

*Global Thinker***Non-liquid LOVE: janzygbau@**

Janina and Zygmunt Bauman had a common email address, janzygbau@, created from the first syllables of their names, in keeping with their tightly coordinated existence. ‘They worked on most things as a couple’, as Tester said: ‘actually . . . they were indivisible. . . . There wasn’t a formal line between them. . . . Each had a separate identity but they were a single entity too.’¹ Bauman used to say that as soon as he was born (in November 1925), he ‘ordered’ himself a wife, who was born nine months later (August 1926). This can be read in two ways, with our current understanding of sexual politics. It’s a message of love, framing the couple’s romantic destiny; she was the Woman of his Life. At the same time, it expresses his position as the dominant male: he ordered the conception of his wife. The paternalistic vision and cynical sense of humour somehow describe their fusional relationship pretty well.

Bauman was a charmer and gallant who ‘certainly wasn’t embarrassed in showing that he loved Janina’, Tester said.² In numerous interviews published in the Polish press, Bauman declared that he was in love, in a strong relationship, and with a discreet blink of an eye would let it be understood that he was under the control of his wife. Bauman once commented about his political engagement in Poland before 1968: ‘Jasia also told me: “Give up, stop it, stop having illusions.” Because we were discussing our life together. Yes, she was that voice [of reason]. But why didn’t I listen to her? *After all, I was used to listening to Jasia.*’³

In Polish, the expression ‘I was used to listening to . . .’ *szuchalem się* . . . is a speech form (today a little old-fashioned) used by children to say, ‘I am obedient to my parents.’ The phrase contains a minor grammatical error: we can listen to someone (*stuchać kogoś*) or listen to ourself (*stuchać się*) – but not both.⁴ Bauman’s use of the quaint expression⁵ illustrates something about their

relationship, in the sense that he listened to himself (first) and Janina (also).

Bauman's Polish friends confirmed this self-presentation. Janina made the decisions, they said; she was a very strong personality. It was she, for example, who had refused to move to Australia,⁶ and it was her preference – and not Zygmunt's – to go to Israel in 1968. To be sure, their relationship was more complex than one or the other being the dominant figure; sixty-two years of life together are rarely frozen in a single model of relationships. 'I will give you a picture', Tester recalled:

Janina is sitting in the corner in a front room – smoking . . . and Zygmunt is going around making sure that everyone has food and drink. Janina was definitely the power . . . she kind of defined the situation and Zygmunt would facilitate her and enable her to flourish. Power means that she was in control, but it was not like that. They had different roles: she was the one who framed the event, he made it happen.

The term 'fusion' probably most adequately defines their relationship, which Janina described as a beautiful and romantic love story in her book *The Dream of Belonging*, published in 1988. They married on her birthday, 18 August 1948, forever linking her birthday to their marriage. But Janina was not prepared to be a spouse defined by her husband. Her family had determined she was to become a doctor; after the war, while living in the Ghetto and hiding places, she dreamed of becoming a writer. After her graduation, she kept her journal, which was difficult for a professionally active woman with three children. Despite political instability, she was able to manage an interesting career trajectory as the indispensable negotiator between censors and film artists. She also represented Polish film at international festivals, a highly prestigious position in the peak years of Polish cinematography.

When their financial situation improved in the late 1950s, the Baumans began the ritual of a marriage anniversary lunch, during which they summed up the past year and predicted the next. 'We have carried on our celebrations year in, year out, never missing a single one, not even at the sad time of crisis that in the sixties threatened to wreck our marriage', Janina wrote; 'It has always helped to talk and to listen' (J. Bauman, 1988: 58). They had a time of crisis and passed through it. Interestingly, this discreet but significant information appears only in the English version of Janina's book. For the Polish audience, there were no crises, only a perfect couple. In his discussions and writings, Bauman underlined the importance of constant care and permanent efforts to maintain the early passion: 'Love . . . declines to promise an easy road to happiness and meaning. . . . It is something that always

still needs to be *made* anew and remade daily, hourly; constantly resuscitated, reaffirmed, attended to and cared for' (Bauman, 2008: 132).

It needs practice and training each day: discussions, explanations, fixing broken parts, apologies and forgiveness. This is how trust and understanding are built. Bauman presented this vision as a model of how love used to be in the time before 'liquid modernity' – as opposed to the current era in which the quick exchange of partners as a kind of consumption makes it impossible to improve relationships, which become insecure and unstable. His own experience was the former kind, however.

For Bauman, happiness was what was important in the love relationship, and happiness was a topic that fascinated him. Maintaining happiness in a *longue durée*⁷ relationship was one of the greatest challenges. How, in a liquid world, was it possible to create non-liquid love? In a 2011 interview with Justyna Dąbrowska, he described the complexity of love relationships:

'I love you?' – What does that mean? It means, in fact, I wish you all that is good, I want you to be happy . . . To support my wish with an act, I have to create an ideal of your person; that other person, the one that is your happiness, is the image of what is good for you. At some point (out of love for you) I become convinced that I know better than you how to make you happy. I step on your liberty. In the name of your wellbeing, I want to force you to do something other than what you would like to do. What happens if, to the contrary, I put your freedom above all other considerations? Then another trap lurks: a Pontius Pilate gesture . . . in short, indifference and anesthesia, and in either case, this is the moment to look for your love on a tombstone and start composing the obituary. (Bauman in Dąbrowska, 2019: 158–9)

This is a sad picture of love, trapped between too much control and too much freedom, between possessiveness and indifference. A troubling perception of love as a feeling that's based on an ideal image of the partner. To what extent was this about Bauman's own experience? We get some insight into this question by reading Bauman's reaction to Janina's autobiographical books. In a letter to Tester, Bauman notes that the character 'Konrad' in *A Dream of Belonging* stood for 'Janina's image of me, and I carefully resisted any, whether direct or indirect, interference with her portraiture' (Bauman, e-mail to Tester, 2016). Interestingly, Konrad is only the 'Zygmunt' character in the English version of the book. In Polish translation, the character's name is Zygmunt. Why was this change made? Did it reflect the effects of British culture, where privacy is a core value? Or was it the result of negotiations, discussions that took place, perhaps, during the anniversary-of-marriage dinner?

In her book about their shared life, Janina gave some discreet insights from those special evenings that occurred once a year, providing snapshots of moments of pause between epochs of their life together. '[S]till in the bar, we talk. We talk about yet another year of our married life, and about our daughters. We try to sum up what has been good, what bad, and what should be better. We think about what must be done in the coming year, and about all the things we cannot prevent – missiles, rising unemployment, Israel's military ventures' (J. Bauman, 1988: 59).

Sitting in a Leeds restaurant (probably in 1986 or 1987), celebrating one more year together, Janina and Zygmunt were grateful that, after four decades together, they could 'still sit peacefully together and talk and look forward to the year which is just beginning'. They enjoyed their approaching retirement, which Zygmunt awaited with impatience. They could not have imagined Janina's success nor Zygmunt's spectacular fame and creative output – and the extraordinary political changes of the coming years were entirely beyond view. They worried about Israel's military situation and the safety of their families there, but did not imagine that two years later the whole Eastern bloc would collapse. Two years later, they would be back in Poland for the first time in two decades.

Unrequited love: Poland

The German philosopher Franz Rosenzweig wrote, 'to what extent a Jew participates in the life of nations does not depend on him but on those nations'.⁸ Bauman's relationship with 'Poland' – as a society represented by authorities and institutions – is a complex story. In large part, it is a story of unrequited love, of an individual who showed, his entire life, that he saw himself as a Polish citizen like any other. Bauman was not alone in this situation. This is a fundamental problem for all Poles with Jewish culture. Many intellectuals made public their reflections (Prokop-Janiec, 2013).

Bauman never published his texts, as Polish intellectuals such as Brandys, Morawski, Tuwim, Sandauer and many others did. His private manuscript is entitled 'The Poles, The Jews, and I: An Investigation into Whatever Made Me What I Am'. It is largely in this unique piece that Bauman discusses the issue.

Zygmunt Bauman was in love with Poland. He had perfect command of his mother tongue, loved Polish literature and poetry, excelled at school and proudly joined the Polish Army at the age of 18. After the war, he was actively engaged in the construction of a better society, following a Polish model of social justice, and became a talented scholar who defined himself as a *Polish* sociologist. At each stage of his long life – and even afterwards – however,

his claim of full rights to being a Pole was challenged. Regardless of which politicians are in place, or whether capitalism or socialism rules the roost, the legitimacy of his declaration 'I am a Pole' is still questioned.

The following story, told by Bauman in 2013, reflects the constancy of this love–hate relationship.

