well aware of these, and indeed refers to them – especially to the kaleidoscopic national claims of newly reconfigured Eastern Europe – at various points in his text.

As a theorist, Mauss is committed to using 'nation' as an analytical or technical category. The analytical vocation of the term, he suggests, has remained largely unfulfilled. Its meaning is indeterminate, and it is often conflated with 'state' (pp. 573, 577). While the concept of 'state' has received a rich theoretical development ever since the sixteenth century (pp. 573, 574, 576), that of 'nation' remains theoretically impoverished. The 'urgent task of any political theory' (understood broadly as a theory of social and political organisation) is to correct this state of affairs by making manifest the theoretical richness of the concept of nation (p. 577).

This means among other things recovering the 'positive' theoretical content of the idea of nation, which in turn requires distinguishing the notion of nation from the apparently closely related, but actually quite different, notions of nationality and nationalism (p. 576). 'For a very large number of our contemporaries, the notion of nation is above all that of nationality, that of nationalism. It has above all negative content, often designating the revolt against the foreigner, the hatred that one maintains against them all, even those who are not oppressors' (p. 576). This negative understanding of nation, Mauss suggests, is a theoretically limited one. By 'negative' Mauss does not refer to the normative evaluation of nation, but rather to the way 'nation', or more precisely nationality and nationalism – terms, Mauss laments, that have eclipsed 'nation' in contemporary discussions – are conceptualised as essentially *reactive* phenomena, defined *against* someone or something else (against the foreigner, or against progress that is seen as undermining national traditions [p. 577]), rather than as having positive content of their own.

2. When quoting from passages translated in Wacquant (forthcoming), I have used this translation; otherwise, translations are my own. Page numbers refer to the French text cited in note 1.

A fourfold aim, in sum, can be discerned in the opening pages of Mauss's text: (i) to shift theoretical attention from nationality and nationalism, much discussed at the time Mauss wrote, to the more fundamental category 'nation'; (ii) to endow the idea of nation with positive rather than merely negative conceptual content; (iii) to distinguish 'nation' consistently from 'state'; and (iv) to demonstrate the theoretical richness of the notion of 'nation' as a technical or analytical category despite its apparent theoretical poverty.

2

After these preliminaries, Mauss begins a more sustained exposition by asking 'what sort of society deserves to be called a nation' (p. 577). But rather than answer this question directly by defining 'nation' straightaway, Mauss proceeds instead to sketch a universal classification of forms of political and social organisation. The most fundamental distinction, which he adopts from Durkheim, is between 'poly-segmentary' and 'integrated' societies (pp. 580ff). The former are characterised by sharp internal divisions, generally along clan lines. They can be further divided into two groups according to the presence or absence of some kind of permanent organisation at the tribal or supra-clan level. 'Integrated' societies are characterised by the more or less marked disappearance of sharp internal segmentation along clan or other lines. They, too, can be divided into two groups according to their degree and form of integration. The more 'diffusely' integrated societies, characterised by an 'extrinsic' central power, are called 'peoples' or 'empires', depending on their form of organisation (pp. 581–584), while only the more fully integrated societies deserve the name 'nation'. In this way Mauss arrives at his definition of 'nation': 'a society materially and morally integrated, with a stable and permanent central authority, with determinate borders, whose inhabitants possess a relative moral, mental, and cultural unity and consciously adhere to the state and its laws' (p. 584).

Why does Mauss situate his discussion of 'nation' in the context of this highly simplified classification of types of society? Clearly, Mauss himself attaches considerable importance to the scheme, devoting the first seven pages of his discussion of '*nations* and nationalities' to it, a quarter of the discussion as a whole. The significance of this classificatory scheme, I think, is that by locating 'nation' as a form of social organisation in a universal–historical conceptual space, it undergirds an objectivist, structuralist, and evolutionist account of nationhood.

