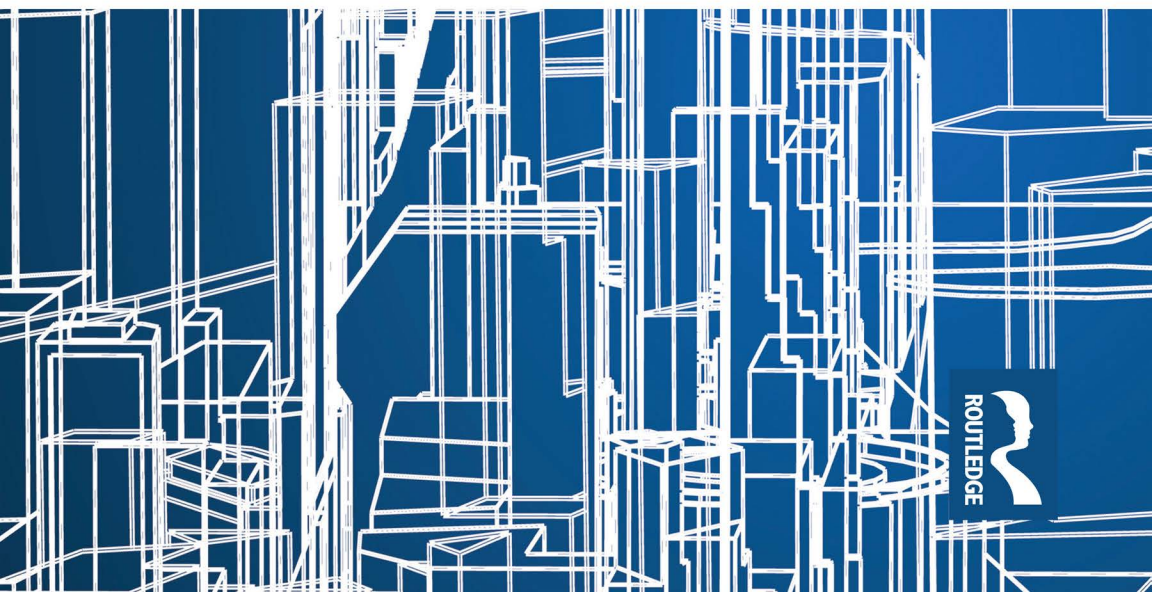


Classical and Contemporary Social Theory

REVISITING MODERNITY AND THE HOLOCAUST

HERITAGE, DILEMMAS, EXTENSIONS

Edited by
Jack Palmer and Dariusz Brzeziński



ROUTLEDGE



Revisiting Modernity and the Holocaust

Zygmunt Bauman's *Modernity and the Holocaust* is a decisive text of intellectual reflection after Auschwitz, in which Bauman rejected the idea that the Holocaust represented the polar opposite of modernity and saw it instead as its dark potentiality. Bringing together leading scholars from across disciplines, this volume offers the first set of focused and critical commentaries on this classic work of social theory, evaluating its ongoing contribution to scholarship in the social sciences and humanities. Addressing the core messages of *Modernity and the Holocaust* that continue to sound amidst the convulsions of the present, the chapters situate Bauman's volume in the social, cultural and academic context of its genesis, and considers its role in the complex processes of Holocaust memorialisation. Offering extensions of Bauman's thesis to lesser-known and undertheorised events of mass violence, and also considering the significance of Janina Bauman's writings in their own right, this volume will appeal to scholars of sociology, intellectual history, Holocaust and genocide studies, moral philosophy, memory studies and cultural theory.

Jack Palmer is Research Fellow in the School of Sociology and Social Policy and Deputy Director of the Bauman Institute at the University of Leeds, UK. He is the author of *Entanglements of Modernity, Colonialism and Genocide*.

Dariusz Brzeziński is Assistant Professor in the Department of Theoretical Sociology at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Polish Academy of Sciences. He is the author of *Zygmunt Bauman and the Theory of Culture*.

Classical and Contemporary Social Theory

Series Editor: Stjepan G. Mestrovic

Texas A&M University, USA

Classical and Contemporary Social Theory publishes rigorous scholarly work that re-discovers the relevance of social theory for contemporary times, demonstrating the enduring importance of theory for modern social issues. The series covers social theory in a broad sense, inviting contributions on both ‘classical’ and modern theory, thus encompassing sociology, without being confined to a single discipline. As such, work from across the social sciences is welcome, provided that volumes address the social context of particular issues, subjects, or figures and offer new understandings of social reality and the contribution of a theorist or school to our understanding of it.

The series considers significant new appraisals of established thinkers or schools, comparative works or contributions that discuss a particular social issue or phenomenon in relation to the work of specific theorists or theoretical approaches. Contributions are welcome that assess broad strands of thought within certain schools or across the work of a number of thinkers, but always with an eye toward contributing to contemporary understandings of social issues and contexts.

Titles in this series

The End of the Modernist Era in Arts and Academia

Bruce Fleming

The Civilizing Process and the Past We Now Abhor

Slavery, Cat-Burning and the Colonialism of Time

Bruce Fleming

Temporal Politics and Banal Culture

Before the Future

Peter Conlin

Revisiting Modernity and the Holocaust

Heritage, Dilemmas, Extensions

Edited by Jack Palmer and Dariusz Brzeziński

For more information about this series, please visit: www.routledge.com/sociology/series/ASHSER1383

Revisiting Modernity and the Holocaust

Heritage, Dilemmas, Extensions

**Edited by Jack Palmer and
Dariusz Brzeziński**

First published 2022
by Routledge
4 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

and by Routledge
605 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10158

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

© 2022 selection and editorial matter, Jack Palmer and Dariusz Brzeziński;
individual chapters, the contributors

The right of Jack Palmer and Dariusz Brzeziński to be identified as the authors of the editorial material, and of the authors for their individual chapters, has been asserted in accordance with sections 77 and 78 of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

Trademark notice: Product or corporate names may be trademarks or registered trademarks, and are used only for identification and explanation without intent to infringe.

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

A catalog record for this book has been requested

ISBN: 978-0-367-63754-5 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-0-367-63755-2 (pbk)

ISBN: 978-1-003-12055-1 (ebk)

DOI: 10.4324/9781003120551

Typeset in Times New Roman
by Apex CoVantage, LLC

Contents

<i>Notes on contributors</i>	vii
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xii

Editors' introduction: through the window again: revisiting <i>Modernity and the Holocaust</i>	1
JACK PALMER AND DARIUSZ BRZEZIŃSKI	

PART 1	
Sociology after <i>Modernity and the Holocaust</i>	23

1 Modernity or decivilisation? Reflections on <i>Modernity and the Holocaust Today</i>	25
LARRY RAY	

2 The sociology of modernity, the ethnography of the Holocaust: what Zygmunt Bauman knew	39
JOANNA TOKARSKA-BAKIR	

PART 2	
Rationality, obedience, agency	57

3 From understanding victims to victims' understanding: rationality, shame and other emotions in <i>Modernity and the Holocaust</i>	59
DOMINIC WILLIAMS	

4 Warsaw Jews in the face of the Holocaust: 'trajectory' as the key concept in understanding victims' behaviour	75
MARIA FERENC	

5 Visual representations of modernity in documents from the Łódź Ghetto	88
PAWEŁ MICHNA	
PART 3	
Extensions and reevaluations	109
6 Reassessing <i>Modernity and the Holocaust</i> in the light of genocide in Bosnia	111
ARNE JOHAN VETLESEN	
7 The Rwandan genocide and the multiplicity of modernity	125
JACK PALMER	
PART 4	
‘That world that was not his’ – on Janina Bauman	143
8 Janina Bauman: to remain human in inhuman conditions	145
LYDIA BAUMAN	
9 Janina and Zygmunt Bauman: a case study of inspiring collaboration	156
IZABELA WAGNER	
10 Reading <i>Modernity and the Holocaust</i> with and against <i>Winter in the Morning</i>	177
GRISELDA POLLOCK	
PART 5	
The legacies of <i>Modernity and the Holocaust</i>	197
11 Bauman, the Frankfurt School, and the tradition of enlightened catastrophism	199
JONATHON CATLIN	
12 <i>Modernity and the Holocaust</i> and the concentrationary universe	218
MAX SILVERMAN	
<i>Off-the-scene: an afterword</i>	232
BRYAN CHEYETTE	
<i>Index</i>	246

Notes on contributors

Lydia Bauman is an artist and art historian. Lydia has a BA in Fine Art from University of Newcastle upon Tyne and an MA in History of Art from the Courtauld Institute of Art (Distinction). She has exhibited widely in solo and group shows within the United Kingdom, the United States and Poland. Her exhibition in March 2019 at the Mall Galleries in London, “Looking for Georgia”, attracted international attention. Her most recent exhibition, “Earthworks”, was held at the Mall Galleries in 2021. She has lectured at numerous adult education institutions in London and art galleries such as the Tate Gallery, National Portrait Gallery, Boston Museum of Fine Arts and the National Gallery where she works to date. Over the course of the pandemic, she devised and delivered a programme of 180 online lectures – “Art for the Uninitiated”. These lectures, along with biographical information and her artworks, can be accessed on her website: www.lydiabauman.com.

Dariusz Brzeziński is Assistant Professor at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, Polish Academy of Sciences (Department of Theoretical Sociology) and Visiting Research Fellow at the School of Sociology and Social Policy at the University of Leeds. He teaches sociology and anthropology at the Jagiellonian University in Cracow as well. His research focuses on contemporary social thought, sociology of culture and theory of culture. He is an author of *Zygmunt Bauman and the Theory of Culture* (McGill-Queens University Press 2022), and a co-editor of a three-volume series of selected writings of Zygmunt Bauman (Polity Press, 2021–2023). Dariusz Brzeziński wrote on many aspects of social theory and sociology of culture in such journals as: *European Journal of Social Theory*, *Thesis Eleven*, *Polish Sociological Review* and many others.

Jonathon Catlin is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of History and the Interdisciplinary Doctoral Program in the Humanities at Princeton University. His dissertation is a history of the concept of catastrophe in twentieth-century German and Jewish thought, with a focus on the Frankfurt School of critical theory. His writings have been published or are forthcoming in *Radical Philosophy*, *Post45 Contemporaries*, *History and Theory*, *Memory Studies*, *Anti-semitism Studies*, *The European Journal of Cultural and Political Sociology*, *The Point*, *The Spectator* and *The Journal of the History of Ideas Blog*, where he is a contributing editor.

Bryan Cheyette is Chair in Modern Literature and Culture at the University of Reading and a Fellow of the English Association. He has published 11 books as well as articles on both Zygmunt and Janina Bauman. His most recent publications include *Diasporas of the Mind: Jewish/Postcolonial Writing and the Nightmare of History* (Yale University Press, 2014) and *The Ghetto: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford University Press, 2020). A Series Editor for Bloomsbury (*New Horizons in Contemporary Writing*), he has been a visiting professor at Dartmouth College, the University of Michigan, and the University of Pennsylvania. He also holds fellowships at the universities of Leeds, Southampton and Birkbeck College, London. He is currently researching *Anti-semitism and Empire: From Arendt to Zangwill*, which will engage with Zygmunt Bauman's theories of allo-Semitism and proteophobia.

Maria Ferenc is Assistant Professor at the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw. In 2020, she completed her Ph.D. dissertation entitled "Sources and Meanings of Information in the Warsaw Ghetto". In 2021 she has published "*Każdy pyta, co z nami będzie*". *Mieszkańcy getta warszawskiego wobec wiadomości o wojnie i Zagładzie* ['Everyone asks what will become of us'. Inhabitants of the Warsaw ghetto in the face of the news about war and the Holocaust]. She is currently coordinating the research project *Encyclopedia of the Warsaw Ghetto* and the English edition of the Ringelblum Archive.

Pawel Michna is a Ph.D. student in the Department of Anthropology of Literature and Cultural Studies at Jagiellonian University in Kraków, Poland, where he is working on a project on the functioning of the Graphic Office in Łódź Ghetto. His research interests focus on politically and socially engaged art from interwar avant-garde to contemporary art and Holocaust Studies, particularly art and visual documents created during Shoah. In 2020, he received the Joseph Kremen Memorial Fellowship in YIVO Institute and Gerald D. Feldman Travel Grant awarded by the Max Weber Foundation.