When the Baumans crossed the Polish border in 1968, they assumed it was for ever. Yet as soon as Zygmunt got British citizenship, he started corresponding with Polish institutions in pursuit of manuscripts requisitioned by customs authorities. 'I got the answers and have kept them until today', Bauman told me.⁹ The customs office told him all manuscripts had been sent to the Polish Academy of Sciences (PAN). He wrote to the president of the PAN, who said nothing had ever arrived there. Then he sent the letters from the customs office and PAN to Professor Henryk Jabłoński, the prime minister. 'He never wrote me back. No answer came.' (Bauman knew Jabłoński personally from Party meetings.) Around 2006, a doctoral student of one of Bauman's former students was researching at the IPN and located Bauman's file, hoping that it was the confiscated work. '[L]ike an idiot . . . I wrote to the IPN in good faith', asking for the return of his manuscripts and those of Janina, Bauman said. A short time later, Piotr Gontarczyk¹⁰ wrote a contentious article about Bauman's wartime and postwar activities:

The IPN never responded to my questions. So this conspiracy between the customs office and Prime Minister Jabłoński continues – nothing has changed . . . regimes come and go, prime ministers and presidents are replaced, the system changes, but there is such a thing as continuity in the secret services. They don't really change – the changes are minor – personnel transfers but basically the system is always there.¹¹

This continuity that Bauman describes, and which Polish historians have also noted,¹² is astounding in that it covers three dramatically different periods – the regimes of Gomułka in 1968, Gierek in 1972, and finally the post-communist period. We should notice that the exception to this rule occurred in 2010 when Bauman obtained from the Minister of Culture the highest Polish decoration, the Medal for Merit to Culture – Gloria Artis. This event, however, attracted a lot of criticism, especially from the right-wing parties' supporters – a surprising continuity between the former communist regime and present-day right-wing people, who share the same reaction towards Bauman – always hostile, and always with the echo of anti-Semitism.

For them, Bauman was always an 'enemy of Poland'. Leszek Kołakowski, meanwhile, the most important leader of the 1968 revisionists, was welcomed back after the regime change in 1989. Why is

this? From the first, Kołakowski was considered 100 per cent a Pole. He was not a Polish Jew, originating instead from a Catholic family, and he had returned to his ancestral religion. He was forgiven for his communist engagement once he switched sides and supported capitalism. Bauman could fix his origins, but public opinion and most of the intellectuals expected him to abandon his leftist ideas . . . in vain. Bauman maintained his belief in socialism. This was also why he never agreed to become a Cold War sovietologist, and declined offers from excellent universities (for example, Yale).¹³

The culprit

Bauman remained under the spotlight of the secret services long after he left Poland. Writing his name without capital letters, and in the plural, was a subtle element of the stigmatization process – Bauman was presented as a duplicitous person (Kraśko, 2017: 66). He was a special target of Ryszard Gontarz, among the most aggressive and anti-Semitic journalists of 1968. Gontarz published a paper entitled ‘The New Road of Zygmunt Bauman’, in which, in an ironic and vicious style, he analysed the distorted profile of Bauman from *Maariv* (see ch. 12), which had been translated into Polish and read in its entirety on Radio Free Europe. Gontarz, as an employee of the *Bezpieka*, had access to the secret police copy of the article (Dąbrowski, 2008). He used it to characterize Bauman as a Zionist agent, and a ringleader of ‘fledgling revisionists’ who had posed as a revolutionary Marxist:

In the intellectual circles of the capital [Warsaw] . . . he was a star of the first magnitude. Until recently, many participants in the March incidents regarded him as their idol. Many young and naive people believed that Zygmunt Bauman was one of the leading interpreters of Marxism . . . this ‘militant Zionist’ who, under the direction of power-hungry political swindlers, was one of the students’ spiritual leaders and teachers.

The article goes on to state that Bauman was guilty of sponsoring provocations by the youthful protesters, concluding: ‘He was one of the moral perpetrators of the March events. He is one of the main culprits.’¹⁴ As we know, this is all far from the truth.

According to Bauman’s file, on 8 September 1968 the Party organized a meeting at the PAN Institute of Philosophy and Sociology where Bauman’s interview in *Maariv* (broadcast on Radio Free Europe two days earlier) was read and discussed. The time was right for forging an image of Bauman that would help to discredit the whole revolt of March 1968. A *Bezpieka* agent wrote:

Participants at the meeting expressed their total disapproval of Z. Bauman as a person and the position taken by him, emphasizing his duplicity and his desire to make a career under any conditions, regardless of the country and political system in which he lives. There was particular indignation among the gathered over Z. Bauman's statement about the full solidarity of the Warsaw philosophical and sociological environment. Listeners mocked and laughed at Z. Bauman's response about the declaration of workers given to Bauman . . . at the end of the gathering, one of the young scholars, a non-Party member and a Catholic, thanked me very much for inviting him to the meeting, which allowed him to learn the truth about Z. Bauman.¹⁵

Similar denunciations of the 'Bauman case' took place in various Party sections at the university.

Condemned to absence

In the spring of 1968, Bauman's publications, as well as those of other 'revisionist authors', were withdrawn from the bookstores, libraries and other places where they were publicly accessible. His name was put on the most restrictive censorship list: not even negative citations were permitted.¹⁶ Bauman's positions as editor and chair were given to non-Jewish Poles, as were other jobs abandoned by people who were jailed or emigrated. People who would never have been accepted as Ph.D. candidates took the places of students who had fled or been tossed out of the university. Many scholars saw their careers advance rapidly. For some, the impossible became real. As Bauman often mentioned, the ethnic purge made thousands of people happy by transporting them to inaccessible positions.

After the events of 1968, sociologists at Warsaw University followed the orthodox line. Some developed quantitative, survey-based research with methodology increasingly imported from US sociology (especially Parsons, Lazarsfeld and Merton). The banning of works and anathematizing of individuals loosened the connections between Bauman and the Warsaw milieu. Many people cut all ties, though a few (Wiatr and Szacki) stayed in contact – despite the fact that their mail was being carefully checked by censors. What survived in the collective memory was the anecdote about his boots and the gun he brought to school while still in the KBW – a narrow depiction of Bauman as a fearful figure.

Gradually, the Polish underground gained strength at the university. Unlike Kořakowski, Bauman was not at the core of this new social movement; he followed it from a distance, from time to time writing a paper about the Polish situation (his colleagues regularly published their texts in *Annex*, an opposition review). Like most

Polish émigré scientists (Wagner, 2011), Bauman did not participate in the life of the Polish diaspora, which was often linked with the Catholic Church. Instead of looking for friends inside *Polonia* (the diaspora), Bauman tried to fit into the expectations of the Leeds University community. He was busy as a head of department and not really available for taking part in Polish 'struggles'. Unlike Kołakowski, his sociological topics were not connected with sharp critique of Marxism or with Poland. He was a general sociologist, analysing universal problems and working in Great Britain. He refused to specialize in Eastern Europe.¹⁷

Bauman also did not openly condemn the introduction of martial law in 1981, which was viewed as discreet support for the Jaruzelski regime and led former colleagues and friends to distance themselves. Bauman's contact with Poland was private: some old colleagues visiting him in Leeds, and correspondence with Polish friends, most of them abroad. The authorities had banned contact with Bauman. Many colleagues who remained feared the consequences of maintaining the relationship, or simply were not interested. He had been ejected from the Polish intellectual world.

Bauman's situation started to change in 1980. With the rise of the Solidarity movement, previous government decisions were criticized and challenged, and this critique reached the universities. In July 1981, the Warsaw University Senate asked the Ministry of Higher Education to retract its 25 March 1968 decision to evict faculty members, and requested the reinstatement of the purged professors.¹⁸ The ministry responded¹⁹ by requesting case-by-case defences of the faculty, which opened the possibility of rehabilitating at least some of them. The rector started sending letters to the evicted professors asking for them to return. But, of the six fired professors, only four were invited back – excluding Bauman and Hirszowicz. Why this omission? Ostensibly, the questionable legal status of the two accounted for them being left out – both had 'voluntarily' resigned their Polish nationality before leaving. The other four had managed to avoid this categoric decision.²⁰

This story is told in a letter written by Włodzimierz Brus, who was contacted by the rector and immediately responded, saying it offended him. Brus said any exclusion of 'persons who resigned their Polish citizenship' was unjust and duplicitous, because their deracination had not been made freely. In addition, Brus noted, there was no formal requirement to be a Polish citizen to be on the faculty at a Polish university. 'Neither Maria Hirszowicz nor Zygmunt Bauman got a letter from the University of Warsaw seeking pardon for the pain and injustice provoked by their eviction', Brus wrote, and this unjustified discrimination 'suggests painful similarities (with the past) and awakens worries (for the future)'.²¹

On 10 November 1981, Rector Samsonowicz responded with a

letter to Bauman saying the university senate wished to reverse the 1968 decision. The last sentence in the letter was the one the ousted professors had been waiting to hear: 'In informing you of the above, I express my regret about what happened in 1968.'

Visibly, in 1981 the situation was still unclear. The institutions discussed steps to repair past damage, but no one wanted to apologize officially or take responsibility for what had occurred. Samsonowicz obviously was not responsible for the 1968 decision. But those whom the ban had harmed expected more from the institution that participated in imposing it.