Mauss's account is objectivist and structuralist in seeing nationhood as constituted not by belief (as in Seton-Watson's interestingly circular definition of a nation as 'a significant number of people [who] . . . consider themselves to form a nation' (1977, p. 5), or by will (as in Renan's celebrated metaphor of the nation as a 'daily plebiscite' that expresses a 'desire to live together' [1996, pp. 52–53]), but by the fundamental social-structural principles of integration and individuation. For Mauss, nation is not, first and foremost, a matter of discourse, language, feeling, or belief, but of social organisation. Mauss does, of course, characterise nation in cultural as well as structural terms. But the 'relative moral, mental, and cultural unity' to which he refers is secondary on his account – expressive, as it were, of nationhood, not constitutive of it. It is the structural principles of integration and individuation that are primary.

The typology of forms of social organisation situates nationhood not only in conceptual space, but also in moral space and in evolutionary time. The scheme does not merely identify different types of societies but outlines an evolutionary trajectory. Nation is not simply a form of social organisation; it is the 'last and most perfect' form (p. 627), possessing an 'incomparable moral dignity' (p. 593). 'Economically, juridically, morally, and politically [nations] are the most elevated of societies' (p. 627). Contemporary societies differ in their 'evolutionary rank' (p. 584). Some are 'not yet [n.b.] perfectly integrated' and therefore not (yet) to be counted as 'nations' (p. 584); others are 'young nations', still marked by their pre-national past, and still inclined, as a result, to imperialism (pp. 588–589). Fully realised nations are rare but, as Mauss concludes his discussion of nationhood, 'they are all the more noteworthy for that, and . . . all the more beautiful' (pp. 604, 617).

3

If Mauss's teleological perspective and occasionally celebratory tone are foreign to our chastened and jaded sensibilities, his basic characterisation of nation in terms of the twin ideas of integration and individuation remains powerful because it focuses analytical attention on underlying structural processes rather than on the cultural and other commonalities that are often taken as constitutive of nationhood. True, Mauss does discuss language, civilisation, and race as putatively shared characteristics, but he treats these and other commonalities as contingent and variable products of processes of integration and individuation rather than as primordial, irreducible bases of nationhood. He focuses on the conditions under which shared and distinctive cultural – and even biological – characteristics can emerge and develop rather than on the shared and distinctive characteristics themselves. He is interested, as it were, in the 'infrastructure' of nationhood rather than in its overt manifestations.

Integration, for Mauss, is defined in relation to segmentation; its root meaning is the overcoming of segmentation. In segmented (or only weakly integrated) societies, following the organic analogy that Mauss takes over from Spencer, the parts – whether clans, tribes, towns, feudal magnates, provinces, corporate bodies, or ethno-religious communities – are relatively independent of one another and of the central power (to the extent that such a central power exists at all); and the society as a whole, as well as the centre, in its turn, is relatively independent of and 'insensitive' or indifferent to its parts (p. 582). States – to the extent that one can speak without anachronism of 'the state' at all in such conditions – do not effectively penetrate societies; however strong their despotic powers might be, their infrastructural powers are weak (Mann 1986). The independence of the parts is not only a matter of relative imperviousness or refractoriness to central control, but also of a relative mutual indifference and a lack of 'sensitivity', as Mauss puts it, drawing again on the organic analogy. This allows the parts to be 'amputated' relatively painlessly, as happened routinely, and indeed without great fuss, even as late as the eighteenth century as a result of wars and dynastic marital strategies in all of the more or less composite monarchies of *ancien régime* Europe (pp. 582, 583, 589).

Integration changes all this. It occurs in a number of domains: military, administrative, judicial, economic, cultural, moral, even epistemological (on this last see Gellner

1983, pp. 21–23). In the strongly integrated societies that Mauss calls 'nations' internal divisions and barriers (such as clan and tribal divisions, internal customs barriers, and hindrances to communication and transportation) have been removed; the independence of the parts (municipalities, magnates, corporate groups, and so on) has been destroyed or greatly reduced; and insensitivity has been replaced by a *hypersensitivity* (to changes in or violation of borders; to that modern-day 'totem', the national flag; to the national language; to anything that smacks of outside interference in internal affairs; in some cases, indeed, to anything that is 'foreign' (p. 593).