Jack Palmer is a Research Fellow based in the School of Sociology and Social Policy at the University of Leeds and is Deputy Director of the Bauman Institute. His Leverhulme Trust-funded project "Bauman and the West" (2018–2021) is an extended study of the late sociologist Zygmunt Bauman, and situates the West as a substantive theme in Bauman's scholarship and biography. A sole-authored monograph of this project is under contract with McGill-Queens University Press. His previous publications include *Entanglements of Modernity, Colonialism and Genocide: Burundi and Rwanda in Historical-Sociological Perspective* (Routledge, 2018) and his work has appeared in journals such as *European Journal of Social Theory*, *Theory, Culture & Society* and *Thesis Eleven*. He is a co-editor of a three-volume series of selected writings of Zygmunt Bauman (Polity Press).

Griselda Pollock is Professor Emerita of Social and Critical Histories of Art and Director of the Centre for Cultural Analysis, Theory and History (CENTRECATH) at the University of Leeds. She is a world-renowned figure in cultural theory and art history and is the 2020 Laureate of the Holberg Prize.

Committed to creating and extending an international, postcolonial, queer feminist analysis of the visual arts, visual culture and cultural theory, she also researches issues of trauma and the aesthetic in contemporary art expanding her concept of the virtual feminist museum (*After-affects I After-images: Trauma and Aesthetic Transformation in the Virtual Museum*, Manchester, 2013; *Art in the Time-Space of Memory and Migration*, Freud Museum & Wild Pansy Press, 2013); and her monograph *Charlotte Salomon in the Theatre of Memory* (Yale, 2018). Since 1995, she has been teaching and publishing on issues of the Holocaust and Cultural Memory and since 2007, she has elaborated the concept of concentrationary memory in relation to the Arendtian critique of totalitarianism, in four publications co-edited with Max Silverman: *Concentrationary Cinema* (Berghahn, 2011); *Concentrationary Memories: Totalitarian Terror and Cultural Resistance* (Bloomsbury, 2013); *Concentrationary Imaginaries: Tracing Totalitarian Violence in Popular Culture* (Bloomsbury, 2015) and *Concentrationary Art* (2018). Her recent publications include *Bracha L. Ettinger, Matrixial Subjectivity Aesthetics Ethics, Volume 1990–2000* (Palgrave MacMillan, 2020) and forthcoming is *Killing Men & Dying Women: Imagining Difference in 1950s New York Painting* (Manchester University Press, 2022).

Larry Ray is Professor Emeritus of Sociology at the University of Kent, UK. His research and publications extend across social theory, globalisation, post-communism, ethnonational conflict, sociology of memory, Jewish Studies and the sociology of violence. He is the author of 12 authored and edited books, including *Theorizing Classical Sociology* (Open University Press, 1999), *Key Contemporary Social Theorists* (co-edited with Anthony Elliott, Blackwell, 2002), *Social Theory and Postcommunism* (with William Outhwaite, Blackwell, 2005), *Globalization and Everyday Life* (Routledge, 2007), *Violence and Society – Towards a New Sociology* (with Jane Kilby, Sociological Review Monograph Series) and *Boundaries, Identity and Belonging in Modern Judaism* (with Maria Diemling Routledge, 2016). He is currently working on social theory, modernity and photography.

Max Silverman is Professor of Modern French Studies at the University of Leeds. He works on post-Holocaust culture, postcolonial theory and cultures and questions of trauma, memory, race and violence. His book *Palimpsestic Memory: The Holocaust and Colonialism in French and Francophone Fiction and Film* (Berghahn, 2013) considers the connections between the Holocaust and colonialism in the French and Francophone cultural imaginary. He has recently published four co-edited books with Griselda Pollock on the theme of “concentrationary”: *Concentrationary Cinema* (2011), *Concentrationary Memories* (2014), *Concentrationary Imaginaries* (2015) and *Concentrationary Art* (2019).

Joanna Tokarska-Bakir is a Polish cultural anthropologist, literary scholar and religious studies scholar. Her book *Pod klątwą. Społeczny portret pogromu*

kieleckiego (Czarna Owca, 2018) won the 2019 Yad Vashem International Book Prize for Holocaust Research. She also received a Cross of Merit from the Polish Government in 2014, and the 2007 Jan Karski and Pola Nirenska prize from the YIVO institute. She is a full professor of ethnic and national relations at the Polish Academy of Science's Institute of Slavic Studies. She is internationally renowned for her work on blood libel, historical anthropology, violence and Holocaust ethnography. In addition to *Pod klątwą*, she is the author of *Pogrom Cries: Essays on Polish-Jewish History, 1939–1946* (Peter Lang, 2017), *Légendes du sang: Pour une anthropologie de l'antisémitisme chrétien* (Albin Michel, 2015) and numerous articles and papers.

Arne Johan Vetlesen studied philosophy, sociology and social anthropology during 1981–1985. He then studied at the University of Frankfurt am Main during 1985–1990 with Jürgen Habermas as a supervisor for a master's thesis on recognition and historical change and a doctoral dissertation on the role of emotion (especially empathy) in moral perception and judgement. He was employed as an associate professor in philosophy at the University of Oslo from 1995, and as a professor from 1998 until the present. He was the editor of *Norwegian Philosophical Journal* during 1996–2000. He is member of the Academy of Sciences since 2003. He received the Prisoners' Testament Award in 2004, and was nominated for the mediation award at the University of Oslo in 2003 and 2014. His interests are broad and often interdisciplinary in that insights from subjects such as psychology, sociology and history are used to elucidate philosophical issues in a specific context and show their practical implications. He has worked in particular on the preconditions of morality – individually, culturally and socially – on pain, evil and genocide (i.e. *Evil and Human Agency*, 2005 and *A Philosophy of Pain*, 2009). In recent years, he has turned to environmental philosophy, especially the question of the value of nature in light of the debate between anthropocentric and biocentric perspectives. Since 1994, he has published, alone or with a co-author, 20 books, most recently being *Studies in Evil* (2014), *The Fear of Education* (w/PB Foros; 2nd Edition 2015), *The Denial of Nature* (2015), *What to Answer Our Children?* (w/Rasmus Willig; 2018) and *Cosmologies of the Anthropocene: Panpsychism, Animism, and the Limits of Posthumanism* (2019).

Izabela Wagner (Ph.D. with habilitation) is Associate Professor in the Department of Philosophy and Sociology at the Institute of Sociology, University of Warsaw in Poland and a fellow at the Institute Convergence Migration in Paris. In 1996, after working as a music teacher (MA in pedagogy of music from the Academy of Music in Poznan, Poland), Wagner enrolled in the sociology doctoral program jointly offered by the Ecole Normale Supérieure, the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales (EHESS) and University of Paris 8. In 2006, she defended her Ph.D. thesis (on ethnography of music virtuoso world) and pursued her study of creative careers in the context of international elite circles. From 2003 to 2016, Wagner conducted ethnographic research focusing on academic careers (mainly life science specialists). Since 2016, Wagner

has also been investigating the refugee phenomenon (works in progress). One of the topics in this field concerns the role of the arts (music, dance, theatre, film) in the process of refugee hosting. In 2010–2011, Wagner was a visiting scholar in the Department of the History of Science at Harvard University and in 2016 at the New School for Social Research in NYC. Wagner was also a visiting professor at the Fudan University in Shanghai (China) in 2010, Minho University (Portugal) in 2013 and 2014; Cagliari University (Italy) in 2015 and at the EHESS in Paris in 2017. Wagner is the author of *Producing Excellence: Making of a Virtuoso* (Rutgers UP, 2015) and *Becoming Transnational Professional* (Scholar, 2011). She has also written several articles about the work conditions, the construction of careers and international mobility of creative professionals. She is the author of *Bauman: A Biography* (Polity, 2020).

Dominic Williams is Senior Lecturer in Holocaust and Genocide Studies at Northumbria University. He has recently published articles in *Holocaust Studies*, *Genealogy* and *Alphaville*. Along with Nicholas Chare, he has co-edited and co-authored four books in Holocaust Studies, most recently being *Testimonies of Resistance: Representations of the Auschwitz-Birkenau Sonderkommando* (Berghahn Books, 2019). With Keith Kahn-Harris, he co-edited *Metal, Jews and the Holocaust*, a special issue of *Metal Music Studies* (2020).

Acknowledgements

The chapters collected in this volume were almost all presented as papers at two events held during 9–13 September 2019 to mark the 30th anniversary of Zygmunt Bauman's *Modernity and the Holocaust*. The first event was a two-day symposium at the University of Leeds hosted by the Bauman Institute and generously supported by funds from the University of Leeds and the Leverhulme Trust (Grant No. ECF-2018–517). The second event was a special panel on “Sociology and the Holocaust” at the 17th Polish Sociological Congress in Wrocław.

As editors, we would like to thank all of those who took part in these events. At Leeds, beyond the contributors to this volume, this includes Thomas Campbell, Mark Davis, Per Bjørn Foros, Austin Harrington, Marianne Hirschberg, Tommy Jensen, Jerzy Kociatkiewicz, Monika Kostera, Salman Sayyid and Michal Zawadsky. We are especially grateful to Helen Finch for her efforts in documenting the proceedings, as well as to Kris McLaughlin for his support in organising the event. This event also saw the launch of the Janina and Zygmunt Bauman Papers at the University of Leeds. We thank Timothy Procter and Caroline Bolton for their work in establishing this wonderful resource and also for ensuring that we could display items from the archive at the symposium in Leeds. The ideas contained within this volume also owe considerably to conversations that we had in Wrocław. We are especially thankful to the participants of the panel “Sociology and the Holocaust”: Roma Sendyka, Anna Maria Orla-Bukowska, Maria Ferenc and Piotr Filipkowski. We are also very grateful to Joanna Kurczewska, the chair of the Department of Theoretical Sociology at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Polish Academy of Science, for her advice and support.

We are also grateful to Anna Sford, and Irena and Lydia Bauman for their encouragement and support in our archive and legacy work, of which this volume forms a part. We owe a particular debt to Lydia for both her chapter and the use of photographs from the family album. We would also like to thank Bryan Chetty for his perceptive comments on the draft of this volume and for generously contributing an afterword.

We are grateful for the guidance of Neil Jordan and Alice Salt from Routledge, as well as Stjepan Mestrovic and an anonymous reviewer for extremely helpful comments on our proposal.

Finally, Jack Palmer would like to thank Yoshiko Stokoe and his daughters Naima and Serin, and Dariusz Brzeziński would like to thank his wife Karolina Augustyniak-Brzezińska for her love and continuous support.

Editors' note

Modernity and the Holocaust is referenced throughout the text in this volume as MH. All page numbers refer to the 2000 edition (Polity Press). This edition includes two additional chapters from the original 1989 edition, namely the text of the Amalfi Prize lecture, “The Social Manipulation of Morality: Moralizing Actors, Adiaphorizing Action” and a new afterword, “The Duty to Remember, But What?”

Some of the chapters in this volume refer to archival materials held in the Papers of Janina and Zygmunt Bauman archive, situated in the Special Collections of the Brotherton Library at the University of Leeds, UK. Where this material is referenced and quoted from, shelf mark details are provided in the endnotes. For more information about this archive, see <https://library.leeds.ac.uk/special-collections/collection/2581>



Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

Editors' introduction

Through the window again: revisiting *Modernity and the Holocaust*

Jack Palmer and Dariusz Brzeziński

This is a book which grew out of the experience that spans the until recently deep and seemingly unbridgeable divide between what we used to call 'Eastern' and 'Western' Europe. The ideas that went into the book and its message gestated as much in my home university of Warsaw as they did in the company of my colleagues in Britain, the country that – in the years of exile – offered me my second home. These ideas knew of no divide; they knew only of our common European experience, of our shared history whose unity may be belied, even temporarily suppressed, but not broken. It is our joint, all-European fate that my book is addressing.

(Bauman, 1991b: 137)

These words were uttered in 1990 by Zygmunt Bauman upon receiving the Amalfi Prize for *Modernity and the Holocaust*. Established in 1987, the award associated with the beautiful coastal town in Italy rewards works of sociology which constitute a significant contribution to the development of the discipline. It is also a commendation bestowed upon works that strengthen European culture.¹ Bauman's orientation to and embeddedness within a 'common European experience' are consequential for several reasons. They lay bare his disagreements with any *Sonderweg* reading of European history, in which Germany took a uniquely twisted path to and through modernity which contained the propensity for genocidal antisemitism. Having been made by a Jew born in Poland before being forced to move from east to west at the behest of a Soviet satellite state which he once served, the arguments of *Modernity and the Holocaust* struck a thunderbolt in the German *Historikerstreit* whose embers had barely cooled in 1989 upon its publication. This is one of the reasons why the eminent German sociologist, Hans Joas, termed it 'one of the decisive texts of a *sociology after Auschwitz*' (Joas, 1998: 48; see also Varcoe, 1998).