On 13 March 1990, Samsonowicz, now minister of higher education in the first post-communist government, wrote a long letter to Bauman seeking forgiveness for his unjust treatment. It is a sincere letter, full of respect, requesting Bauman's return to the faculty of Warsaw University. The wind of 1989 had cleared many obstacles. By the mid-1980s, Bauman began to correspond with colleagues more intensely. In 1986, Lydia Bauman sought a visa to return to Poland with a group of university artists, but was refused.²² Two years later, in 1988, the University of Warsaw invited Bauman to give a lecture at the university. The Baumans applied for visas, got them, and came to Warsaw for a short visit after twenty years of absence.

Homecoming!?

'I returned to Warsaw "indoctrinated" by Alfred Schutz, the author of a beautiful essay about what in English is called *homecoming*,²³ a term that is difficult to translate faithfully into Polish', Bauman said in an interview conducted in 1988:

It's about going home, coming to it a second time. The essay is extensive but it adds up to this trivial thought: that homecoming is the arrival of a man who no longer exists to a place that doesn't exist. There are, however, expectations: people expect to see someone they remember from years ago, and the arrival thinks similarly. Agreement on this situation is very difficult. I was afraid of this arrival' (Bauman in Mieszczanek (interview), 1989: 160).²⁴

The Baumans were wary of those mutual expectations, but also feared the authorities' behaviour. The previous system still existed, and the future was not clear. After all, Janina Bauman, as of 1988, was still on the list of undesirable persons in Poland – an impassable blacklist, in theory. Zygmunt had been removed from the list a couple of days before his return thanks to the intervention of colleagues who organized it.²⁵

[A]fter the first shock at Okęcie airport, when after passing the passport control they stopped us and in a not very polite manner told us to wait, explaining the contradiction between the fact that we had visas and the existence of our names on the list of undesirable people; after the turmoil in my head [when authorities let us in] after I saw all those faces [of friends] I have not seen for years . . . By the second day it seemed I was picking up conversations that were interrupted twenty years earlier and that nothing had happened in the interim – neither to me nor the people here. (Bauman, 1989: 160)

To see the city of their past with all the friends that they had been unable to see for two decades was an emotional experience for the Baumans. Just as the final days before their departure had been emotionally charged, feelings of joy accompanying their return were mixed with a tone of sadness. They reflected on time, which passes too fast, and all the years when they missed so many people who were close to them in their Warsaw life. Some former friends who in 1968 had said nothing and kept silent, now asked for forgiveness, expressing shame at their behaviour, at their weakness and fear of repression.²⁶ One imagines that the Baumans did not sleep a lot during their first return to Poland, or in other visits that followed with regularity thereafter. Their old friends were happy to see them again and always had time for those special meetings. New friends, acquaintances and scholarly colleagues mobilized new teaching, writing and discussion projects. Bauman rarely refused an offer, and his calendar became more and more jammed. They were happy to find their old places, restaurants, theatres, museums and the National Philharmonic. They bought books and records. They visited other cities: Poznań, as well as Kraków and Lublin. They made new friends with philosophers and cultural studies experts, as well as artists. Bauman was in his ‘photography’ period and there were organized shows, in a friendly atmosphere with a growing circle of young people.

Zygmunt accepted an offer from the Polish Academy of Sciences to become a part-time professor. In May 1991, he was appointed to the Committee of the Social Sciences at the Polish Academy of Sciences, one of the most prestigious academic institutions.²⁷ Through this process, Bauman in some ways recovered the place he would have had if he had stayed in Poland. His principal employer before 1968 – the University of Warsaw – was not in such a rush to restore him, however – the process took 6½ years. The Philosophy and Sociology Department Council voted on 20 June 1989 to return the evicted faculty members (Hirszowicz and Bauman), requesting the rector to take the necessary steps. But nothing happened, so the request was made again five years later, in November 1994, and in June 1995 the rector invited Bauman to return as a professor. A 4

January 1996 letter shows Bauman's response: he had decided to become a professor emeritus.²⁸

This period also saw Bauman's return to Polish scientific journals. His first post-1989 article, 'The Fall of Lawmakers', appeared in 1990 in *Philosophical Studies*. In 1992, *Modernity and the Holocaust* appeared in Polish, published by Cultural Foundation Masada. The Baumans were close with the publisher's creator, Julian Wojdowski, who was also an exceptional author. A childhood survivor of the Holocaust, he published important texts about anti-Semitism, the Holocaust and the Jewish fate. Bauman's book was the first and only book published by Masada; Wojdowski took his life in 1991.²⁹ His widow, Anna Wojdowska-Iwaszkiewiczowa responded to the Polish Nobel laureate Czesław Miłosz when he asked why her husband took his own life: 'Are you not aware that the Holocaust kills even the survivors? It is impossible to live with.' However, some did . . . One way of 'living with' the Holocaust was to write and speak about it. That was Janina Bauman's way.

The Holocaust became the major topic in the Baumans' life at that time. Janina translated and published *Winter in the Morning* in Polish in 1989, and the book was well received, though Zygmunt always felt it deserved more attention. Bauman always asked his colleagues and the organizers of his visits to prepare events for Janina's books. Their Poznań friend, the artist and art professor Tomasz Kowalski, who organized several meetings with the Baumans, together with the philosophy professor Roman Kubicki and philosopher Anna Zeidler-Janiszewska,³⁰ would invite all his friends, students and family members to Janina's presentations. Her audience remained small compared to Zygmunt's, but she enjoyed responding to the public's reaction to her work.

The enthusiasm that their visits aroused in Poland was part of growing interest in Zygmunt's work. His book *Modernity and the Holocaust* placed him at the pinnacle of the university world, bringing prizes, invitations to talks and other prestigious events, and doctorates of *honoris causa*. Retirement would not mean a rest for the Baumans, who still hardly had time to accept all the invitations that came from around the world. Celebrity came at a good moment.

World recognition

The recognition started to build up even before the 'liquid turn' in Bauman's work. In 1989, the Italian Association of Sociology awarded Bauman the prestigious European Amalfi Prize for *Modernity and the Holocaust*.³¹ His Italian success began at that moment and never ended. He became a star in Italy. Even his friend

and editor, John Thompson, was surprised by this phenomenon, noting that authors and university professors in the UK rarely reach the celebrity Bauman enjoyed in Italy, Spain, Portugal and South America. In these places Bauman was viewed as a guru, a role he always said he disliked and refused to play. Bauman enjoyed speaking before large audiences, but he was less enthusiastic about parties and receptions. After his talks, Janina and Zygmunt were usually invited to receptions, dinners and cocktails, but the Baumans often ducked out with a friend, the artist Tomasz Kowalski told me. 'If Bauman was to become a celebrity, he was to be an unwilling one', Beilharz said: 'In an academic world where self-promotion is now a standard requirement, this is a rare thing' (2020 MS: 80).

Monika Kostera, the co-author of one of Bauman's last books, *Management in Liquid Modernity*, gave a detailed account of one occasion:

In 1995, Zygmunt came to Warsaw. His talk took place in the Institute of Culture and there were a lot of invited people. It was difficult to get in: media, cameras, well-known people, and us. Well, after the lecture, which was poignant – he was an amazing person who spoke so simply and so beautifully about complicated social processes . . . – after this lecture, Ania [Anna Zeidler-Janiszewska] introduced me to Zygmunt and we talked. At some point Zygmunt said, 'Let's go', and a quick action was executed. Ania grabbed us and somehow we got out of there quickly with all these journalists and cameras and important professors [waiting for Bauman] . . . we escaped along a corridor. Ania knew this place and knew how to get out by the back door – The three of us sat in the 'Literacka' cafe – and had an absolutely fantastic time.

Though Bauman liked to escape crowds, he did very well in official functions. He was an amazing keynote speaker, had a very elegant way of talking and a rare verbal grace, responding to questions with his sweet-and-sour sense of humour. All those features made him sympathetic, and despite his declarations to the contrary, Bauman played the role of 'sage' to perfection. His advancing age increased his aura as a grand public intellectual, and he clearly liked speaking about contemporary problems and the changing world, especially with younger audiences. This was impressive, since most people his age had stopped following technological change, social evolution and global phenomena.

Bauman's physical charisma was expressed in his talismanic pipe-smoking, his height and white hair and the agility – rare at his age – with which he passionately delivered a global vision grounded in sophisticated analysis. He was a bewitching figure for a consumerist culture in which there is such primacy given to youth. Young people saw him as a Yoda, a wizened ancient one with the secrets to

understanding human action and relationships. In short, Bauman transformed his age from a handicap to an advantage, employing his sociological imagination to create attractive ideas and communicate them to large groups of people.