In this vision of nation as constituted by powerful processes of integration, Mauss anticipates by half a century the most original and powerful theory of nationalism of the second half of the twentieth century, that of Ernest Gellner. For Gellner, as for Mauss, nation is an objective form of social organisation, based on the 'fusion of culture and polity' (1983, p. 13). Pre-national agrarian society was both horizontally stratified and, at the non-elite level, vertically divided into self-reproducing, mutually isolated local segments. Although Gellner does not use the same terminology, the transition to 'industrial society', on his account, involves precisely what Mauss calls integration: the erosion of both horizontal and vertical partitions, and the constitution of a single, undifferentiated social, cultural, and cognitive space in which individual 'parts', dependent on 'exo-education' – that is, on a centrally organised and school-transmitted culture – are no longer capable of reproducing themselves.

Although integration is characterised as the overcoming of segmentation, it generates new forms of segmentation, albeit on a larger scale. Citizenship, the focal point of Mauss's account of integration, is at the same time a powerful principle of segmentation, partitioning the world into a set of mutually exclusive citizenries, matched to segmented, mutually exclusive national territories. Internally, the modern nation-state represents the triumph of integration over segmentation; externally it represents not the overcoming but the *re-scaling* of segmentation, its transposition from a local to a global scale. Although Mauss does not explicitly remark on the irony of what might be called the 'segmentary integration' of citizenship and nationhood, he does hint at it in his sardonic comparison of modern nations to primitive tribes (pp. 593–594).

4

Mauss's second core idea is individuation. The last two centuries have led 'not to a uniformisation of civilisation but, from certain points of view, to an ever deeper individuation of nations and nationalities' (p. 591). 'A nation worthy of the name', Mauss writes, 'has its *own* civilisation (aesthetic, moral, and material) and almost always its *own* language. It has its *own* mentality, its *own* sensibility, its *own* morality, its *own* will, its *own* form of progress' (p. 591). Mauss goes so far as to assert – rather implausibly – that 'the methods of thinking and the manners of feeling of an Italian and a Spaniard are infinitely more remote from each other . . . than are the popular moralities and imaginations whose extraordinary uniformity throughout the world expresses the unity of primitive human mentality' (p. 594).

Individuation has a dual aspect, involving internal homogenisation on the one hand, and external differentiation on the other. To a considerable extent, this dual process of homogenisation and differentiation has been an unintended by-product of increasing

integration. The development of distinctive national mentalities (p. 594), for example, reflects the development of unified, codified, distinctive national languages (themselves products of territorial, administrative, economic, and infrastructural integration), and of codified, school-transmitted national literatures, integrated national educational systems, and integrated national communications media. The development of distinctive national physiognomic types – what Mauss calls the distinctive ‘races’ that are being formed within modern nations (p. 595) – is likewise the product of integration:

the ease of migration, of movement, the existence of large urban centres where people of all origins meet, recent forms of life such as the barracks . . . or that of the civil servant whose career takes him on a journey throughout a country, have begun to effect a fusion of the old stocks of population. (p. 595)

To this unintended erosion of internal differences and accentuation of external ones is added the force of conscious efforts to create or protect national distinctiveness. In the domain of language, for example, Mauss mentions the linguistic ‘purism’ that consciously rejects and seeks to weed out ‘foreign’ words and influences. One might think also of the conscious efforts to create or accentuate differences between closely related, even identical languages, most recently the tragicomic efforts to codify distinctive Serbian and Croatian languages and to deny the existence of what until recently was universally thought to be a single Serbo-Croatian language that was simply written with two orthographic systems.

There is an interesting ambiguity, signaled by a sharp shift of tone, in Mauss’s discussion of individuation. Although he begins his discussion by asserting unqualifiedly that a nation ‘worthy of the name’ *has* its own civilisation, language, mentality, sensibility, morality, and so on, he shifts a few pages later to a more sceptical stance, noting that a ‘modern nation *believes* in its race’ (a belief ‘moreover quite erroneous’); ‘*believes* in its language’ (to the point of conservatism, proselytism, even fanaticism); and *believes* in its own civilisation, its industrial arts and its fine arts’ (a belief qualified as ‘fetishism’, ‘illusion’, ‘fatuity’, ‘ignorance’, and ‘political sophistry’) (pp. 595–599, emphasis added).