The evocation of a heritage and fate shared by Europe *tout court* also chimed with the processes that were converging towards the Maastricht treaty of 1992. As Tony Judt memorably termed it in his panoramic survey of post-war Europe, a particular form of Holocaust remembrance came, after the collapse of Soviet state-socialism, to constitute something like a 'European entry ticket' (Judt, 2005: 803).

Bauman's account aligns with this cosmopolitan vision. Conspicuously absent in his interpretation were many of the mainstays of official Marxist interpretations of the Holocaust which had hitherto been prevalent in Eastern Europe. Fascism or anti-fascism are barely mentioned in *Modernity and the Holocaust* let alone ascribed any causal significance. The precipitating context of the Second World War – in which the memory of the Holocaust was for many years subsumed, in narrations of national trauma and martyrology – is also largely elided (Subotić, 2019). And though Bauman owed a significant debt to the Frankfurt School, as Jonathon Catlin's contribution to this volume outlines (see also Jacobsen and Hansen, 2017), and although he remained a resolute socialist after expulsion from the Polish People's Republic, he largely avoids the 'Western' Marxist analysis of the Holocaust in which it unfolded as a pathology derived from the crisis tendencies of capitalism, explicable in psychoanalytic terms. Indeed, in *Modernity and the Holocaust* and works thereafter, Bauman would elucidate the genocidal potential of state communism, the 'other totalitarianism' whose shadow casts over the twentieth century (Beilharz, 2002).² The common referent was modernity, a condition that Bauman interpreted as the obsessive pursuit of order and the eradication of ambivalence, indeterminacy and uncertainty, and which incorporated the entangled histories of Auschwitz and the Gulag.

As Lydia Bauman, Izabela Wagner and Griselda Pollock point out in this volume, *Modernity and the Holocaust* is intimately (and ambiguously) tied to a book of Janina Bauman's, his first wife and life companion from 1948 until her death in 2009. This book is *Winter in the Morning* (J. Bauman, 1986), her testimony of adolescence in the unimaginable circumstances of the Warsaw ghetto and in hiding in various locations in Poland. It achieved significant notoriety and was later turned into a stage play, the acclaim greatly pleasing Zygmunt. As he wrote to a friend: 'That success may come to persons like her, is one of the few remaining arguments in favour of letting this world of ours to continue'.³ Zygmunt claimed that Janina's testimony shattered his prior understanding of the Holocaust as akin to 'a picture on the wall: neatly framed, to set the painting apart from the wallpaper and emphasize how different it was from the rest of the furnishings' (MH: vi). After reading it, he said that the Holocaust instead became a 'window' through which one could glimpse the genocidal possibilities latent in modern societies, actualised in a unique concatenation of routine features of modernity. 'What I saw through this window I did not find at all pleasing', wrote Bauman. 'The more depressing the view, however, the more I was convinced that if one refused to look through the window, it would be at one's peril' (MH: viii).

Modernity and the Holocaust can now be treated, over 30 years after its publication, as an *artefact*, itself akin to a picture hung on the wall, neatly framed within its spatio-temporal context as a testament to the 'ongoingness' (Wagner-Pacifici, 2017: 5) of the event of the Holocaust in memorialisation and hauntology (see Bauman, 1998a). But the work retains a *heuristic* power, on its own substantive terms, offering its own 'window' not only as a scholarly tract on the Holocaust (which, as several contributors to the volume argue, has in some senses been outstripped by historiographical developments and new data sources unavailable

to Bauman at the time of writing) but also as a source for thinking about the dark inner potentiality of modern societies. *Modernity and the Holocaust* is, to use Umberto Eco's expression, an 'open work' (Eco, 1989 [1969]), the horizons of which fuse with ours as we read it in the present. Though familiar and even uneasily canonical, his claims remain insightful, provocative and assist in the contemporary interpretation of social phenomena of violence, dehumanisation, cruelty and indifference.

The book also resonates beyond the narrow confines of sociology. So much is demonstrated by this collection which brings together scholars from across the social sciences and humanities, and from across 'the until recently deep and seemingly unbridgeable divide between' (Bauman, 1991b: 137) East and West, especially from Poland and Britain, the twin poles of Zygmunt Bauman's exile. It revisits his critical messages concerning the limitations of understanding and explanation, the dark side of the condition of modernity and the failures of moral responsibility. Moreover, the collection necessarily looks beyond Bauman's analysis. From various angles, the authors evaluate *Modernity and the Holocaust* in the light of new developments in Holocaust historiography, theoretical advances in the sociology of modern societies, the persistence of large-scale genocidal violence after the book's publication, as well as the acute problems of remembrance in the twenty-first century in various contexts. The collection offers a responding 'voice in a discourse' that *Modernity and the Holocaust* established, in the hope that, as Bauman put it in his Amalfi speech, it 'will stay in the focus of our shared vocation' (Bauman, 1991b: 138).

***Modernity and the Holocaust* as artefact: biography, history and memory**

Modernity and the Holocaust – like all of Bauman's work – is intimately bound to the world that it seeks to understand. Born in interwar Poznań, in 1925, he fled eastwards into the Soviet Union with his parents when the Nazis invaded Poland. In 'The Poles, the Jews and I' (currently under production with Polity Press, under the guidance of Izabela Wagner) – an unpublished memoir written for family members in 1987 – he recalled the encroaching threats of fascism and antisemitism:

We read of the mounting physical violence – of the beatings of Jewish students in the universities, of mini-pogroms in the rising number of rural areas and small provincial towns, of self-styled fascist troopers marching through the Jewish shtetls while watched rather apathetically by the police not particularly eager to be involved.⁴

Recollected also are the bombs which fell onto Poznań until the family left on one of the last trains on the night of the 2nd September 1939. They were pursued by planes which, as Bauman recalled, 'flew over so close that I can bet I saw the malicious grin on the face of the pilot'. When German soldiers rode into Włocławek, where the train had stopped, Zofia Bauman cut bits of her son's pyjamas into stars to be affixed to his coat: 'the signs of our Jewish distinction, now

officially recognised by our new rulers'.⁵ In October, they arrived at the Soviet border, and fortuitously missed evacuation to Ostrów Mazowiecka, where the first wartime massacre of Polish Jews occurred.

'I escaped that part of the world', Bauman reflected upon learning of Janina's experiences in the Poland he had left behind (MH: vii). His wartime experiences were those of a refugee and then those of a combatant. Remembering marching back towards Poland as a 19-year-old soldier in the First Polish Army, he noted that 'my first sight when my battery entered Lublin was Majdanek . . . – one of the most horrible extermination camps the Nazis built in occupied Poland. The corpses were still lying around in heaps, their recycling begun yet unfinished' (Bauman, 2020: 31; see also Wagner, 2020a: 93).

After the war, he threw himself into the project of re-creating a devastated nation, now under Soviet control. He became a committed communist and served in a military position – and his role in the administration remains a source of controversy in Poland today – until discharged in 1953. Then, he turned to sociology, lecturing at the University of Warsaw after gaining his first post in 1954. Initially, he was inspired by Marxist-Leninism and passionately supported the communist regime (Bauman and Wiatr, 1953: 69–99). Over time, however, his position changed, his growing disagreement with the Polish United Worker's Party's policies playing a significant role (Tester, 2004: 43–46). Under the influence of figures like Julian Hochfeld, Stanisław Ossowski and Antonio Gramsci (see Wagner, 2020a: 171–190; Bauman, 2008: 231–240; Tester, 2004: 34–43), Bauman developed in his sociological work a Marxist-humanism, within which a philosophical anthropology of praxis is central (Bauman, 1967b: 399–415, see also Brzeziński, 2017: 61–80). It was founded on an 'activistic image of man', consciously distinct from the 'mechanistic image' of orthodox Marxism, behaviourism and structural functionalism which sees the human as a 'reactive being . . . determined by outer forces or inner drives' (Bauman, 1967a: 13). The activistic image of man, by contrast, emphasises human action as creation, continuously engaged in the structuring of the world, a process that he terms culture (Bauman, 1973). Human behaviour, it transpires, is at best only partly predictable and manageable. In this context, it is worth emphasising that as early as the late 1960s, Bauman clearly criticised all attempts to create a perfectly ordered social world. He not only considered them unattainable, but argued that they also deprived individuals of creative agency and moral responsibility (Bauman, 1966a: 145–162, 1966b: 451–464). This issue was of particular importance in his later analysis of the Holocaust.

Bauman's 'revisionism' had long made him a target of state surveillance and, in the wake of the Six Day War, his Jewishness was deemed incompatible with his Polishness. Janina's second memoir, *A Dream of Belonging* (1988), recounts the dramatic struggles of post-war Poland which led to their expulsion as part of an anti-Semitic and anti-revisionist campaign in 1968, known today as the 'March events' (Stola, 2006: 175–201; Eisler, 1998: 237–252). It was the first time, he said, that his own Jewishness had been brought to the forefront of his self-identity (Bauman, 2004b: 11–12), extraordinary given the childhood experiences

recounted in his memoir. Zygmunt, Janina and their three daughters – Anna, Irena and Lydia (the last of whom contributes to this volume) – escaped into exile in Israel. Here, he wrote a prototype of the ‘Jewish writings’ (Cheyette, 2020) which would occupy him in the late 1980s and of which *Modernity and the Holocaust* is a part. Its English title ‘The End of Polish Jewry’ (Bauman, 1969) does not quite carry the same weight as the title of the Polish manuscript in the Janina and Zygmunt Bauman Papers, ‘Endlösung 1968’.⁶

Bauman could no longer believe in large-scale ideational projects of redemption, be that Soviet communism or nationalism, not least Israeli nationalism (Bauman and Hafner, 2020: 37–38). In a 1971 piece published in *Haaretz*, he opined that the country stood at a crossroads between demilitarisation and further militaristic entrenchment and, if it proceeded in the latter direction, it would have devastating consequences for the region:

The time has come to harness all of our energy towards the discussion, experimentation and planning required so that we are not caught by peace unawares, not ready to win the battle to build a society as we had learned to vanquish enemies at war. We will do our future a disservice if we adhere too closely to priorities rooted in the past.⁷

This was, he said, the only prediction he ever made that came true (Bauman and Hafner, 2020: 37).

In 1970, Bauman received an invitation to take up a lectureship in Leeds, an industrial city in the north of England. He accepted and, upon arrival, he assumed Head of the Department of Sociology that was first established at the University of Leeds in 1946. In his inaugural lecture at Leeds, Bauman (Bauman, 1972: 67–83) began by noting that the most intimate and private biographical details of the professional sociologist cannot help but be entwined with the biography of the discipline itself. His biography, it is clear, propelled him towards the sociological arguments presented in *Modernity and the Holocaust* and, in turn, these biographically informed arguments were turned towards the fundamental precepts of sociology. The book is an exemplary work of *hermeneutic* sociology in that it extends to an object of investigation and returns with the consequences for sociological investigation, in the manner of the hermeneutic circle or ‘spiral’ (Bauman preferred the latter term).

Knowledge of the past, Bauman held, can never be completed. The questions that we ask of the past are always conditioned by the approach from some spatio-temporal *hic et nunc*. As he wrote at the end of the 1970s in his *Hermeneutics and Social Science*:

Whatever the hypothetical ontological status of an event, it becomes historical because of our effort to reach it, to grasp it, to understand it, and thereby to incorporate it into our present. All these efforts are actuated by our present interests rather than by true or alleged intrinsic peculiarities of the event itself. Therefore, the changing shape of history as we know it, as it is given to

us at any time we think of it, is to be traced back not so much to the logic of happenings ‘in themselves’, but to our present-day preoccupations.

(Bauman, 1978: 43)

What were the ‘present-day preoccupations’ that, Bauman held, changed the meaning of the Holocaust for sociology and which turned it into a window?