As the Baumans got older, it was harder for him to accept even short separations, and he always travelled with Janina. This was problematic but non-negotiable. Janina stopped her yearly visits to Israel, a difficult concession because she missed her daughter and grandchildren and the beauty of Jerusalem in the evening, described so well in *Dream of Belonging*. In Leeds they were always working on the next talk, project or book, and constantly preparing for the next trip. But Janina was not always 'the professor's wife'. Sometimes Zygmunt was 'Janina Bauman's husband'. She was invited to speak about *Winter in the Morning* in Holland, Germany, Scandinavia and other places, at universities (Jewish studies, Shoah history) or events for the public. Beginning in 1995, she was frequently invited to the Anne Frank House as an author and survivor for educational and historical projects. She also became involved in the construction of Holocaust memory projects and education for tolerance. She frequently shared her wartime experience with students in Poland and in Germany, an emotional challenge. Zygmunt accompanied her on those trips, frequently giving talks at nearby universities. They were always together. In 1998, the city of Frankfurt presented Bauman with the Theodor W. Adorno Award – an incredible honour. Two years later, the publication of *Liquid Modernity* created a new departure. Bauman was 75 years old.

Global Bauman

Between 2000 and 2010, Bauman published at least one book a year. He wrote about things that interested people: consumerism, globalization, modernity, post-modernity, fear, love, hate and anti-Semitism. His vast training and experience, erudition, attention to popular culture such as movies, and comfort in four or five languages – English, Polish, Hebrew, Russian and sometimes French and Italian – gave him a wide field of play. Bauman put all those resources together to create readable and compelling books and thoughts. 'I did not truly "belong" to any school, order, intellectual camaraderie or clique', Bauman said in 2011:

I did not apply for admission to any of them, let alone did much to deserve an invitation; nor would I be listed by any of them – at least listed unqualifiedly as 'one of us'. I guess my claustrophobia is incurable – feeling, as I tend to, ill at ease in any closed room, and always tempted to find out what is on the other side of the door. I guess

I am doomed to remain an outsider to the end, lacking as I am the indispensable qualities of an academic insider: school loyalty, conformity to the procedure, and readiness to obey by the school-endorsed criteria of cohesion and consistency. And, frankly, I don't mind.³²

Bauman broke with the conventions³³ of academic writing. Some scholarly milieus have problems with this transgression, and some professional sociologists, especially in the UK, harshly criticized his turn to the popular touch (see Kilminster, 2016, or Rattansi, 2017, for example). Overall, academic sociologists were ambivalent about his writing. Tester saw Bauman's 'transgression' as part of 'the Zygmunt of "Control Zygmunt" – the one who says, "Watch this film! Read this novel!"', the one who has a very strong sense of vocation, an extreme sense of humour as well, always playing off of being an outsider very skilfully. It was a joke for him.'³⁴ Being an outsider had become a privilege; it enabled freedom from academic conventions. Bauman had shed the shackles of academia and become a free writer (Bauman, 2012). There was no other way for him to continue to think, Bauman said in later interviews; he needed to maintain a special connection with his readers, who included activists. His engaged work inspired important social movements that were anti-globalist or sought alternatives to its current forms. But his remarkable huge public success came under a shadow: the old story of his unrequited love for Poland.

Global and famous and . . . the culprit again . . .

During their visits to Poland, Janina engaged mainly in discussions of the Holocaust and its lessons, while Zygmunt participated in academic events and became a kind of leftist spiritual leader (the group *Krytyka Polityczna* frequently published his texts and organized talks) – and presented his photographs. In 2004, Poland joined the European Union, an event that was a source of optimism and hope for democratic stability. Bauman became rector of the Jan Józef Lipski Open University in Teremiski near Białowieża, in eastern Poland. This institution, created by Solidarity leader Jacek Kuroń, represented the utopian idea that a university should open its doors to everyone, including in the most isolated places in the country, with the idea that knowledge transmission (and construction) should not be limited to national or private universities or students with high levels of social capital. These popular universities have existed in Poland for nearly a century, and it is an honour to be invited to lecture in them. The idea of education for all continued a socialist ideal, implementing Gramsci's ideas and transforming Bauman's words into deeds. The lectures he gave in a wooden barn

in the tiny forest village 200 kilometres east of Warsaw attracted a lot of people – ranging from locals to Warsaw intelligentsia and Belorussian neighbours. Young and old squeezed together in the barn.

In April 2004, Bauman received an honorary Doctorate of Letters from the University of Leeds, ‘a rare honour in this country and a profound satisfaction’, Janina wrote to Beilharz (2020 MS: 159). In total, Bauman would win twenty *honoris causa* doctorates in different countries. These ceremonies were always pleasant – except in Poland. By chance – apparently – just as the University of Warsaw was launching the process of awarding Bauman with its highest distinction, in June 2006 a historian of the IPN published a paper denouncing Bauman’s communist past.³⁵

The IPN is a powerful institution of post-communist Poland. It is both an archive of records from the communist-era secret police and other sources, and an agency that compensates victims as well as prosecuting those allegedly guilty of crimes under communism. Since the election of the right-wing nationalist Law and Justice Party in 2005, the IPN has increasingly also been used as a politicized tool to attack and marginalize opponents of the government, including much of the leadership of the Solidarity movement that helped bring down the communist regime. The use of selective IPN files for the ‘lustration’ or cleansing of Polish society led Solidarity leader and publisher Adam Michnik to declare in 2008 that the IPN, rather than preserving the nation’s memory, was destroying it.³⁶ IPN’s founding paragraph has been revised to a focus solely on communist – and not Nazi – crimes, and recently was changed to protecting the ‘good name’ of Poland against accusations of complicity in the Holocaust. More to the point, IPN officials have selectively leaked files to journalists in order to smear enemies of the current government. The victims of these smear campaigns have included personalities such as Lech Wałęsa, Jacek Kuroń – and Zygmunt Bauman.

In the mid-2000s, Warsaw University faculty were instructed to declare whether they had collaborated with the secret services, a tricky question for many, since, in order to travel, scholars had to sign a ‘collaborative declaration’ with the *Bezpieka*, even if they never really worked for it. Discussions on the subject generated a lot of public controversy. The logic behind lustration was actually the same as in 1968 – to purge society and solidify the control of the ruling party through successive elections. Increasingly, the IPN was essentially geared to distributing pro-government, nationalist propaganda.

The article about Bauman published in 2006 on the IPN’s website did not contain evidence of a crime. It presented two *Bezpieka* files, one from 1950 that gave a positive assessment of Bauman’s activities by his superior, Colonel Bibrowski, as a justification for his

promotion. The second was a certificate testifying that Bauman collaborated with military intelligence. The author of the IPN report, Gontarz, argued that Bibrowski's assessment showed that Bauman had been a team leader in KBW activities against underground fighters in winter 1946. Since the newly empowered neo-nationalists had declared these underground anti-communist fighters to be national heroes, the fact of having opposed them became a crime, if not a prosecutable one. There was no other specific evidence against Bauman.

In previous chapters, I have presented a detailed analysis of the context in which Bauman entered the military services. There is no denying that Bauman actively supported the communist system in the postwar period, nor that he was a KBW officer who served in military intelligence for three years. The hate attacks against Bauman that arose as a result of Gontarz's IPN article probably stemmed from other causes. Firstly, Bauman never apologized for his involvement in the communist enterprise in postwar Poland. He said repeatedly that he viewed it as having been the best option at that time in those circumstances. In an interview with the *Guardian* in 2007, he said that he bore full responsibility for his actions, but did not apologize because he did not feel he had done wrong.

Secondly, unlike fellow former communists such as Kołakowski, Bauman did not entirely change his political stripes, and remained on the left side of the political arena. Thirdly, he became extremely famous, which attracted jealousy and rage. Last, but probably not least, he was a Jew. The IPN article unleashed a series of rabid attacks on Bauman by the anti-Semitic media. Bauman became a mythical enemy whose 'cosmopolitanism' was a danger to the construction and maintenance of a strong national identity in a new European sphere. Hatred was mobilized by fear – the fear that Poland was losing its specific culture, language, independence and way of life in the new, 'liquid' spheres of the world.

One could speculate that the selective release of seemingly incriminating evidence against Bauman was part of an intentional process to undermine Bauman and scuttle his *honoris causa* distinction. Bauman was one of the perfect targets for the IPN – a handy scapegoat for a nationalist right-wing government. He was famous, and continued to embrace a socialist ideal and to criticize the perversities of capitalism at a time when capitalism was not just a new economic system in Poland, but a new 'religion'.

On 5 July 2006, in the same month the IPN article was published, the director of the Institute of Applied Social Sciences (ISNS) wrote an official letter to the rector of the University of Warsaw noting the approaching fiftieth anniversary of Bauman's doctorate award and requesting its 'solemn renewal'.³⁷ This initiative was supported by the university's other sociological institute,

the Institute of Sociology (IS).³⁸ The ‘solemn renewal of doctorate degree’ is equivalent to an *honoris causa* (which cannot be awarded to a graduate of the same university; as Bauman got his Ph.D. at the University of Warsaw, a solemn renewal was the only option for him). The decision of the sociological institutes required agreement from the university Senate and a Commission for Honorific Titles that included the current and previous rectors. They were to meet to discuss the award after the summer break. In early September, the rector received protests.