This suggests a more general observation about the shifts in tone from the lyrical and celebratory to the detached and ironic. Because of this alternation in tone, Mauss’s text appears at once dated and strikingly contemporary. The mood of high normative pathos, especially in the lyrical discussions of citizenship and patriotism – no doubt reflecting the fact that the project was conceived during the First World War and written immediately thereafter – marks the text as dated (and marks a sharp contrast to Weber’s more consistently ‘disenchanted’ treatment of ‘nation’). However, this is overlaid by a very different mood and tone, characterised by ironic distance and cool scepticism. Thus Mauss compares the homogeneity of the modern nation to that of the primitive clan, identifies the flag of the former with the totem of the latter, and equates the cult of the *patrie* with that of ancestral animal-gods (pp. 593–594). He notes that ‘millions of imitations, citations, allusions have fixed literatures in often insipid national form’ (p. 600). Anticipating recent work on the ‘invention of tradition’, he observes the ‘growing efforts . . . to return to popular sources, to folklore, to the roots, true or false, of the nation. It is not only language, but also ancient tradition that one has attempted to reconstitute and re-animate’ (p. 601).

Another strikingly contemporary aspect of Mauss’s account is his sustained attention to what he called international (or, more generally, ‘inter-social’) phenomena – to what we would today call ‘globalisation’, all too often parochially considered to have sprung into being with the transportation and communications revolutions of the late twentieth century. Mauss’s text is a salutary reminder that these phenomena are by no means new.

Today, an analytical emphasis on national forms and an emphasis on globalisation are generally thought to be alternative, incompatible theoretical positions. Defenders of the continued significance of national forms downplay the significance of globalisation, while partisans of globalisation emphasise the erosion and hollowing out of national forms, and proclaim the advent of a post-national world. One of the virtues of Mauss’s text is that it avoids this facile opposition between the national and the international. Indeed, he argues explicitly that internationalism presupposes, rather than undermines, nationhood. It is cosmopolitanism – a movement with no real social grounding, according to Mauss – that is opposed to nationhood, while internationalism does not negate but ‘situates’ the nation in a broader context (pp. 591, 629–630).

But is there really *no* tension or opposition between national integration and individuation on the one hand, and the intensification of international exchanges on the other; between the closure of national economies (p. 590) and the economic openness associated with internationalism (p. 612); or between the pervasive ‘nationalisation’ of arts and sciences (pp. 600ff) and their essentially ‘intersocial’ nature (p. 614)? Is it really the case that there is in the movement towards internationalism ‘nothing . . . contrary to the principles of national independence nor to the development of national character’ (p. 633)? As Mauss himself observes, ‘more extended commerce, more expanded and comprehensive exchanges, more speedy borrowings of ideas and fashions, the great waves of religious and moral movements, ever more conscious imitation of institutions and of economic and juridical regimes’ have placed nations in a ‘state of permeation and growing mutual dependency’ (p. 607). The result is that the ‘mentalities of nations . . . are . . . more open than ever before to each other’ (p. 624). But does this not amount to integration on a super-national scale? And does not this, in turn, lead to a certain *de-individuation* at the level of the nation?

Integration and individuation, after all, are not intrinsically linked to nationhood. They are processes that can occur on many different levels. Integration on the national level led historically to de-individuation on the provincial level as provinces lost their individuality and became more homogeneous within nations (Weber 1976; Watkins 1991). By the same logic, would we not expect increasing integration on a super-national level to lead to a certain de-individuation on the national level? Would we not expect distinctive national individualities to erode before the intensifying onslaught of international exchanges? Does not Mauss himself concede as much when he remarks, for example, that ‘in every language, that part which precisely corresponds to what is human as opposed to national increases’, so that eventually ‘a universal language will make a universal society possible, and vice versa’ (p. 624)?

These are questions that Mauss does not raise, let alone answer, though one cannot read his text today without them coming to mind. In addressing these and similar questions, we can usefully follow Michael Mann in distinguishing, as Mauss does not,

between transnational and international phenomena. The latter, as Mann puts it, are 'relations between nationally-constituted networks', while transnational networks cut across national boundaries. International networks, like national networks, 'are constituted or fundamentally constrained by the nation state', but transnational networks may undermine it (1997, pp. 475–476). In the terms of Mauss's argument, one might suggest that while international phenomena presuppose and may even strengthen the nation state – as Milward (1992) argues about European integration – transnational phenomena may have the opposite effect, undermining in the long run both national integration and national individuation.