Intellectually, the Holocaust occupied a central place in a cluster of events and processes which put paid to the high era of ‘order-building’ modernity. Bauman is among those social theorists of modernity who critically reflect on the historicity of the concept itself, and also the teleological and progressivist assumptions that persist in various forms in accounts of modernity and modernisation. Crucially, this condition was diagnosed from the vantage point of a novel condition, that of postmodernity: modernity shorn of its illusions and promises. *Modernity and the Holocaust* is thus a keystone of the ‘postmodern turn’ in the social sciences and humanities (Susen, 2015).

Another preoccupation can be located at the intersections of biography and history. *Modernity and the Holocaust* was published shortly after the Baumans were permitted a return to Poland in 1988 (Bauman and Mieszczanek, 1989: 160–173). The book and the redemptive idea of Europe to which it referred and in which it gestated, was written therefore at a particular stage of exile. Zygmunt Bauman, of course, shared this exilic experience with Janina. Her *Winter in the Morning* is much more explicitly set within Polish history. As Joanna Tokarska-Bakir argues in this volume, Bauman largely sidesteps the issues of Polish antisemitism and local participation and collaboration in genocide despite his momentary allusions to important discussions such as in Jan Błoński’s article ‘Poor Poles Look at the Ghetto’ (Błoński, 1988: 341–355, see Bauman, 1988: 294–301).

We can also locate the writings of Janina and Zygmunt within a broader cultural process of Holocaust memorialisation. As Griselda Pollock details in her chapter, they were avid consumers of filmic representation and documentation of the Holocaust. References to Lanzmann’s *Shoah*, *Schindler’s List* and the *Holocaust* television series are present across *Modernity and the Holocaust*, an authorial positioning in the movement that Pollock has termed ‘from trauma to cultural memory’.⁸

The argument

The broad arguments of *Modernity and the Holocaust* are by now familiar. For Bauman, the Holocaust was not the antithesis of modern society, a reversion to barbarism or a deviation from or pathological form of modernity. ‘The Holocaust’, he argues, ‘was born in our modern rational society, at the high stage of our civilization and at the peak of human cultural achievement, and for this reason it is a problem of that society, civilization and culture’ (MH: 7).

But the relationship between genocide and modernity is not a straightforward one. A complex historiographical argument is at work in Bauman’s book. The Holocaust was a unique event produced by a concatenation of ordinary features of modernity, an emergent phenomenon resultant from the contingent

entanglement of historical threads hitherto unconnected. The course that Bauman steers between singularity and universality evokes, Hannah Arendt, a major influence on the work. She wrote in the second volume of her *Life of the Mind*:

A thing may have happened quite at random, but, once it has come into existence and assumed reality, it loses its aspect of contingency and presents itself to us in the guise of necessity. And even if the event is of our own making, or at least we are one of the contributing causes . . . the simple existential fact that it now is as it has become (for whatever reasons) is likely to withstand all reflections on its original randomness. Once the contingent has happened we can no longer unravel the strands that entangled it until it became an event – as though it could still be or not be.

(Arendt, 1978: vol 2, 138)

This historical frame may be seen as a post hoc summation of her narrative approach in her monumental *Origins of Totalitarianism* (Arendt, 2017 [1951]). This work was driven by a scepticism towards the 'belief in historical causality', in 'causes that inevitably led to certain effects', preferring to think of the appearance of totalitarianism as a political evil that arose from the contingent entanglement of a multiplicity of processes. Totalitarianism appeared to Arendt in the image of 'a crystallised structure which I had to break up into its constituent elements in order to destroy it', an image which troubled the historiographical imperative 'to save and conserve and render fit for remembrance' (Arendt, 2018 [1958]: 157–158).

What were the constituent elements that Bauman tied together as the conditions of possibility for the Holocaust? Most enduringly, Bauman identified bureaucratic organisation and rationalisation. Navigating between the intentionalist and functionalist positions in the historiography of the Holocaust, Bauman argued that 'the space extending between the idea' of *Endlösung* 'and its execution was filled wall-to-wall with bureaucratic action' (MH:105). Bureaucratic action and the complex division of labour splits up the overall task into a huge range of smaller tasks, thus fragmenting the *end* into a proliferation of *means*. Technical responsibility is substituted for moral responsibility. In the process, the objects of bureaucratic action are dehumanised, reduced to a set of quantifiable measures. The ever-increasing distance, Bauman argued, between an act and its consequences – a fundamental institutional dimension of modernity – leads to a dangerous demoralisation or *adiaphorisation* of action.

This process was propelled by the logic of biopolitical management of a population assailed by pollutants. This was memorably metaphorised – with due credit to Ernest Gellner (1983) – as the state seeing society as akin to a garden, split into healthy plants that the gardener wishes to nourish and encourage and unproductive or harmful weeds which must be kept separate, even destroyed if necessary. The vector of such separation and splitting was scientific racism and the destructive potential was actualised in conditions of social crisis:

Periods of deep social dislocations are times when this most remarkable feature of modernity comes into its own. Indeed, at no other time does society

seem to be so formless – ‘unfinished’, indefinite and pliable – literally waiting for a vision and a skillful and resourceful designed to give it a form. At no other time does society seem so devoid of forces and tendencies of its own, and hence incapable of resisting the hand of the gardener, and ready to be squeezed into any form he chooses. . . . Genocide arrives as an integral part of the process through which the grand design is implemented. The design gives it the legitimation; state bureaucracy gives it the vehicle; and the paralysis of society gives it the ‘road clear’ sign.

(MH:114)

It is indeed, as Larry Ray argues in his contribution to this volume – and what was earlier emphasised by, *inter alia*, Yehuda Bauer (2001: 68–92) – a weakness of Bauman’s interpretation of the Holocaust that the middle-range elucidation and analysis of the social dislocation and political tumult in which the Holocaust was enacted is largely elided. There are only tentative allusions to the crises of the interwar period, and surprisingly few mentions of the fascist distortion of modernity with its reversion to palingenetic and organicist nationalism, or the entanglement of evil in economic relations and rationales. For a book so clearly influenced by Hannah Arendt, it is surprising that there is little mention or substantive engagement with theories of totalitarianism or, as some have noted, with the history of colonial-imperialism⁹ (Rattansi, 2017). The effect is that genocide becomes the potential of the modern state or modernity *per se* rather than a particular political form that the state takes in a set of generative historical conditions.

Bauman, for his part, claimed that *Modernity and the Holocaust* is not a book about the Holocaust in any straightforward sense. It is rather a book about modernity, defined as a zeal for *order*. Modern genocide – if one can extend Bauman’s thesis (and this is a moot point) – is powered by a future-oriented, intellectualistic vision of order that involves the elimination of a population who have been categorised as an obstacle to the building of that order. This central tenet of his argument is mis- or underrepresented surprisingly often. As he wrote in response to what he saw an unfair critique from the Holocaust historian Ian Kershaw:

I can’t truly comprehend, let alone to explain, why such a great and scrupulous scholar as Ian Kershaw had inverted and deformed my thesis. What I argued in *Modernity and the Holocaust* . . . is precisely that modern technology and modern science and practice of management enabled the Holocaust to happen. I never suggested that they were the causes of the Shoah. . . .

But what Kershaw overlooked in addition (at any rate gave no sign that he didn’t) was another, in my view decisive, link connecting the Holocaust to modernity and the paramount ‘enabling factor’: The modern ‘we can do it therefore we will do it’ posture, ambition and determination to surrender the world to the demands of comfort and convenience however defined, and whatever are the moral transgressions which the meeting of such demands would require.¹⁰

In short, there is a tendency to read *Modernity and the Holocaust* as a gloomy sort of Weberian sociology of organisations and one misses, in this reading, its combination with the cultural sociology of praxis that Bauman had been developing since at least the late 1960s. Premonitions abound in works like recently rediscovered *Sketches in the Theory of Culture* (2018 [1968]), seized in 1968 in the event of exile,¹¹ and *Culture as Praxis* (1973). In the former, he pointed out totalising cultural systems use different defence mechanisms against all 'otherness', including, for example, 'the utilization of the institution of taboo, [and] efforts aiming towards cultural repression or psychical annihilation' (Bauman, 2018 [1968]: 116). In the latter, he developed these analyses in relation to J.P. Sartre's (1992) thoughts on the term *le visqueux* – meaning 'viscous' or 'glutinous', but also 'vile, offensive and vulgar' – and Mary Douglas' (1966) anthropology of the phenomenon of 'dirt', and analysed how individual beings or entire social groups that are characterised by these categories are subjected to various forms of social oppression. Each of these sources were later used by Bauman as an analytical framework for his reflections on the attitude towards 'strangers' and 'otherness' in his analyses of modernity (e.g. Bauman, 1997: 7, 8, 26, 27).

The relationship between Bauman's theory of culture and his analyses of the Holocaust is well illustrated in his book *Modernity and Ambivalence* (Bauman, 1991a). Bauman argued there that the marginal – symbolised, qua Simmel and Schutz, in the figure of 'the stranger' – is always a product of cultural praxis, the ambivalence-generating human propensity towards order-building via the structuration of the world which became an obsession at the onset of modernity. The archetypal, though by no means the only, stranger or marginal was the Jew. Antisemitism, for Bauman, does not simply mean 'resentment of Jews' or 'inter-group enmity'. It does not spring from the meeting of two territorially established groups who live in each other's midst. It has its roots in *allo*-semitism:

the practice of setting the Jews apart as people radically different from all the others, needing separate concepts to describe and comprehend them, and special treatment in all or most social intercourse – since the concepts and treatments usefully deployed when facing or dealing with other people or peoples, simply would not do.

(Bauman, 1995: 207; see also Bauman, 1997)

Antisemitism, furthermore, is not simply heterophobic – a fear of the different. It is *proteophobic*, a response to something that simply does not fit the orderly structure of the world and brings such order into stark question. The object of the former, however detestable, makes sense in the schema of an orderly world of friends and enemies, us and them, established and outsiders. The Jew, the archetypal stranger, makes a mockery of all of these distinctions.

Bauman also emphasises the importance of Judaism as a counter-image to Christianity, in long-term historical perspective, as the chaos to its vision of order:

I suggest that the allocentrism endemic to Western civilisation is to a decisive extent the legacy of Christendom. The Christian Church's struggle with the

inassimilable, yet indispensable, precisely for its inassimilability, modality of the Jews bequeathed to later ages two factors crucial to the emergence and self-perpetuation of allo-Semitism. The first factor was the casting of Jews as the embodiment of ambivalence, that is of dis-order; once cast in this mould, Jews could serve as a dumping ground for all new varieties of ambivalence which later times were still to produce. And the second was the abstract Jew, the Jew as a concept located in a different discourse from practical knowledge of 'empirical' Jews, and hence located at a secure distance from experience and immune to whatever information may be aroused by daily intercourse.

(Bauman, 1995: 213)

The conceptual Jew, he memorably put it, channelling Sartre and Douglas, 'has been historically construed as the universal "viscosity" of the Western world' (MH: 40).

Spatial separation and exclusion of Jews represented the search for a *solid* social order. Camps and ghettos were the spaces where violence and cruelty were concentrated and intensified in sealed boundaries. These spaces figure prominently in Bauman's discussions of the *Judenräte* and the *Sonderkommando*, where bureaucratically administered oppression compels the oppressed to act in the service of their own oppression. A series of chapters in the present volume by Dominic Williams, Maria Ferenc and Paweł Michna address these most controversial arguments of Bauman's book.

Bauman understands genocide, like Raul Hilberg (1961) from whom he drew significant inspiration, as a *process*. The oppressed group is singled out and dealt with in a separate bureaucratic structure, eradicating the possibility of solidarity with other oppressed groups and giving the impression to the group that there is nothing outside of this structure and they are thus compelled to adapt to it. They are *spiritually* separated, associated with vermin and disease, and are thus figured as an affront to the hygienic body. This separation is supplemented legally by the creation of separate legal frameworks for the oppressed group, in this case the Nuremberg laws. It ensures that other groups within the society rest assured that the oppression will not touch them and crucially *distances* them from the target of genocide. This distancing produces *indifference – more dangerous than hatred*. It leads to the creation of 'a world without neighbours' (MH: 128).