On 7 September, Professor Jerzy Kwaśniewski sent a letter by e-mail urging that the honour be reconsidered:

In the face of recently disclosed information that Prof. Zygmunt Bauman was an officer and an agent of the communist security services, I am opposed to the request of the Faculty of Philosophy and Sociology and the Department of Applied Social Sciences and Rehabilitation for a solemn renewal of the doctorate . . . At the same time, I request that these department councils resume voting on the matter after their members read the IPN materials on the activities of Z. Bauman in the communist special services.³⁹

The second letter came from Canada. Professor Maria Łoś, a sociologist, had graduated in the early 1970s from Warsaw and taught at the University of Ottawa on Eastern Europe and communism. Her 24 September letter to the rector also called for withholding the honour to Bauman ‘until he explains his former role in the apparatus of repression. There is no doubt to me, that Professor Bauman has significant scientific achievements and has significantly influenced the shaping of social and ethical thought in the last twenty years.’ However, ‘a calm investigation and explanation’ were required because of the IPN disclosures of ‘*previously unknown information* that Zygmunt Bauman was an officer of the communist security authorities in 1945–1953, as well as a secret military information agent, and that he actively participated in eliminating the resistance of the underground guerrilla.’⁴⁰

The backdrop to the story of those letters is important to understanding the context of Bauman’s shunning by the university. First, Kwaśniewski led a third sociological institute at the University of Warsaw that was in competition with the two institutes that were urging the honouring of Bauman. No other discipline at this university is organized in this way, and it reflects the complex relationships among networks that have developed over several generations. Łoś, by contrast, was a longtime emigrant and thus a ‘foreign expert’ whose letter from abroad weighed more than one signed by a scholar working in Poland. As a peripheral post-Soviet country, Poland and many of its citizens looked with absolute idolatry towards ‘the West’.

Both Kwaśniewski and Łoś were close collaborators of Adam Podgórecki (1925–98), who left Poland in 1977 and went to Ottawa, where Łoś followed two years later. Łoś was Podgórecki's wife. She had received her master's degree in 1966, and a Ph.D. in 1971, at the Institute of Sociology, and knew Bauman personally. Kwaśniewski also graduated from the institute and attended lectures with Bauman. Podgórecki and Bauman were university faculty of the same age and knew each other, but represented different sociological positions. Podgórecki was a specialist in deviation, socio-technics and the sociology of morality, which Bauman criticized in his post-Poland works. Their biographical features also were different, though both had left Poland for political reasons. Podgórecki was a well-regarded Catholic anti-communist who originated in the Polish gentry. Kwaśniewski had taken his place at the university when Podgórecki left. Born in 1942 in a rural area, Kwaśniewski was also a non-Jewish Pole. He was hired at the university in 1969, when the anti-Semitic purge had opened up new places.

The second common point in the two letters was their level of ignorance, which is surprising, especially since communist security institutions were Łoś's area of expertise. Both sociologists should have known there was nothing new in the IPN documents. There had never been any secret about Bauman being a KBW officer when he began his master's at Warsaw University. He came to campus in his military uniform, having had no time to change it (like many others in the same situation), and continued to wear the uniform after leaving the KBW because he had no money for other clothes. If Łoś and Kwaśniewski didn't remember this detail personally, they would have known it from their older colleagues and friends – especially Podgórecki. Anyone at Warsaw University would have known that KBW was part of the secret military services, and it was no secret that, in the two years after the war ended, all KBW units were 'combatting Polish guerrillas'. Indeed, any Polish Army officer from this period spent at least short periods chasing partisans in the forests – and Bauman was far from being the only person at Warsaw University who served in the military at the time. Yet no one ever found evidence that Bauman had fired a weapon, let alone mistreated or tortured a prisoner. Such people had trouble returning to Poland after the fall of communism; Bauman never did.⁴¹ Specialists did the dirty work in the postwar era, and the authorities kept this secret even inside their units. Bauman was a propaganda officer, a teacher and a Party intellectual.

Adding to the intrigue, there had been a scholarly quarrel in the late 1970s which opposed Bauman's friends to Podgórecki, during a polemic that arose over a paper that the latter published in 1976 about Polish sociology and its paradigms, approaches and methodology (Szacki, 2011 [1976]). Podgórecki, a supporter of 'positivist sociology', heavily criticized – among others – Jan Szczepański

and Aleksandra Jasińska-Kania, and Jerzy Szacki responded with a short text, defending his colleagues. It could be compared to a conflict of the 'schools' or 'coteries' – however, the tone of the discussion imposed by the first text by Podgórecki was particularly aggressive and abrasive.

Finally, Łoś's and Kwaśniewski's letters suggest that the authors were supporters of lustration. Like Podgórecki, they followed paradigms that were the opposite of Bauman's – Łoś using the concept of late modernity; and Kwaśniewski, 'deviation and social norms'. Both specialized in punitive institutions and re-socialization, which Bauman criticized. Moreover, perhaps they hoped that someone else would get the coveted 'renewal of doctorate degree' that was being offered to Bauman. Other names had been proposed from outside the Sociology Department.

The official process restarted after the summer break. On 9 October, the rector informed the institutes of the negative decision of the Commission for Honorific Titles, justifying it based on the '[c]haracter of the academic and teaching achievements of the candidate'.⁴² This short sentence provoked strong reactions from both the sociological institutes that had put Bauman's name forward. Their leaders sent indignant letters to the rector seeking more explanation.⁴³ The president of the Institute of Applied Social Science's academic council concluded on 31 October, 'The verdict of the Commission and the form of communicating this verdict have been interpreted as disregarding and challenging the competence not only of the councils of two Institutes representing sociology and social sciences at our university, but also many prestigious, well-respected Western European scientific institutions.'⁴⁴ The letter mentions the nine European universities that had awarded Bauman with the *honoris causa* distinction. On 27 November, the rector asked members of the Commission for Honorific Titles to provide more detailed responses within three days.

The final letter from the rector states:

Professor Zygmunt Bauman is a world-class scholar whose sociological achievements are undisputed, widely recognized and valued in Europe and in the world. However, the postwar activity of the professor as a political officer of the KBW and his ideological engagement among others at the University of Warsaw and the Higher School of Social Sciences at the Central Committee of the PZPR raises serious reservations and may be the subject of intense controversy. The renewal of the doctoral thesis promotes not only scientific achievements but also patterns of civic attitude. It has important didactic and educational meaning. At the University of Warsaw, fortunately, we have no strong aspiration to hold an accounting of the past or publicly condemn members of our community who were involved in

the communist regime. . . . But it is hardly surprising that this is an obstacle to the highest honours. This was reflected in the results of the vote of both faculty councils. In this situation, the Commission fully and unanimously upholds its previous position.⁴⁵

The University of Warsaw's rector was Professor Katarzyna Macukow-Chałasińska, a physicist elected in 2005 and the daughter of Jozef Chałasiński, a sociologist who had not got along well with Hochfeld (Chałubiński, 2017: 33–4 and ch.8) or Bauman. In the 1960s, Chałasiński wrote of himself that, during the Stalinist period, he was 'an altar boy of the established rite – Stalin worship' (Piskala and Zysiak, 2013: 294). Before turning against orthodox Marxism, Chałasiński had been an aggressive young communist who fought with his mentor, Znaniecki. All of this suggests that the failure of Bauman's honorary degree had a long history, one that reached into the 1950s and before, and included resentment towards Bauman among some of those who worked with him, and their students. After 1989, true Marxists were in a minority and Hochfeld's circle had lost its strength. Anything that smelled of communism was frowned upon, with reinforcement from popular anti-Semitic opinions. There is no direct proof of any conspiracy against Bauman, but a climate of witch-hunting and resentment framed the event.

The result didn't surprise the Warsaw sociology community, though many opposed the decision. One anonymous observer blamed the institutes for failing to lay the groundwork before setting in motion the *honoris causa* for Bauman: 'We were so sure he would get it because of his achievements and fame. But at the top, opposition was strong, and we lost. And afterwards there was shame.'

Ostensibly, the thesis of anti-Semitism seems weak: Jews such as the Israeli Professor Shmul Eisenstadt received honorary degrees from the University of Warsaw. But Eisenstadt had strong institutional backing and was a practitioner of functionalism, the major approach in sociology at the university. And, though born in Warsaw, he had fled to Palestine before the war, was educated in Israel, and never pretended to be a Pole. Bauman always presented himself as a Pole, and, for a lot of Poles, that was the problem. Today, anti-Semitism is not typically directed at Israeli citizens, but rather at present or former Polish Jews.

Bauman did not like to speak about the 'sad thing', but he was very disappointed. The worst thing was to be rejected by his academic *alma mater*, which had been such an exceptional intellectual environment in the 1960s. The prodigal son had once more been rejected, a kind of *déjà vu* almost thirty years after the first rejection. Bauman again was being denounced on the front pages of the newspapers (with repercussions in other countries, such as the *Guardian* article published in April 2007 titled 'Professor with a Past').⁴⁶

The worst thing was this incredible consistency, in the liquid world. Despite radical changes that occurred in Poland after 1989, exclusion processes maintained an astonishing continuity. Whatever the regime, he fitted the role of ‘culprit’ and ‘enemy’ – his master status was unchanging, whether it was assigned because he was a Jew, a ‘Zionist’ or a former communist. Although it didn’t appear in the university documents, Bauman’s activism in 21st-century anti-capitalist movements was also a punishable activity in the nationalist press. He was the perfect enemy.