6

Mauss's objectivist, structuralist perspective enables him to shift attention from surface phenomena, such as putatively shared cultural characteristics and the political claims put forward in their name, to underlying structural processes of integration, individuation, and internationalisation. In so doing, he develops a distinctively sociological account of nation (and 'inter-nation'). His account anticipates later work on nationhood focusing on integration and individuation, as well as contemporary discussions of globalisation.

Mauss's objectivism does, however, have its limitations. By using 'nation' as a category of analysis, designating an objectively existing kind of society, firmly lodged in an evolutionary taxonomy, and by enlisting social science in the effort to determine 'what sort of society deserves to be called a nation', Mauss obscures the practical uses of 'nation', the claims to autonomy and independence, to loyalty and sacrifice, to dignity and distinctiveness advanced in the name of putative nations, and the counter-claims of those who deny that such putative nations exist – in short, the whole domain of nationalist *politics*.

For 'nation' is not only a category of analysis; it is also a category of practice. In practice, 'nation' functions not to denote, but to promote; not to characterise, but to mobilise; not to designate, but to legitimate. In practice, that is, 'nation' is not an ethnographic or structural fact, but a political claim. It is, as Weber recognised, a value-concept (*Wertbegriff*), used in practice to signal a normative expectation:

if the concept of 'nation' can in any way be defined unambiguously, this cannot be done in terms of the empirical qualities common to its putative members. In the meaning of those who use the term at a given time, it undoubtedly signifies, above all, that a specific feeling of solidarity vis-à-vis other groups is *expected* of certain groups of people; the concept thus belongs to the sphere of values. (Weber 1968, pp. 922, 925, emphasis in original, translation modified; cf. Weber 1964, pp. 675, 677)

Mauss was, of course, aware of the powerful, swirling currents of nationalist politics that dominated the political scene throughout much of Europe during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Yet his comments on nationalist politics are perfunctory and ad hoc, in sharp contrast to his deep and systematic analysis of integration, individuation, and internationalisation. This disparity, to be sure, is in part simply a consequence of Mauss's interest in basic structural forms and processes. But it also reflects the inherent limits of an objectivist understanding of nationhood (Brubaker

1996, chapter 1).³ Such an understanding cannot help but obscure the way 'nation' may (or may not) 'happen', as E. P. Thompson famously said about 'class' (Thompson 1963, p. 9), that is, the way it may or may not 'crystallise' in particular historical situations. Nor can it make sense of the way 'nation' works in practice as an often contested claim, a cognitive frame, a key term of political rhetoric. And it encumbers his discussion with the analytically uninteresting question of whether a society is integrated or individuated enough to count as a 'nation'. There is no good reason for social analysis to be in the business of validating or invalidating claims to nationhood, of specifying who 'deserves' this dignifying appellation. Such matters are best left to nationalists themselves.

Mauss's perspective on nationhood is limited not only by its objectivism but also by its state-centrism. There is a certain irony in this, since Mauss was motivated to write about 'nation' in part, as already suggested, by the desire to give the concept of nation an autonomous theoretical status in the social sciences by distinguishing it from the theoretically much more central and richly developed concept of 'state', in the shadow of which it had hitherto lain fallow.

Despite this aim, Mauss's understanding of nation remains closely tied to the state – and remains in this respect, as in others (notably in the lyrical, celebratory accounts of the intertwined concepts of *patrie* and *citoyen*), very French. The nation is understood as framed, incubated, in part even constituted by the state; 'stable and permanent central authority', 'determinate borders', and conscious adherence 'to the state and its laws' are built into the very definition of nation (p. 584). Nation is indeed characterised as 'distinct from the state' (p. 574), but only, as it were, on a vertical, state–society dimension, not on a horizontal dimension. 'The society in its entirety', Mauss writes in connection with his discussion of *patrie* and *citoyen*, 'has become . . . the state, the sovereign political body; it is the totality of the citizens. This is precisely what is called the Nation' (p. 593).