It is notable that Bauman stays away from the kind of reconstruction of this world without neighbours in the camp or ghetto that we see elsewhere, such as in the testimony of Primo Levi (1988) or Charlotte Delbo (1995) for instance, or indeed Janina Bauman (1986), or in a more conventionally academic sense the famous final chapter of Arendt's *Origins of Totalitarianism* (2017 [1951]) and later works like Wolfgang Sofsky's *The Order of Terror* (1997). His focus is on the elite and bureaucratic organisational machinery of the modern genocidal state, figures whose privileged position took them away from the human laboratories that were the ghettos and the camps, phenomenological worlds unto themselves. It also elides the forms of agency exercised by the victims in the most inhuman of conditions. Bauman takes us to the gate of the camp, to the walls of the ghetto, but

that otherworld unto which these opened up is left alone. In this sense, implicit in his argument is a sense that barbarism can reside in modernity, decivilisation in civilisation, irrationality in rationality.

And morality can reside amidst mass immorality. Bauman was mystified and disarmed by those figures who chose to save life at risk of their own lives. These figures – and the evil rationality that they defied – called for a reformulation of the moral foundations of sociology. Bauman saw it that morality has been given a marginal or subsidiary role in prevailing sociological discourse. The scientific pretensions of sociology have led to the degradation of the kind of teleological language in such notions as purpose and will. Morality was thus given a secondary status, seen as ultimately derivative from *society*. This notion, embodied by Émile Durkheim (1982), saw society is a morality-producing factory serving the needs, via the production and imposition of norms, of social integration. Indeed, one of the very reasons that the Holocaust has been so marginalised by sociologists – that it was put to the side to be dealt with by specialists outside of the major frameworks of sociological analysis – was because the Holocaust profoundly challenged the notion that morality is identical with social discipline and with law: 'In the aftermath of the Holocaust, legal practice, and thus also moral theory, faced the possibility that morality may manifest itself in insubordination towards socially upheld principles, and in an action openly defying social solidarity and consensus' (MH:177). Cruelty is not born of a breakdown or absence of social structure but it is rather a possibility of that structure: '*inhumanity is a matter of social relationships*' (MH:159).

While legal systems may well be relative, and potentially put to sinister and cruel ends, the ability to act morally – to make a *choice* between courses of action that the actor is then *responsible for* – is an anthropological universal. Moral capacity and compulsion is an 'existential modality of the social' – not societal – sphere and is 'conceivable only in the context of coexistence, of "being with others", that is, a social context; but it does not owe its appearance to the presence of supra-individual agencies of training and enforcement, that is, of a societal context' (MH: 179). Responsibility is a property of sociality, an intrinsic feature of any relationship. It is that human beings are intrinsically good and thus corrupted by social arrangements. It is rather that, because any social arrangement is indeterminate, people make choices between different courses of action and are subsequently *responsible* for the choice. The universality of the choice posits responsibility at the root of what might be termed a Baumanian philosophical anthropology. Evil is a possibility of sociation. Modern societies develop complex mechanisms in which responsibility can be deferred and this is their inherent danger: 'the organisation as whole is an instrument to obliterate responsibility' (MH: 163).

Bauman's Holocaust sociology had led to a very dark place – the corruptibility and potentially evil effects of all societal structures and institutions – and Emmanuel Levinas was a light, the hope:

To Levinas, 'being with others', that most primary and irremovable attribute of human existence, means first and foremost *responsibility*. . . . My

responsibility is the one and only form in which the other exists for me; it is the mode of his presence, of his proximity.

(MH:182)

Responsibility is unconditional. We cannot choose not to choose. The choice can only be deferred.

A further chink of light was found in the defence of the pluralisation of power and authority, also discussed in the first chapter of *Modernity and Ambivalence* (Bauman, 1991a: 51–52). Authority is pluralised via checks and balances, alternative concentrations of power. When authority is diffused, it significantly reduces the chances of cruelty. Plurality (as with genocide) is also a possibility of modernity itself which – because it is a possibility and not an inevitability or intrinsic property – is vulnerable. Danger approaches in the form of the genocidal situation when the pluralism of political power is degraded: ‘Pluralism is the best preventative medicine against morally normal people engaging in morally abnormal action’ (MH:165), and ‘the voice of individual moral conscience is best heard in the tumult of political and social discord’ (MH:166).

Bauman after *Modernity and the Holocaust*

Bauman returned to the issues discussed in *Modernity and the Holocaust* in many of his works from the end of the twentieth century and the twenty-first century (see e.g. Bauman, 1993b: 23–33, 1998a: 33–38, 2009: 78–109). He was especially attentive to questions of remembrance, and maintained a critical vigilance against the ‘banalisation’ of the Holocaust and argued against untenable comparisons and analogies. As part of the postmodern turn, Bauman held that the age of Western proselytisation was over, and so too was the era of the ‘gardening’ state. Cultural pluralism had become part of everyday life. The world, he reported in the 2000 afterword to the second edition of *Modernity and the Holocaust*, is no longer turned into humankind’s garden *tout court* but instead ‘has split into innumerable little plots with their own little orders’ (MH: 219). ‘Order-building’ genocides and ‘final solutions’ are unlikely in the new phase of liquid modernity. Indeed, ‘the strategy most widely deployed and most keenly desired in our liquid modern era is to stave off the possibility of any “solution” turning “final”’ (Bauman, 2010a: 107).

Bauman was thus significantly challenged by large-scale genocidal violence committed after the publication of *Modernity and the Holocaust*. Arne Johan Vetlesen, in this volume, draws on his long-standing critical engagement with Bauman in his chapter on the case of Bosnia. Jack Palmer likewise considers the possibilities of extending Bauman’s arguments to the case of the 1994 Rwandan genocide. These events occurred in regions of the world often figured as outside or behind the modern, mediated with recourse to familiar tropes of reversions to barbarism and aeonian tribal animosities. Against such positions, Bauman would later argue (often with reference to Vetlesen) that such events were expressions of modernity rather than its opposite. But he made a sharp distinction between the Nazi and Stalinist ‘societal’ genocides which adhered to the logic of ‘order-building’

and the 'communal' genocides in Bosnia and Rwanda which expressed a logic of 'neighbourly imperialism'. Both are 'offshoots of the modern condition' (Bauman, 2009: 103–104). There were crucial differences between them, however, including in the modality of violence:

In stark opposition to the societal type of categorical murder as exemplified by the Holocaust, the emphasis in genocidal acts inspired by community-building is on the 'personal' nature of the crime, on killing in broad daylight, with the murderers known by face and name to their victims and the victims being the murderer's kith and kin, acquaintances and next-door neighbours.

(Bauman, 2009: 105)

It is curious, then, that he neglects the significant 'communal' aspects of the Nazi genocide, as demonstrated in works like Jan T. Gross's *Neighbours* (Gross, 2001), or in the writings of Joanna Tokarska-Bakir (as outlined in her chapter in this volume). Bauman never satisfactorily responded to the opening of national archives in central and eastern Europe after the fall of communism which shed light on the 'Holocaust by bullets' in the inter-imperial zone which Tim Snyder termed the 'bloodlands' (Snyder, 2010). Where he did later address cruelty inflicted in proximate physical distance, he referred to cases like Mý Lai and Abu Ghraib, the focus not so much on the bureaucrat-murderer distanced from physical killing but on ordinary men and women turned cruel in neocolonial wars (Bauman, 2011).

In these later reflections, Bauman emphasised that some of the phenomena that led to the emergence of the Holocaust are still present in contemporary, 'liquid' phase of modernity (Bauman, 2000a). He identified new, dangerous forms of adiphorisation derived from the culture of individualism rather than instrumental rationality (Bauman, 1993a, 2000b: 83–96, 2001: 95). The phenomena of social stigmatisation and exclusion, which in solid modernity were related to ethnic or religious criteria, occur in different guises. In this context, he devoted considerable attention to the exclusion of 'flawed consumers', the criminalised poor, refugees and asylum seekers and other groups regarded as 'outcasts' (Bauman, 2004a). Revealingly, in correspondence with the Norwegian criminologist Nils Christie, he wrote:

When I wrote *Modernity and the Holocaust*, I thought I was reopening a close chapter only to close it up again. It transpires now that there are further chapters – and such as it will resist ending for a long time to come . . . I scribbled other pieces which I hope would address your worries as well as mine. One on the fate of refugees on our planet suddenly disclosing that it is full and continuous, and another about the changed nature of wars.¹²

His concern for and identification with refugees occupied him until his death, in the midst of the worst refugee crisis since the Second World War, an echo of his own experiences (Bauman, 2016; Wagner, 2020b). His emphasis on the threats emerging in liquid modernity has been accompanied by the need to develop

sensitivity to social suffering, as well as institutional solutions capable of reducing them (Bauman, 2017).

Bauman was also fiercely critical of the ‘sanctification’ of the Holocaust. He understood very well that the narrative memorialisation of historical experiences of trauma plays a significant role in the construction of particularistic and exclusivist collective identities. The work of ‘cultural trauma’, to refer to Jeffrey Alexander’s influential idea to denote ‘when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness’ (Alexander, 2016: 4), does not always move in the direction of universalisation. More often than not, it congeals into what A. Dirk Moses termed, after Mircea Eliade, the ‘terror of history’ whereby ‘current events are depicted as reincarnations or perpetuations of the traumatic, often genocidal, experience’, which in turn leads ‘to pre-emptive or anticipatory self-defence’ (Moses, 2011: 96–97). With more than a nod to his experiences in Israel, Bauman lambasted ‘hereditary victims’ of the Holocaust who maintain ‘a vested interest in the hostility of the world, in fomenting the hostility of the world and keeping the world hostile’ (MH: 239). On the contrary, ‘the present-day significance of the Holocaust is the lesson it contains for the whole of humanity’ (MH:206). As he put it elsewhere, ‘the mission of the Holocaust survivors is *salvation of the world from another catastrophe*. For this purpose, they need to carry witness to the hidden, yet all the same very much alive and resilient gruesome and murderous tendencies’,¹³ that lurk in the everyday.

Modernity and the Holocaust as heuristic: the active dystopia

Keith Tester, who passed away in January 2019, called Bauman a ‘sociologist of possibility’ (Tester, 2004) and noted how, especially in his writings of the 1970s, he articulated a sociology that sought to legitimise ‘the status of “the possible” in valid knowledge’, as he put in in his work *Socialism: The Active Utopia* (Bauman, 1976a: 33). Sociology, Bauman insisted, ought to remind us that things could be otherwise, that what exists is but one possibility among many. But this entails no normative evaluation. Here, Bauman follows two of his major influences, Hannah Arendt and Cornelius Castoriadis. Arendt’s concern with natality, the human capacity to ‘begin anew’ (Arendt, 1958), applied as much to her analyses of totalitarianism and concentration camps as novel and unprecedented phenomena as it did to the American Revolution or the Greek *polis*. Cornelius Castoriadis likewise held that ‘creation does not necessarily – nor even generally – signify “good” creation or the creation of “positive values”. Auschwitz and the Gulag are creations just as much as the Parthenon and the *Principia Mathematica*’ (Castoriadis, 1991: 161).

With its constant allusions to the ongoing *possibility* of the Holocaust – as distinct from its inevitability, probability, plausibility and so on – *Modernity and the Holocaust* might be seen as an exemplary exercise in the ‘active dystopia’. Fiercely critical of the notion that the Holocaust was the inevitable *telos* of modernity, and hostile to the trivialisation of the Holocaust resultant from its

appropriation and extension to more quotidian forms of discrimination, Bauman nevertheless maintained that we continue to 'live in a type of society that made the Holocaust possible, and that contained nothing which could stop the Holocaust happening' (MH: 88)

Bauman was trying to understand modernity and its possibilities from the vantage point of its most acute crisis of humanity. As he argued in his essay *Towards a Critical Sociology* (1976b), the event of crisis offers a vantage point for asking questions of normality and for scanning the possibilities immanent in a particular configuration at a given time. In our own time of crisis, genocidal events remain a *possibility*. This poses significant questions – again, Arendtian questions – for sociology, concerning the way in which sociology is incapable of coming to terms with events that fall outside of its linguistically constructed universe. As Bauman wrote:

The deployment of sociological language entails the acceptance of the world-picture this language generates, and implies a tacit consent to conducting the ensuing discourse in such a way that all reference to reality is directed to the world so generated. The sociologically generated world-picture replicates the accomplishment of societal legislating powers. But it does more than that: it silences the possibility of articulating alternative visions in whose suppression the accomplishment of such powers consists.