In a 2019 article entitled ‘Polish Deadlock: Between Liberal and Right-Wing Anti-Communism’, Jakub Majmurek remarked:

Right-wing anti-communism has no single figure that gathers its discourses, like *homo sovieticus*. The closest to this is probably the figure of ‘Major Bauman’ – as the right-wing press calls the outstanding sociologist, Zygmunt Bauman. ‘Major Bauman’ brings together the narrative of ‘race war’ and the Soviet conquest, the figure of the elite of the Third Polish Republic and the modern Western left, and as such is the ideal object for attacks from right-wing anti-communism.⁴⁷

The Baumans continued to visit Poland after 2006, but less joyfully than in the past. Friends, collaborators and enthusiastic supporters of Bauman’s work organized new events, and he gave lectures at the co-operative university Collegium Civitas, and the Institute of Applied Sciences created by Krytyka Polityczna. But these were outside the mainstream of Polish higher education. With the exception of the Polish Academy of Sciences, this world no longer welcomed Bauman. More Polish universities rejected *honoris causa* proposals (for example, Poznań’s Mickiewicz University), and Bauman declined a decoration from Wrocław’s private Lower Silesia University. After the hate action organized by fascist groups that had disturbed his lecture in Wrocław a few months earlier (June 2013 – see Introduction), Bauman wished to avoid similar problems; he did not want to be a ‘problem’ for others. Already in 1988, Bauman said ironically:

because whatever I did with the sincere conviction that it was for the good of Poland was considered an element of the Zionist world conspiracy in which I wanted to give Krakow to Israel, it seemed to me that I became a King Midas in a way that if the touch of King Midas turned everything into gold, with me – everything I touch turned to shit. I apologize for the unpleasant word, but I felt that way. . . . I felt that I could only disturb and not help my colleagues. And that maybe it would be better for them, if I leave, if they do not have to carry me on their backs with all the other weights. (Bauman, cited in Mieszczanek, 1989: 164)

The exclusion continued not only in academia but more generally. Bauman never recovered his citizenship, although President Aleksander Kwaśniewski asked him at an event why he had not got it back. It would be a small formality, Kwaśniewski said.⁴⁸ Bauman never pursued it, and it is not clear whether he ever considered doing so. After all, he did not resign from his Polish citizenship – he was evicted from Poland with his family and resignation from the citizenship was imposed. There was no other choice. Requesting his citizenship back would certainly have been time-consuming. It might have also seemed risky, since Bauman's life had been one of multiple rejections from Polish society. 'If I did not become a Pole and nobody let me do it, it is the fault of Poland, not mine', wrote Bauman's Polish editor, Włodzimierz Wojdowski ('Judaism as Fate' in Molisak, 2004: 318). Yet unlike Wojdowski, who remained in Poland to give permanent testimony on the Holocaust, Bauman remained a Pole, in spirit at least.

Legends: Jackboots and iron – deconstruction

Chapter 8 began with this anecdote, which concerns a story that circulates at Warsaw University. Bauman frequented his department as a student wearing a military uniform and with a gun in its holster, which would sometimes clatter onto the floor during the seminar. The hero of the story is Bauman – the professor's name varies. Interestingly, when I interviewed Bronisław Baczko, a philosopher and colleague of Bauman, he gave a slightly different account: 'When I was at the university the first years, I was still in the Army [Baczko was a political officer, at a higher rank than Bauman – he benefitted from a military apartment in the beautiful buildings that were just near the university campus]. It was not always possible to take time to change into civilian clothes as I ran directly from the office to the lectures. And it was me who dropped my gun on the floor!' Another interviewee – Karol Modzelewski – recalled this anecdote with Kołakowski in the principal role, not Bauman. That version was confirmed by Jerzy and Barbara Szacki who, after some hesitation, recognize Kołakowski as the gun's owner ('he always had his head in the clouds – it could only have happened to him'), and the place was not Warsaw but Łódź.

All these reported versions could be true. All the heroes of the story – Baczko, Kołakowski, Bauman – were in possession of guns in their first years at the university. They were in active military service (except Kołakowski, who was not in the Polish Army – but he was a member of a radical communist group and, like all his colleagues, he had a gun for self-defence). What does this anecdote tell us?

First, about the context – in the postwar period, not everyone had returned to civilian life after the Liberation. The university welcomed those who were still active soldiers. We should remember that Poland in these years was still at war – guns were like mobile phones today: every active person carried one with them, especially those who supported the new system. All three heroes of this same story had a gun and took it to the university. This story is simply an illustration of the unusual nature of those stormy times. Why does this anecdote mention mainly Bauman? Because Kołakowski washed his hands of his communist past, Baczko plunged into his scholarly work, completely disappearing from the Polish academic milieu, and Bauman . . . he stayed as always – leftist, and famous! In the twenty-first century, Bauman became a world celebrity, a Global Thinker.

He was also the only one to be the target of a hate campaign in Poland (even if the biographies of both Kołakowski and Baczko were entangled in communist engagement). The anecdote contained a hidden message: Bauman was dangerous; everyone should be afraid of him. This could justify the accusations made by the press, and the lack of enthusiasm by university authorities to attribute the highest award to him. Bauman never denied his previous communist engagements. He explained several times that, in that postwar period, the communist programme was the most attractive and egalitarian – he saw it as the best plan for Poland at that moment. Unlike the majority of people engaged in the construction of communist/socialist Poland after 1989, who became critical of the leftist approach, Bauman remained true to the values that had led him to support communism during that period.

Jasia . . .

The rejections and disillusionments were difficult, but Bauman was used to them. But he was not prepared for the loss of Janina after almost sixty-two years of marriage. Bauman showed Janina his love, but if love was a constant tension between freedom and control, as Bauman described, his was much closer to the latter. He needed her, and she was always nearby, at his computer screen, travelling, walking hand in hand, discussing after he finished his daily writing, watching the latest ‘must-see’ film. She was always a bit in his shadow.

She had her own writing and her own passions, of course. Close friends and family remember the beautiful ceramic *garnki*, or pots, that she made for them – she was an artistic ceramicist who produced rare and beautiful work. ‘My mother suddenly started making pots in Leeds’, Irena recalled. She always gave them as presents, and Irena’s daughter, a professional art expert who specialized in

ceramics, said that Janina had invented a new adhesive method: 'It was very difficult work, and these pots are beautiful, and we did not understand what she was doing, or what an interesting artist she was. We failed to understand all those years.'

We can ask what accounts for this lack of recognition or struggle to impose her own will and desires – why she stopped her regular trips to Israel, why she did not push to write more books, why she never had a show of her ceramic work, or tried to sell it. Janina was enveloped in a kind of nostalgia or sorrow, some friends say – perhaps because she was living in Zygmunt's shadow, perhaps because of the incalculable losses of her childhood. Or for many reasons. Emigration caused many struggles. 'When you change your language you lose your capacity to be funny; you are deadly serious', her friend Griselda Pollock notes. While Janina wrote her books in English, 'she never had this ability to say what she wanted in English'. While others found Janina's spoken English very good, it certainly was not at a level with which she felt entire comfort. In her first book, Janina discussed her awkwardness with English as she learned to shop in Leeds. 'Learning a new language for everyday life involves making a fool of yourself, which may involve humiliation. Silence is an alternative strategy', said Peter Beilharz. English was Janina's fifth language, and she did not begin learning it until her late forties. In Polish, she was less reserved; she had a sense of humour and a kindness that, as some friends recall, made Zygmunt more 'accessible'. In addition to those linguistic limits, of course, her painful past never went away, for Janina's first identity was as a Holocaust survivor. She focused on sharing this unshareable experience, and it hurt. As Jan Gross noted in his autobiographical book (Gross and Pawlicka, 2018), Holocaust studies are a special field of activity. They strongly affect the author and never allow a moment's rest. The duty of transmission is stronger than the pain of recalling its horrors.

Towards the end of her life, Janina struggled with a heart ailment that resulted from the extreme conditions of her teenage years. Zygmunt was 'literally spoon-feeding her'⁴⁹ in her final years, yet the Baumans managed to spend their sixtieth wedding anniversary in Warsaw at the Hotel Bristol. It was the last time they came to Poland together. Back in Leeds, the Baumans spent many days in the clinics and hospitals of the National Health Service waiting for treatment. Bauman refused to pay for private care as a matter of principle. Why should he and his wife get better care than others who couldn't afford it? He hated to wait, but Bauman waited patiently. The Global Thinker sat in the corridors of public hospitals dealing with the shortages in care that resulted from the devastating reforms started by Margaret Thatcher. It was still a public trust, and Bauman stuck to his ideals – for his wife's treatment, and later for his own.