Here, as elsewhere (for example in his introductory discussion of the history of the use of the word 'nation'), Mauss adopts what later scholars, following Hans Kohn (1944), have called the 'Western' or 'civic' model of nationhood, neglecting the 'Eastern' or 'ethnocultural' model. Despite his global historical–anthropological vision, Mauss's discussion of 'nation' is in certain ways rather parochial, privileging the historical experience of England, France, and the United States and making only perfunctory reference to the very different Central and East European experience, where 'nation' has historically been understood as a frame of reference and focus of value prior to and independent of the state – that is, where nation has been understood as distinct from the state on a horizontal as well as a vertical dimension. This statist understanding of nationhood is another reason for the superficial and ad hoc quality of Mauss's discussion of contemporary nationalist politics: for the tumultuous nationalist politics of his time, especially in Central and Eastern Europe, pivoted precisely on an alternative, ethnocultural understanding of nationhood.

3. A similar point could be made about Gellner, whose profound sociological account of nationhood as a form of social organisation is joined to a perfunctory treatment of nationalism as a form of politics. In Gellner's case, too, this follows directly from his objectivism, which leads him to see nationalist politics as epiphenomenal, as the working out on the surface of things of a deeper objective necessity: 'it is not the case . . . that nationalism imposes homogeneity; it is rather that a homogeneity imposed by objective, inescapable imperative eventually appears on the surface in the form of nationalism' (1983, p. 39).

Despite these limitations, Mauss's account of integration, individuation, and internationalisation remains deeply illuminating, and amounts to a distinctively sociological analysis of a phenomenon previously explored primarily by political theorists and legal scholars. This text certainly deserves a place – alongside contributions of Renan, Renner, Bauer, Weber, and a few others – on the small shelf of pioneering late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century work in social theory concerning nationhood and nationalism.

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REMEMBERING WITHOUT COMMEMORATION: THE DEVICES AND THE POLITICS OF MEMORY AMONG EAST EUROPEAN ROMA

Michael Stewart

This paper derives from an effort to assemble the pieces of a puzzle some twelve years after I first came across them. As part of my preparation for ethnographic research among Romany-speaking Hungarian Roma in 1983 I had read Donald Kenrick and Gratton Puxon's pioneering study of the Nazi treatment of the Roma: *The Destiny of Europe's Gypsies* (1972). Considering the exploratory nature of their study I looked forward to discovering numerous accounts of the war years from my informants. It is, of course, in the nature of field research that one's own preoccupations give way to those of one's hosts. As the researcher becomes absorbed in the rhythms of another way of life so he surrenders his own agenda. And so it was that I became accustomed to barely bothering to discuss the past, let alone the distant past with my informants – so little did it feature 'naturally' in their own conversations. Indeed, throughout this initial fieldwork I carried out not one sustained interview about the war and the persecution of the Gypsies.

This is not to say that there was no mention of the past. The old man whose house I shared would comment frequently to the effect that if the Red Army had not come in 1945 none of the Roma I knew would be alive today. Occasionally, he would briefly narrate an event from the end of the war when he and other members of his family were sent on a forced march to the town of Hatvan – from where ran a railway line for deportations. As they crossed the fields before the town, the guns of the Red Army could be heard from behind the overlooking hills and the German troops fled, leaving their Romany prisoners in the hands of local Hungarian fascists, who, in turn, shortly took to their heels. Or there was another image that flashed into vision at times, of a woman raped while lying across her sister's legs as her father looked on. It was as if the memory of the whole war were condensed into one or two images that were normally kept deep in the shadows of the cave, illuminated occasionally and incandescently before being enveloped again in the penumbra of the past. In talking about such phenomena with other Roma since, I have come across similar practices in other settlements. Ágnes Daroczi, a Hungarian Romany cultural activist, told me of growing up in a village in eastern Hungary where she had heard from the old people of boards appearing outside every house in her grandparents' settlement one evening towards the end of the war. On these boards the Germans wrote the numbers of people to be taken from each house. Another fragment of a past, another image torn from an experience of terror, fear, and helplessness. And in Ágnes' childhood, as in my experience in Harangos, these iconic moments were presented as if understandable in and of themselves, outside any general narrative framework.

Beyond such powerful, if disjointed reminders there was precious little record of the events of 1940–1945. In the collective repertoire of songs I assiduously recorded in 1985–1986 there were no songs of the camps. In an old collection of a post-war