(MH: 213)

Bauman is not calling for *prediction*, and he was sceptical about the predictive and managerial ambitions of the social sciences. In this sense, Bauman even *implicates* social sciences in practices of modern genocide. The alliance between the modern state and 'legislative' intellectuals who see populations as inert matter to be moulded according to the vision of a grand design contains significant potential for violence against those defined as alternative to that design (Bauman, 1987). Modern genocide, as Bauman saw it, is a huge project of social engineering, an outgrowth of the mastery over nature and society. The role of the arts and of cultural analysis becomes very important here, as Max Silverman writes in his chapter on *Modernity and the Holocaust* as a 'concentrationary' work, a reference to a project on concentrationary memories that he established with Griselda Pollock in 2007 (see Pollock and Silverman, 2014, 2015a, 2015b, 2019). This accounts for the frequent references in Bauman's works to the dystopias of Kafka, Huxley, Orwell, Houellebecq and Saramago. Such creative works – like *Modernity and the Holocaust* – tease out tendencies within the present and reflect them back to us. They perform the function of what Hans Jonas called, in *The Imperative of Responsibility*, the 'heuristics of fear' (Jonas, 1985: 26). Sociologists' objections to Baumanian gloominess (Rattansi, 2014) and to categories like that of 'the concentrationary' for their lack of concrete specificity neglect the necessity for vigilance and attentivity to the cruelty embedded in everyday life. Overawed by scientific pretensions to predict based upon the analysis of precedents, we are blindsided by the possibility of the unprecedented.

The argument developed here also has consequences for the memorialisation of the Holocaust and in particular confronting the problem of complicity. In her essay, ‘The Future of Auschwitz’, published in *Judaism and Modernity*, Gillian Rose troubles hard and fast distinctions between innocent and guilty in Holocaust memorialisation. Memorialising the Holocaust today, we ought not only ‘identify herself in infinite pain with “the victims”’ or ‘engage in intense self-questioning: “Could I have done this?”’ but ought to pose the question collectively: “How easily could we have allowed this to be carried out?”’ (Rose, 2017 [1993]: 35–36).

Such a question pertains to the entangled facets of the present crisis of humanity, chief among them the human destruction of nature and their own conditions of life. Bauman recognised this, though he was in general curiously subdued on environmental and ecological questions.¹⁴ The Holocaust was, he argued, a terrible extension of human rational-mastery over nature, humanity and nature conceived in binary separation. As he wrote in his Amalfi lecture:

It is true that the realm of *techne*, the realm of dealings with the non-human world or the human world cast as non-human, was at all times treated as morally neutral thanks to the expedient of adiaphorisation. Human rational-mastery has increased to such an extent that it runs the risk of transcending nature’s self-healing capacity.

(MH: 217)

Here, there is a possibility for a Baumanian ethics for the Anthropocene, as Jonathan Catlin suggests in his chapter in this volume. This is an

ethics of distance and distant consequences, an ethics commensurable with the uncannily extended spatial and temporal range of the effects of technological action. An ethics that would be unlike any other morality we know: one that would reach over the socially erected obstacles of mediated action and the functional reduction of human self.

(MH: 220–221)

And thus it is apt to approach the text today as a window onto the social, political, economic and ecological crises of our present. As people fleeing conflict, environmental degradation and economic immiseration are blocked, expelled and left to down; as the self-appointed defenders of human rights separate families and detain indefinitely in remote camps; as anti-Semitic conspiracy theories and vandalism rise, entangled with other forms of racism; as democratic institutions designed to protect human plurality are put under severe strain and the institutions of global normativity are hollowed out; as the planet warms, wildfires burn and floodwaters rise; and indeed as the memory of the Holocaust recedes . . . *this* is perhaps the most significant way in which *Modernity and the Holocaust* speaks to us today: To direct us to consider the possibilities for barbarism latent in contemporary expressions of cruelty and dehumanisation, and to remind us, as Zygmunt Bauman wrote, that ‘*the unimaginable ought to be imagined*’ (MH: 85).

Bauman's book remains such a window from which such imaginative feats may draw inspiration.

Notes

- 1 Information on the European Amalfi Prize for Social Sciences can be found on the website: <https://web.uniroma1.it/disp/en/events/european-amalfi-prize/prize> (access: 01.08.2021).
- 2 Bauman presented his critique of totalitarian communism and at the same time contrasted it with his own vision of socialism in the book *Socialism: The Active Utopia* (Bauman 1976a).
- 3 Letter from Zygmunt Bauman to Juan Corradi, 29th June 1987. In Janina and Zygmunt Bauman papers, MS 2067/B/5/2.
- 4 Bauman, 'The Poles, the Jews, and I: an investigation into whatever made me what I am', typescript, 1987, p. 14. In Janina and Zygmunt Bauman papers, MS 2067/B/1/4
- 5 'The Poles, the Jews, and I', p. 27.
- 6 Typescript in Janina and Zygmunt Bauman papers, MS 2067/B/2/3/1.
- 7 'מולש'ל ונוכחה לארשי לע' [Israel must prepare for peace], *Haaretz*, 8th August 1971, p. 6. We are grateful to Maya Johnson for translating this article from Hebrew.
- 8 This is the title of a module that Pollock established in the School of Fine Art, History of Art and Cultural Studies at the University of Leeds, around the time of the publication of *Modernity and the Holocaust* and partly in response to it. For an example of this historical frame as employed in her work, see Pollock, 2013.
- 9 This argument requires some nuancing. In his discussions of scientific racism in the second and third chapters, Bauman clearly intimates that the practice of eugenics spans over the connected, genocidal histories of modern anti-Semitism, the dehumanisation of disabled peoples, and the violent totalising ambitions of colonial-imperialism. He also foregrounds some more contemporary developments in Holocaust studies which seek to elucidate the colonial dimensions of the Nazi genocide itself (e.g. Zimmerer, 2005; Baranowski, 2011). To take one example: 'At first the Nazi bureaucracy saw the conquest and appropriation of quasi-colonial territories as the dreamt-of opportunity to fulfil the *Fuhrer's* command in full: *Generalgouvernement* seemed to provide the sought-after dumping ground for the Jewry still inhabiting the lands of Germany proper, destined for racial purity. . . . Gradually yet relentlessly, the thousand-year *Reich* took up, ever more distinctly, the shape of a German-ruled Europe. Under the circumstances, the goal of a *judenfrei* Germany could not but follow the process. Almost imperceptibly, step by step, it expanded into the objective of a *judenfrei* Europe' (MH: 16). See also Bauman's contribution to the 2013 scholar's forum in *Dapim: Studies on the Holocaust* on the theme of 'The Holocaust: A Colonial Genocide?' (Bauman, 2013) and the discussions of colonial-imperialism in *Wasted Lives* (Bauman, 2004a).
- 10 'INTERVIEW Avner Shapira', digital file in Janina and Zygmunt Bauman papers, USB 19, 5–6.
- 11 Although the book *Sketches in the Theory of Culture* was prepared to be released in 1968, its publication took place half century later (Bauman 2018). The book was to be destroyed by the decision of the Polish authorities in 1968, as a part of the repressions against Bauman in the time of March events. It survived in one, incomplete manuscript only that was found a few years ago in Warsaw. After the reconstruction done by Dariusz Brzeziński, it was published with the afterword, written by Zygmunt Bauman (Brzeziński 2018: vii–xxv)
- 12 Letter from Zygmunt Bauman to Nils Christie, 21st January, 2002. Digital file in Janina and Zygmunt Bauman archive, disk file 124.
- 13 'On Jews and Israelis', digital file in Janina and Zygmunt Bauman papers, USB 12, 2 (editors emphasis).

- 14 One of the very few papers in which Bauman wrote explicitly about the issue of the climate change is his introduction to Polish edition of Harald Welzer's book *Climate Wars: What People Will Be Killed For in the 21st Century* (Bauman 2010b: 5–13). The English translation of this paper will be published in the 2nd volume of Zygmunt Bauman's *Selected Writings*, entitled *History and Politics* (Polity Press, forthcoming).

Bibliography

- Alexander, Jeffrey. 2016. Cultural Trauma, Morality and Solidarity: The Social Construction of 'Holocaust' and Other Mass Murders. *Thesis Eleven*, 132 (1), 3–16.
- Arendt, H. 1958. *The Human Condition*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- Arendt, H. 1978. *The Life of the Mind*, 2 volume edition. London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Arendt, H. 2017 [1951]. *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. London: Penguin Books.
- Arendt, H. 2018 [1958]. Totalitarianism. In J. Kohn (ed.) *Thinking Without a Banister: Essays in Understanding, 1953–1975*. New York: Schocken Books, 157–159.
- Baranowski, S. 2011. *Nazi Empire: German Colonialism and Imperialism from Bismarck to Hitler*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bauer, Y. 2001. *Rethinking the Holocaust*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Bauman, J. 1986. *Winter in the Morning: A Young Girl's Life in the Warsaw Ghetto and Beyond*. London: Virago.
- Bauman, J. 1988. *A Dream of Belonging: My Years in Postwar Poland*. London: Virago.
- Bauman, Z. 1966a. *Kultura i Społeczeństwo. Preliminaria* [Culture and Society: Preliminaries]. Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe.
- Bauman, Z. 1966b. The Limitations of Perfect Planning. *Co-existence*, 2, 145–162.
- Bauman, Z. 1967a. Image of Man in the Modern Sociology (Some Methodological Remarks). *The Polish Sociological Bulletin*, 1, 12–21.
- Bauman, Z. 1967b. Modern Times, Modern Marxism. *Social Research*, 3, 399–415.
- Bauman, Z. 1969. The End of Polish Jewry – A Sociological Review. *Bulletin on Soviet and East European Jewish Affairs*, 3, 3–8.
- Bauman, Z. 1972. Culture, Values and Science of Society. *The University of Leeds Review*, 2, 185–203.
- Bauman, Z. 1973. *Culture as Praxis*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Bauman, Z. 1976a. *Socialism: The Active Utopia*. London: George Allen & Unwin.
- Bauman, Z. 1976b. *Towards a Critical Sociology: An Essay on Commonsense and Emancipation*. Oxon: Routledge.
- Bauman, Z. 1978. *Hermeneutics and Social Science: Approaches to Understanding*. London: Hutchison and Co.
- Bauman, Z. 1987. *Legislators and Interpreters: On Modernity, Postmodernity and Intellectuals*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Bauman, Z. 1988. On Immoral Reason and Illogical Morality. *Polin*, 3, 294–301.
- Bauman, Z. 1991a. *Modernity and Ambivalence*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Bauman, Z. 1991b. The Social Manipulation of Morality: Moralizing Actors, Adiphorizing Action. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 8 (1), 137–151.
- Bauman, Z. 1993a. *Postmodern Ethics*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Bauman, Z. 1993b. The Holocaust: Fifty Years Later. In D. Grinberg (ed.) *The Holocaust Fifty Years Later*. Warsaw: Wydawnictwo DiG/Jewish Historical Institute of Warsaw, 23–33.
- Bauman, Z. 1995. *Life in Fragments: Essays in Postmodern Morality*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