Janina died at age 83, on 29 December 2009. The man whom she had shadowed during her English life also began to disappear. Every living person has a shadow. If the shadow goes, it means that the person who cast it is there no more. Both die.

from the hip you shoot, my god,
 untroubled by fluky strikes
 and your people, your creators
 you dispatch to kingless justice
 hooded courts

chaos rules your blue beyond
 sparks within you and without
 your ways are unknown to us
 and no doubt to you the most
 heady fog

when a sage's ken you envy
 into stones you turn his eyes
 then you raise yourself above us
 unencumbered by remorse
 mortal's pain.

(Włodzimierz Holsztyński, 'Crossroads', trans. Barbara Nykiel-Herbert)⁵⁰

After Janina's death, Zygmunt Bauman remained home. He asked close friends not to call on him. Family and close friends were increasingly worried that he would follow Janina. For a year he mourned, losing his vital energy . . . for the first time in his life, he was not in a hurry.

A few months after her death, Keith Tester came to the house, and the meeting was very painful. All that Zygmunt wanted to do was to show him pictures of Janina. 'All of those around him thought we would lose him soon', recalled Monika Kostera. Bauman said his life was finished. He would never travel anymore, never go to those places he visited with Janina, never do anything now she was gone. There is a touching documentary entitled *Love, Europe, World* by Krzysztof Rzączyński, who followed Bauman with a camera during his first visit to Poland without Janina. Their daughters came with him. In one scene, Bauman is walking and he says, 'I am alone.' Lydia responds, 'No Dad, you have us.'

The daughters organized their time around being with their *tata* (dad). Bauman's clan was strong and they collaborated diligently to make sure Zygmunt was accompanied to all his professional events, which, despite his initial misgivings, continued. In 2010, he shared with Alain Touraine the Príncipe de Asturias Prize for communication and the humanities. The same year, in the UK, he attended the

creation of the Bauman Institute within the School of Sociology and Social Policy at Leeds, a crowning achievement. Bauman participated in events at the Institute organized by its creator and director Mark Davis until the last months of his life.

Bauman's work began to move him from his morbid inertia. He was engaged in a new book of dialogues with his friend, the former Jesuit priest Stanisław Obirek. They discussed God and humankind, a very interesting project for two outsiders who had belonged to big organizations and actively constructed utopias that never worked out. In their book, they discussed the existence of God from two perspectives – those of a believer and of an atheist. Obirek believed that this work was therapeutic for Bauman, helping to ease his desperation as he passed through the mourning period.

Some months after Janina's death, Bauman said to his daughters: 'This is a matter of choice now: either I die, or I choose life.'

He chose life.

Back to life

For his eighty-fifth birthday, in 2010, Bauman received the 'Gloria Artis' gold medal, the most prestigious decoration for cultural achievement in Poland. The ceremony was led by the Polish Minister of Culture and National Treasure. Bauman was happy about the distinction, though in pain and depressed. He invited to his party a colleague whom he had met for the first time at Warsaw University in 1954 – Aleksandra Jasińska-Kania.⁵¹ Starting in 1956, they worked in the division of political sociology under Hochfeld. Their career timing was different: Bauman quickly finished his doctorate degree and habilitation. Aleksandra Jasińska changed topics (partly for political reasons) and Ph.D. advisers. She finally finished her thesis in 1967, working under Bauman's supervision. Aleksandra Jasińska married her colleague from the department, Albion Kania, and the two Baumans and Kantias were friends who met from time to time before 1968. Aleksandra visited the Baumans in Leeds in 1988 while in Oxford as a visiting scholar. Zygmunt also had professional connections with Aleksandra; they published several times in contributory books, for example in a book about values and morality published in English.⁵²

Meeting again at Bauman's party in 2010, they had the first in a series of long discussions about their lost life-partners (Aleksandra's husband had died sixteen years before), the process of becoming a widow or widower, the sorrow and mourning and stages of pain, suffering and recovery. Bauman realized that these discussions helped him bring out and identify his feelings, and to share them. This mixture of sociology and psychology from a friend was the

best therapy he could get. Bauman's deep friendships with Jasińska-Kania and the former priest Obirek were very positive, and he progressively recovered his vitality. Jasińska-Kania was key – she knew how to transform a sad discussion into a positive and finally joyful exchange. The next year, when Bauman received an invitation to teach at the Collegium Civitas – the first non-public university in Poland, created by Polish Academy of Sciences professors – he got the rector to bring in Jasińska-Kania as his collaborator, and they conducted a seminar together. He came to Warsaw once a month, and Aleksandra ran the seminars in his absence.

'After one of his lectures he proposed to me', wrote Jasińska-Kania: 'It was hard to believe that the miracle of falling in love could happen to people who were 80 years old, but we both felt like we were 16 again' (Jasińska-Kania, 2018). It was a very fast process – 'that was very much like him', one of his daughters recalled: 'He just said that he had fallen in love.' At the time, Lydia and Irena thought their father would move to Warsaw permanently, or that the new couple would share their time between Leeds and Warsaw. Instead, Jasińska-Kania moved to Leeds. Zygmunt started to appreciate life again, and began new projects – four new dialogue books in 2013 alone. He resumed his intensive travel schedule, started entertaining guests and recovered a very similar life to the one he had spent with Janina: writing in the mornings, cooking for Aleksandra, spending the evening talking, singing, reading, watching TV, and discussing all the time. They shared an interest in sociology, in reminiscing about the Hochfeld circle, and their affinity for Russian culture and language, in which both had grown up. As a daughter of communist activists, during World War II Jasińska-Kania had grown up in a kind of Soviet nursery with children of communists from around the world. Younger than Bauman at the time, she absorbed many aspects of Russian culture, and this was a common ground for the two when they met as octogenarians. They would sing Russian childhood songs, read Russian literature and discuss Russian films. It was something new for Bauman to have a partner to recall the vast, beautiful Russian landscapes of his youth, the frigid Russian winters and the generosity of the Russians with whom they had shared those dark years.

They also communicated about their love with others, which surprised a lot of people. Again, Bauman was unconventional. In our societies, relationships that start this late tend to evoke suspicion and cynical comments. There was also gossip about their union, but Bauman did not care – as usual, he did what he wanted. Aleksandra – 'Ola', as her friends and Ph.D. students called her – shared Bauman's attitude. She understood well how someone who suffered from media attacks would feel, for she was the daughter of Bolesław Bierut (see chapters 8 and 9), the Stalinist president of postwar Poland who

had died in 1956 when Stalinism collapsed. Jasińska-Kania's mother, Małgorzata Fornalska, was a communist who had died in 1943 at the hands of the Nazis as a martyr for Poland. During the communist years, her name was celebrated and taught to schoolchildren; after the regime change, her name disappeared.

Jasińska-Kania was writing a book about her parents and their concept of the struggle for freedom in Poland. Who could understand her better than Bauman? Their friends and family appreciated Aleksandra – 'she saved our Zygmunt', one of them said. She gave him five more years of productivity, through a strong friendship, professional collaboration and connection between two Slavic tempers – passionate and quarrelling. Friends observed that Zygmunt grew less preoccupied than he had been since Janina's final years. It was a relationship they both needed. After getting engaged at Bellagio in Italy on New Year's Eve 2012, they were married at Leeds City Hall in the presence of their daughters, including Aleksandra's only daughter, who came from the United States, where she is a professor of mathematics.

Over the next few years, the new couple toured regularly in Poland and other places, including Israel, which they visited together in 2013. This was Bauman's fourth return to the country, which he never ceased criticizing over its militarist policies and what he saw as mistreatment of the Palestinians. Still, his close family lived there, including grandson Michael Sfard, who would become one of the leading human rights lawyers in Israel – a living legacy of the ideas of his grandfather.⁵³

The old/new couple's life attracted the interest of journalists – if only Oprah could have had them on her show. In newspaper articles, they discussed the difficulties of being an unmarried couple, even an old one, in our societies. Hosts were uncomfortable, not knowing whether to reserve one hotel room or two, or how to present Jasińska-Kania. 'Life-partner' did not run trippingly off the tongue. Bauman worried more about practical elements of elderly life: access to health care. Always well organized, he carefully arranged his retirement, pension and insurance coverage, and did what he could to manage such issues for Aleksandra as well. He liked having someone to look after.

Aleksandra left Warsaw and took her professor's pension from the university to spend the last years of Bauman's life with him in Leeds. Their life had two speeds, she would write: very active while on professional trips, and slower when they were home writing (see Jasińska-Kania, 2018). They travelled so intensively that each had a KLM Flying Blue Platinum Membership card – more than sixty trips a year, including to Brazil, where audiences loved him. They visited Boston and Washington, DC, at the end of 2013; Bauman even gave a lecture there. Jasińska-Kania regularly spent her

Christmas in the United States, where her daughter, granddaughter and other relatives lived.

Their youthful enthusiasm and endurance were surprising. After a lecture in Lublin in 2012, Bauman slipped on the stairs of the Brama Grodzka theatre and broke his left arm, but fate smiled on him. The father of the co-organizer of Bauman's talk was an orthopaedist, and the physicians in Accident and Emergency took care of him immediately, getting the break diagnosed and treated – no surgery was required – and getting him back to his hotel the next morning. The very next day, Aleksandra gave his lecture and they went on to the next city on his tour without missing a beat. Physicians were impressed by his good humour, tolerance of pain and excellent health. Ironically, the next stop on his tour was Kohlberg,⁵⁴ the city where he'd injured the same arm in battle in March 1945. 'Every time I visit Kohlberg I have problems with this left arm', he joked: 'I wonder what it is about this city?'

Increasingly, however, Bauman was confronted with hate speech and neo-Nazi groups. He was baffled and frightened by the resurgence of fascists, especially after the June 2013 episode in Wrocław. The groups that had stood up to hurl abuse at him there – organizations called ONR (Obóz Radykalno-Narodowy), and Młodzież Wszechpolska⁵⁵ – had the same ultra-nationalist ideologies as the anti-Semitic politicians that implemented the rules that had forced him onto the ghetto bench eighty years before (Cała, 2012). This was too much like *déjà vu* for Bauman, and he decided to stop travelling to Poland after the Wrocław brawl, though some of his friends and other observers saw it as a one-off occurrence of hooliganism spilling over that was directed at the city's mayor.

In 2015, Adam Michnik tried to organize a symposium for his ninetieth birthday, but Bauman's word was final: 'I will never return to Poland.' In a letter to his friend, Bauman wrote that he felt he had been evicted from Poland for the third time in his life.⁵⁶

The young hotheads weren't the only ones to attack Bauman. In 2014, Andrzej Przyłębski, a professor of philosophy from Poznań University, wrote a letter to the German philosophical journal *Information Philosophie* disputing the character of the attacks on Bauman at Wrocław.⁵⁷ The students had no anti-Semitic intent, he argued – they were justified because the KBW unit Bauman led was equivalent to the SS. While other academics wrote in to denounce Przyłębski's letter, such opinions circulated among some faculty members, who attacked Bauman for failing to apologize for his engagement with communism and its security formations. While these critics speak only of Bauman's communist past, and not his Jewish origin, the stereotype of Judaeo-communism remains powerful in Poland, and hateful opinions are expressed even at the universities.⁵⁸

After the German journal controversy ended, a new protest against Bauman arose. On 1 May 2016, a large photograph of Bauman was burned during a right-wing demonstration⁵⁹ promoting 'POLexit' – the idea that Poland should follow Great Britain in divorcing the EU (to avoid Islamization, the Right said). Supporters of the extreme-right groups said Bauman's image was being burned 'because of his opinions and his curriculum'.⁶⁰ But xenophobia was growing in Poland, where anti-Semitic and anti-immigrant opinions were increasingly acceptable. The following year, a mannequin representing a Jew was burned in the central square of Wrocław.

In 2014, some months after his talk in Wrocław, Bauman was having a smoke in Warsaw airport while changing planes for Tallinn, where he was giving a talk. There, in the middle of an international airport, a man attacked Bauman, shouting racial slurs and calling him a criminal and dirty communist. Such attacks could no longer be categorized as minor excesses. Bauman's past had suddenly returned to haunt him. Perhaps it was this moment that decided Bauman to write his last book, *Retrotopia*?

Following his Shadow . . .

The final year of Bauman's life – 2016 – was an Italian year. In June, Aleksandra and Zygmunt left for Cagliari – the capital city of Sardinia, where they were invited for a city festival in one of the 'happiest' places in the world, despite its high level of unemployment and low median income. Bauman was invited to give a key lecture, and happiness was one of his preferred topics. Bauman would ask friends whether they were happy and what made them happy. Was it possible to be happy? Had God not condemned us to permanent suffering? Listeners at Bauman's talk remembered it as a very emotional one. Sardinia is an exceptional place and all that Bauman loved was there: good wine, excellent food, astonishing landscapes with a unique quality of light so appreciated by artists. One of Bauman's favourite thinkers, Antonio Gramsci, was from Sardinia. Bauman had read *Letters from Prison* at the beginning of his sociological life, and he owed much to the book, which kept Marxism from being ruined for him. And so, although he had never been to Sardinia before, Bauman felt almost at home. It was also a part of Italy that he loved very much.

'In Europe he enjoyed going to Italy most of all', Jasińska-Kania said:

He loved Italian people, food, landscapes, cities, monuments, and museums. We both especially admired the massive attendance at the Festivals of Philosophy, and the large audiences at lectures, which is

a specific and enchanting characteristic of Italian culture. Coming to Italy for such events was a very festive occasion for us. Zygmunt always was happy to meet his friends in Italy, and it was here that he found his most valued co-writers or collaborators in publishing his works.

Italian engagements gave Bauman some new energy, but his health was starting to decline. His heart was weak, his hearing limited, his vision getting poorer. Bauman complained of being more and more isolated from the world. He was writing *Retrotopia*, a work dedicated to Aleksandra. The world he observed and analysed for years was shifting its focus to the past. People were looking backward and plunging into dangerous extremes. The memory of our societies was shorter than the lifespan of a person. It was as if we needed another war to remember how deadly war was. Were we doomed to repeat the same tragedies that had killed so many people?

Finishing this project, Bauman wrote to his old friend Janet Wolff, asking her to collaborate on the next one:

I wonder, dear Janet wise, beautiful, and excelling by all scores, what your response would be were you to receive a suggestion of engaging (or trying to) in a dialogue-book on culture(s) with an old man before the arthritis reaches his brains? A conversation addressed not to fellow academics, but to culture's practitioners and cultural practices' objects (and probably containing more questions than answers – those, in Maurice Blanchot's verdict, curses of the questions)? Think freely, respond frankly. I'd fully understand if your response were that you can think of more attractive enjoyments in one's life! Such would be probably my response to a similar suggestion . . .⁶¹

His brain never did give out, but the rest of his body did. His final months saw the cancellation of many trips and talks, which he excused with gracious letters (which always included the texts of the talks he had been unable to give). However, he had a last dream to fulfil and he wanted at any price to realize it. Bauman was singularly interested in the papacy of Jorge Mario Bergoglio, Pope Francis, who had broken the convention of an imperial, opulent Vatican, setting an example with his modest lifestyle and proximity to ordinary people. This was closer to the Christian message of charity and empathy, but also compatible with a socialist approach (focusing on the care of the weaker and less privileged in society). Bauman felt he had a lot in common with the Pope, despite the contrasts imposed by belonging to different spiritual systems. Bauman and Pope Francis were both public celebrities whose past was connected with dictatorial regimes and civil war. They both had slightly tarnished issues in their past (Bauman's KBW period, Bergoglio's

activity during Argentina's military Junta). Both were accused by the press of having been active supporters of bad regimes. But, most importantly, both Bergoglio and Bauman were focused on the weakest parts of society and the future of the world. For Bauman, *Papa Francesco* represented hope. And the Pope, apparently, had some interest in Bauman.

'In Florence, there was a Monsignor Paglia, who had a very close relationship to Francis', said Stanisław Obirek: 'Paglia wanted to bring them closer [Bauman and the Pope]. He found that Francis needed intellectuals because he had intuition but lacked the language required to translate the intuitions – related to openness and dialogue – in an understandable way. Zygmunt was already impressed by Francis. And it ended with the invitation for Bauman to come to Assisi.'⁶²

The Community of Sant'Egidio, known for charity work and dialogues for tolerance, organized a conference in Assisi in September 2016 and a meeting was set up with Pope Francis during the conference. Bauman's family and Aleksandra tried to persuade him to cancel his trip, but Bauman would not be stopped. 'I would crawl to meet him', he told Jasińska-Kania. They met, exchanging some words of respect and hope: 'Bauman compared Pope Francis to a light in the tunnel in the search for the survival and integration of humanity, and the Pope laughed, jokingly saying that it was the first time in his life that he heard the metaphor of a tunnel being applied to him' (Jasińska-Kania, 2018).

Two months later, Bauman and Jasińska-Kania were back in Italy for the last time together. This was a short stay – two nights in Florence. The title of the talk was 'The End of the World' and it was Bauman's last. The analysis of terms such as 'the end of the world' and 'the end of time' was his adieu to an Italian public that had always shown interest in Bauman's work. Back in Leeds, Bauman felt worse than ever. The family kept all his plans to the minimum – no more visitors or collaborators; focus on the family.⁶³ The daughters and Aleksandra surrounded Zygmunt with love. The priority was to improve his health, though it appeared increasingly hopeless. He was under medical care at home – since Janina's illness, he had hated hospitals, but despite this he always sought his care in the NHS, whatever its imperfections. As he did in his life in other situations, he maintained his life philosophy to the end. There was no reason to take more from life than the minimum – no special treatment.

There was a final Christmas celebration, and then, welcoming the New Year 2017, Bauman said: 'It will be a short year.' Indeed. Zygmunt Bauman died on 9 January 2017.

He followed his Shadow . . .