- Bauman, Z. 1997. *Postmodernity and Its Discontents*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Bauman, Z. 1998a. The Holocaust's Life as a Ghost. *Tikkun*, 4: 33–38.
- Bauman, Z. 1998b. Allo-Semitism: Premodern, Modern and Postmodern. In B. Cheyette and L. Marcus (eds.) *Modernity, Culture and 'the Jew'*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 143–156.
- Bauman, Z. 2000a. *Liquid Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Bauman, Z. 2000b. Ethics of Individuals. *Canadian Journal of Sociology*, 1, 83–96.
- Bauman, Z. 2001. *The Individualized Society*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Bauman, Z. 2004a. *Wasted Lives: Modernity and Its Outcasts*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Bauman, Z. 2004b. *Identity: Conversations with Benedetto Vecchi*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Bauman, Z. 2008. Bauman on Bauman – Pro Domo Sua. In M. H. Jacobsen and P. Poder (eds.) *The Sociology of Zygmunt Bauman: Challenges and Critique*. Aldershot: Ashgate, s. 231–240.
- Bauman, Z. 2009. Categorical Murder, or the Legacy of the Twentieth Century and How to Remember It. In *Does Ethics Have a Chance in a World of Consumers?* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 78–109.
- Bauman, Z. 2010a. *Living on Borrowed Time: Conversations with Citlali Rovirosa-Madrado*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Bauman, Z. 2010b. Przedmowa. Panika wśród pasożytów, czyli komu bije dzwon [Foreword. Panic Among the Parasites, or for Whom the Bell Tolls]. In H. Welzer (ed.) *Wojny klimatyczne. Za co będziemy zabijać w XXI wieku?* [*Climate Wars: What People Will be Killed For in the 21st Century*]. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo. Krytyki Politycznej, 5–13.
- Bauman, Z. 2011. A Natural History of Evil. In *Collateral Damage: Social Inequalities in a Global Age*. Cambridge: Polity, 128–149.
- Bauman, Z. 2013. The Role of Modernity: What Was It – and Is It – about? [Part of Scholars' Forum: 'The Holocaust: A Colonial Genocide?']. *Dapim: Studies on the Holocaust*, 27 (1), 69–72.
- Bauman, Z. 2016. *Strangers at Our Door*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Bauman, Z. 2017. *Retrotopia*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Bauman, Z. 2018 [1968]. *Sketches in the Theory of Culture*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Bauman, Z., and Hafner, P. 2020. *Making the Familiar Unfamiliar: A Conversation with Peter Haffner*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Bauman, Z., and Mieszczanek, A. 1989. Home Coming. In A. Mieszczanek (ed.) *Krajobraz po szoku* [*Scenery after Shock*]. Warszawa: Przedświt, 160–173.
- Bauman, Z., and Wiatr, J. 1953. O roli mas w historii [On the Historical Role of the Masses]. *Myśl Filozoficzna*, 3, 69–99.
- Beilharz, P. 2002. Modernity and Communism: Zygmunt Bauman and the Other Totalitarianism. *Thesis Eleven*, 70 (1), 88–99.
- Błoński, J. 1988. Poor Poles Look at the Ghetto. *Yad Vashem Studies*, 19, 341–355.
- Brzeziński, D. 2017. Human Praxis, Alternative Thinking and Heterogeneous Culture – Zygmunt Bauman's Revisionist Thought. *Hybris*, 2, 61–80.
- Brzeziński, D. 2018. A Message in a Bottle: On the Recovered Work of Zygmunt Bauman. In Z. Bauman (ed.) *Sketches in the Theory of Culture*. Cambridge: Polity Press, vii–xxv.
- Castoriadis, C. 1991. *Philosophy, Politics, Autonomy*, trans. D. A. Curtis. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Cheyette, B. 2020. Zygmunt Bauman's Window: From Jews to Strangers and Back Again. *Thesis Eleven*, 156 (1), 67–85.
- Delbo, C. 1995. *Auschwitz and After*, trans. R. Lamont. Newhaven: Yale University Press.

- Douglas, M. 1966. *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Durkheim, É. 1982. *The Rules of Sociological Method*. New York: The Free Press.
- Eco, U. 1989 [1969]. *The Open Work*, trans. A. Cancogni. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Eisler, J. 1998. March 1968 in Poland. In C. Fink, P. Gassert, and D. Junker (eds.) *1968: The World Transformed*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 237–252.
- Gellner, E. 1983. *Nations and Nationalism*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Gross, J. T. 2001. *Neighbours: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Hilberg, R. 1961. *The Destruction of European Jews*. Newhaven: Yale University Press.
- Jacobsen, M. H., and Hansen, C. D. 2017. Critical Theory Old and New: Theodor W. Adorno Meets Zygmunt Bauman in the Shopping Mall. In M. H. Jacobsen (ed.) *Beyond Bauman: Critical Engagements and Creative Excursions*. London: Routledge, 107–135.
- Joas, H. 1998. Bauman in Germany: Modern Violence and the Problems of German Self-Understanding. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 15 (1), 47–55.
- Jonas, H. 1985. *The Imperative of Responsibility: In Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Judt, T. 2005. *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945*. London: Vintage.
- Levi, P. 1988. *The Drowned and the Saved*, trans. R. Rosenthal. London: Michael Joseph.
- Moses, A. D. 2011. Genocide and the Terror of History. *Parallax*, 17 (4), 90–108.
- Pollock, G. 2013. *After-affects/After-images: Trauma and Aesthetic Transformation in the Virtual Feminist Museum*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Pollock, G., and Silverman, M. (eds.). 2014. *Concentrationary Cinema: Aesthetics as Political Resistance in Alain Resnais's Night and Fog*. New York: Berghahn.
- Pollock, G., and Silverman, M. (eds.). 2015a. *Concentrationary Memories: Totalitarian Terror and Cultural Resistance*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Pollock, G., and Silverman, M. (eds.). 2015b. *Concentrationary Imaginaries: Tracing Totalitarian Violence in Popular Culture*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Pollock, G., and Silverman, M. (eds.). 2019. *Concentrationary Art: Jean Cayrol, the Laza-rean and the Everyday in Post-war Film, Literature, Music and the Arts*. New York: Berghahn.
- Rattansi, A. 2014. Zygmunt Bauman: An Adorno for ‘Liquid Modern’ Times? *The Sociological Review*, 62 (4), 908–917.
- Rattansi, A. 2017. *Bauman and Contemporary Sociology: A Critical Analysis*. Manchester: University of Manchester Press.
- Rose, G. 2017 [1993]. *Judaism and Modernity: Philosophical Essays*. London: Verso.
- Sartre, J.-P. 1992. *Being and Nothingness: A Phenomenological Essay on Ontology*. New York: Washington Square Press.
- Snyder, T. 2010. *Bloodlands: Europe between Hitler and Stalin*. New York: Basic Books.
- Sofsky, W. 1997. *The Order of Terror: The Concentration Camp*, trans. W. Templer. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Stola, D. 2006. Anti-Zionism as a Multipurpose Policy Instrument: The Anti-Zionist Campaign in Poland, 1967–1968. *Journal of Israeli History*, 25 (1), 175–201.
- Subotić, J. 2019. *Yellow Star, Red Star: Holocaust Remembrance after Communism*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Susen, S. 2015. *The Postmodern Turn in the Social Sciences*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

- Tester, K. 2004. *The Social Thought of Zygmunt Bauman*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Varcoe, I. 1998. Identity and the Limits of Comparison: Bauman's Reception in Germany. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 15 (1), 57–72.
- Wagner, I. 2020a. *Bauman: A Biography*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Wagner, I. 2020b. Bauman as a Refugee: We Should not Call Refugees 'Migrants'. *Thesis Eleven*, 156 (1), 102–117.
- Wagner-Pacifi, R. 2017. *What is an Event?* Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- Zimmerer, J. 2005. The Birth of the Ostland out of the Spirit of Colonialism: A Postcolonial Perspective on the Nazi Policy of Conquest and Extermination. *Patterns of Prejudice*, 39 (2), 197–219.



Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

Part 1

**Sociology after *Modernity*
*and the Holocaust***



Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

1 Modernity or decivilisation? Reflections on *Modernity and the Holocaust* Today

Larry Ray

After more than 30 years since its publication, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (hereafter MH) remains the subject of debate, as this volume shows, which is a testimony to its lasting significance. It challenged sociologists not only to address the Holocaust but also to reflect on the destructive potential of a modernity in which the discipline had often invested progressive expectations. However, acknowledging its significance should not override the importance of evaluating it critically, as this chapter does. It has also become, as Cannon (2016) argues, a standard trope of mainstream sociology where the Holocaust is treated as a form of ‘murderous Fordism’. The primary concern of MH was not so much to add to historical knowledge of the Holocaust, but explore its relevance for the theory of modernity.¹ Genocide has occurred throughout known human history (and is in itself therefore not specifically ‘modern’) but the Holocaust, Bauman says, was ‘born and executed in our modern rational society’ (MH: x). Indeed, in the literature on genocides, ‘the Holocaust holds a unique place. . . . [I]t alone produced a scholarly literature that spawned, in turn, a comparative discipline’ (Jones, 2011: 255). In relation to this literature, Bauman offered a distinctive (though not unique) perspective informed by a social theory of modernity. Specifically, MH was addressed to a sociological audience for whom ‘[t]he contributions of professional sociologists to Holocaust studies seems marginal and negligible’ (MH: 3). I have argued elsewhere (Ray, 2018: 199–220) that Bauman’s concept of modernity is too one-dimensional and that bureaucratic obedience might not be as central to understanding the Holocaust as he imagines. Bauman was right, nonetheless, to draw attention to its relative neglect in mainstream sociology. This chapter will address these questions especially in relation to the theory of modernity.

Before proceeding, however, two points should be noted. Firstly, the Holocaust was one of the most complex historical events with which one can deal, involving millions of victims, perpetrators and bystanders, and raises multiple moral, political, philosophical and empirical questions. It is unlikely that any neatly systematised narrative, including Bauman’s, is going to illuminate more than a fragment of this complexity. Secondly, all interpretations of the Holocaust must

be made in the humility of acknowledging that it might not ultimately be understandable. After a lifetime of reflecting on his experiences in Auschwitz, Primo Levi concluded:

We who survived the Camps are not true witnesses. This is an uncomfortable notion which I have gradually come to accept by reading what other survivors have written, including myself, when I re-read my writings after a lapse of years. We, the survivors, are not only a tiny but also an anomalous minority. We are those who, through prevarication, skill or luck, never touched bottom. Those who have, and who have seen the face of the Gorgon, did not return, or returned wordless.

(Levi, 1988: 83–84)

The context

Let us proceed with these cautions in mind. One of the reasons for the impact of MH was arguably the timing of its publication. In Germany at least, as Varcoe (1998) notes, but also in Holocaust Studies, it appeared in an atmosphere charged by the *Historikerstreit*, which polemically raised the question of the uniqueness of the Holocaust amid Habermas' accusation of 'apologetic tendencies' in Hillgruber, Nolte and Stürmer (Habermas, 1987). Similarly, the debate about the *Sonderweg* around the same time was essentially also concerned with singularity versus universalism in the explanation of national trajectories. Two concerns about this were that the *Sonderweg* thesis assumed that national states were hermetically sealed and took Western Europe as the exemplar for modernisation. Situating the Holocaust within a European and modern rather than national trajectory, Bauman rejected both the *Sonderweg* and claims to the Holocaust's uniqueness, although in relation to the latter he did argue that the Holocaust was 'uniquely modern' (Palmer, 2018: 21). While not sharing the revisionists' political conservatism, Bauman lent weight to the claim that the Holocaust was not unique and could be studied within the context of genocides in general.

Further, the year of publication of MH was significant as it saw the collapse of communism in Europe and a consequent reimagining Europe beyond 'east' and 'west'. The Fall of the Wall, especially as it was largely unanticipated, generated feverish anticipations about the post-Cold War world. Some of these were headily optimistic, imagining a borderless world of progressive liberal globalisation while others, more soberly pessimistic, especially as the civil wars in former Yugoslavia pointed towards new potential conflicts. The latter prompted Stjepan Meštrović, for example, to announce that 'the Disneyworld dream of a united Europe is unravelling' into ethnonational violence (Meštrović, 1994: 192). Bauman would probably be placed more among the pessimists than the optimists, and later argued that while modernity was supposed to be the period in history when human beings could take control of their lives and overcome fears, at the dawn of the twenty-first century, 'we live again in a time of fear and anxiety about the dangers that could strike unannounced and at any moment' (Bauman, 2006: 127). His

view of the Holocaust as a warning against complacency echoes a longer strand of critical pessimism, such as that in Adorno and Horkheimer (1974). However, MH also reflects the post-1989 mood in addressing our joint European fate as Bauman put it, rather than as had generally previously been the practice, of seeking the origins of Nazi barbarity specifically within German history. Again, by seeking the origins of the genocide in ‘modernity,’ ‘[t]he German problem is no more’ as Natan Sznajder put it (Sznajder, 2016). However, as Sznajder also says, the Holocaust can exemplify modernity only if Germany exemplifies modernity, which is a question of some debate.

Moreover, publication of MH came during a period in which the dominant theoretical perspective in sociology had shifted from historically grounded, comparative and specific theories of societies (in Marxist, Weberian, Parsonian varieties and combinations) to the generalised concept of ‘modernity’ and its equally unspecific successor ‘post-modernity’. Bauman toyed for a while with the latter before settling on ‘liquidity’ as the metaphor for the present age. This period also saw a shift in sociological methodology and analytical perspective. One might, for example, contrast generalised theories of modernity with Barrington Moore’s thesis of three trajectories from agrarianism to the modern world differentiated by the class formations and coalitions that gave rise to the capitalist-democratic, capitalist-reactionary and communist routes (Moore, 1966). Nazi Germany here was an outcome of an authoritarian coalition of the bourgeoisie and aristocracy which, confronted with a structural crisis, was too rigid to reform, thus opening the way to a fascist revolution from above (Moore, 1966: 438). Shmuel Eisenstadt (e.g. 2006) theorised modernisation and modernity as the complex outcome of multiple technological, political, hegemonic, cultural pathways.² Moreover, modernity was a process of systemic differentiation which Richard Münch (1990: 463), following Parsons, claimed is the only possible answer to the problem of social organisation under modern conditions. Radical dedifferentiation, such as occurred in totalitarian systems, was seen as a regression, rather than fulfilment of modern development. Contemporary societies in such views then are fragile, contradictory and paradoxical, with heterodox interplays of pragmatic and totalistic forms of modernity. Through this theoretical lens, we could not speak of ‘modernity’ as an implicitly uniform process across Europe and would need to ask specific questions about the conditions in which Nazism and the Holocaust could occur. Bauman’s ‘modernity’ is by comparison more all-encompassing but also less encumbered with specific structural and historical configurations.

Modern bureaucratic civilisation

Bauman’s strong claim is that ‘[w]ithout modern civilisation and its most central essential achievements there would be no Holocaust’ (MH: 87). This depends of course what one regards as its central achievements, but this statement is true in the sense that the Holocaust required organisational, technological, communicative and ideological mobilisation capacities that are present in modern societies. However, Bauman is not insensitive to the contrary, anti-modernist tendencies

of Nazism, as ‘[t]he irony of history would allow the anti-modernist phobias to be unloaded through channels and forms only modernity could develop’ (Bauman, 2000: 46), even if he did not draw on this insight to add complexity to the analysis. Anyway, the association between the Holocaust and modernity had been drawn before, as Bauman acknowledges. Dirk Moses says, ‘for the older generation of genocide scholars an intimate relationship between genocide and modernity seemed so obvious as to hardly warrant investigation’ (2010: 156). Rubenstein argued that ‘Genocide is an intrinsic expression of modern civilization’ (Rubenstein, 1992: 123) and ‘[s]ymptomatic of the modern state’s temptation to destroy people regarded as undesirable aided by modern planning and technology’ (Rubenstein and Roth, 2003: 370). Somewhat differently, Hannah Arendt identified a modern ‘worldlessness’, which is the ‘quintessential condition of modernity’ originating in imperialism, erosion of the public sphere and atomisation, creating conditions both for totalitarianism and ‘superfluous populations’ without rights (Arendt, 2006: 53). For Adorno and Horkheimer (1974), the instrumentalisation of reason as domination appears ‘rational’ but permits boundless violence against nature that is in turn a model for the domination of humans. Against this instrumental *Verstand* though, they invoke a potentially emancipatory reason as *Vernunft*, which is also relevant for evaluating Bauman’s depiction of both modernity and rationality. For Bauman though the major driving force of modern rationality is bureaucracy, in which rationality is not merely (as Weber supposed) a means to an end, but is ‘more like a loaded dice. It has a logic and momentum of its own’ that renders some solutions more probable than others (MH: 104).

This focus on bureaucracy as a driving force for the Holocaust was anticipated by Fred E. Katz, when he argued:

A nation’s bureaucracies tend to play a major role in such routinization [of violence and atrocity]. Bureaucracies are social machineries for accomplishing complex objectives in relatively orderly fashion. They often operate with moral blinders. The individual bureaucrat typically focuses on a particular task, without considering wide implications, including broader moral issues. Means, rather than ends, are the main concern.

(Katz, 1982)

While Bauman acknowledged some of these prior theories, he did not always indicate the ways in those whose tacit support he was enlisting also diverged from him. Rubenstein, for example, insisted on the Holocaust as a uniquely Jewish tragedy originating in Christian antisemitism’s virulent defamation of Jews and Judaism, as perpetrators of the impossible but irredeemable crime of deicide (Rubenstein, 1992: 37). In this sense, it was not the outcome of modernity in general.

There is moreover a problem that words like modernity, civilisation and rationality are ‘so all-encompassing that they refer to almost any aspects of contemporary society’ (De Swaan, 2015: 41). Bauman accorded modernity the status of agency in several places, so ‘It was the norms and institutions [of modernity]

that made the Holocaust feasible' (MH: 87).³ One is reminded of Marx's comment on 'History' that had been reified by his Hegelian associates, when he wrote:

History does nothing, it 'possesses no immense wealth', it 'wages no battles'. It is man, real, living man who does all that, who possesses and fights; 'history' is not, as it were, a person apart, using man as a means to achieve its own aims; history is nothing but the activity of man pursuing his aims.
(Marx and Engels, 2020: 209)

In similar vein, Best (2014) argues that Bauman's theory was deterministic, failed to distinguish agency as an analytical category and could not capture self-determination, agential control and moral responsibility. Rather than moral neutralisation arising from bureaucratic imperatives, Best claims that the Nazis developed a communitarian ethical code rooted in self-control that enabled them to overcome personal feeling states and participate in acts of cruelty. Himmler's infamous Poznań speech to SS officers in 1943 praising their 'decency' could be an example of this. Further, Katz (1993) presents case studies in the moral careers of perpetrators into evil. In relation to Rudolf Höss, the commandant of Auschwitz, he argues that he was indeed an obedient bureaucrat but had the autonomy to 'make the murderous Auschwitz system work' in pursuit of which he created an informal culture of camaraderie and cruelty as an end in itself (Katz, 1993: 61–62). Nonetheless, Höss attempted to retain a 'semblance of traditional morality . . . taking steps against stealing, against guards taking sexual advantage of prisoners, against "undue" brutality' (1993: 77).

In order to accord not just 'modernity' but more specifically the logic of bureaucratic ethically blind problem-solving central significance in explaining the Holocaust, Bauman adopted a functionalist rather than an instrumentalist stance (MH: 105).⁴ As he suggests, there is evidence that the Final Solution (in details at least) was not planned from the beginning but emerged more haphazardly through circumstances and diverse atrocities such as the mass shootings in Poland and Ukraine, the 'Holocaust by Bullets'.⁵ However, this is not the same at all as saying it 'was the outcome of a bureaucratic culture' (MH: 15). Examining antisemitic Nazi propaganda, it is also clear that genocide was being conceived of early on. A copy of *Der Stürmer* from December 1927 is headed *Der vergiftete König* (the poisoned king) and features a cartoon showing a diseased oak from which branches of German culture grow but are under attack by 'Jewish' rats. These are being exterminated by a man in the uniform of the *Sturmabteilung* and the caption reads, 'Wenn das Ungeziefer tot ist, grünt die deutsche Eiche wieder' (when the vermin are dead, the German oak will grow green again).⁶ The genocidal intention was clear and openly stated. Indeed, genocide was already occurring and being planned before the airing of 'alternatives' such as the so-called Madagascar Plan that Bauman cites as evidence for an 'ethically blind problem-solving process'. The T4 Aktion had murdered around 300,000 people with disabilities in what Proctor calls a 'rehearsal for subsequent genocide' (Procter, 1988: 117). In his trial at Nuremberg, the SS commander Viktor Brack, who had been a prominent

organiser of the ‘euthanasia’ programme, stated that by 1941, it had been an ‘open secret’ in higher party circles that leaders planned the extermination of all Jews (Proctor, 1988: 200).

A further difficulty with the notion of ethically blind decision-making is that Bauman wrote loosely about state monopoly of violence as a modern precondition for genocide but avoids distinctions between totalitarian and liberal democratic states, or indeed of fascism. In Nazi Germany, the bureaucracy had been subject to bureaucratic Nazification (Vetlesen, 2005: 44). Silverman (1988) quotes Schutze, the head of the personnel division of the Reich and Prussian Interior Ministry, to the effect that ‘National Socialist Germany cannot tolerate a civil service that is filled with ideas of internationalism, holding notions of class conflict, paying homage to the parliamentary/democratic system, and that is of foreign blood’. Concern for efficiency did not necessarily deter the Nazis from thoroughly purging and ultimately dismantling important government agencies, especially when the demolition of a particular government department suited the social and economic philosophy of both traditional conservatives in the bureaucracy and the National Socialist party leadership (Silverman, 1988).⁷

It is further important to note here that the Nazi party-state worked in close cooperation with German industry and corporations in occupied countries which generated huge profits – not to be underestimated as a driving force of the Holocaust. These included the SNCF and Reichsbahn charging the SS third-class rail fare for each person deported on the transports and the many ‘household’ company names that profited from slave labour – including Siemens, BMW, Volkswagen, Allianz (insured the death camps), Deutsche Bank (processed gold fillings from murdered Jews), IBM (developed a catalogue system recording camp inmates), Hugo Boss (SS uniforms), German subsidiaries of General Motors and Ford and of course IG Farben and its successor pharmaceutical companies (Grunwald-Spier, 2017). Further, the expropriation of Jewish property provided opportunities for advancement, for example, for the so-called *Volksdeutsche* (people of ethnic German origins) in Poland. Andrzej Leder claims that some of the Polish population benefited from the expropriation, although regarded themselves as collective victims of foreign rulers, the Germans and the Soviets (Leder, 2019). Thus ‘lack of empathy, fear, sadism, ignorance, self-seeking and cowardice’ (Grunwald-Spier, 2017: 544) were also crucial for the operation of the Holocaust.

Civilisation or decivilisation?

To continue the question of theories of modernity, Norbert Elias’ civilisational thesis was the largely unacknowledged interlocutor of MH, to whom Bauman refers only a few times. In places he described the civilising process as a myth because its key attributes were conditions not for human betterment but rather for genocide, including features such as the monopolisation of means of violence, a disarmed society, complex division of labour, quashing the moral significance of actions, revulsion and disgust, which is turned against Jews. This was though

a very partial reading of Elias who emphasised the multiple directions taken by modernity, such that ‘the patterns of rationality and affects, the self-images and drive economy of Germans, the English, the French and Italians differ in keeping with their different histories of interdependence’ (Elias, 1994: 404).

This raises one of the nodal issues in MH, that is, whether to theorise the Holocaust as the outcome of ‘modernity’ or ‘rationality’ or more specifically with reference to socio-economic, cultural and political conditions in pre-Nazi Germany? In a sense, there might be less divergence with Elias than he imagined. The civilisational thesis was not a celebratory account of human progress over the centuries, and while Bauman interprets Elias to be claiming that ‘violence has been eliminated’ (MH: 13 & 107), this was not his point at all (rather actually he wrote of its sequestration). Elias’ thesis, like Bauman’s, was a *warning* that modern habitus felt innate but was not. It was rather the outcome of specific historical conditions and could regress into a decivilising downswing. Elias, who witnessed the paramilitary violence during the Weimar Republic, was acutely conscious of the fragility of those norms that make social life possible. By reconstructing the process of development of such pacified norms that Europeans arrogantly and naively assumed were theirs by ‘nature’, he highlighted their historical contingency and fragility.

Here though is also an important difference between the two. In *The Germans*, Elias (1996) had addressed the origins of Nazism as an outcome of decivilisation – why the civilising process failed in Germany is the underlying theme of this collection of essays and the subject of its central section (1996: 299–402), which was written between 1961 and 1962 partly in response to the Eichmann trial. Elias described the ‘exceptionally disturbed’ long-term development of Germany resulting in Nazism with reference to factors such as follows:

- The shame of 1918 defeat and a resurgence of warrior values
- A distinct career path through the Freikorps to the Sturmabteilung and SS (see also Michael Mann, 2000 on this)
- Middle-class resistance to the Weimar Republic for whom it lacked legitimacy
- Contraction in the scope of ‘mutual identification’
- Decay of the state’s monopoly of force – contra Bauman, for whom this is a key precondition for genocidal modernity
- An escalating double-bind of violence and counter-violence that ended in Hitler’s rise

This is perhaps a more ‘conventional’ *Sonderweg* view of the Holocaust as a ‘German problem’. But it also represented, firstly, a more theoretically nuanced account of the civilising process than in Elias’ earlier work and stimulated further work from the ‘decivilisation’ scholars (such as Dunning and Mennell, 2018; De Swaan, 2015; Goldsblom, 1994); and secondly, it was historically grounded in a detailed way that Bauman’s broad-brush theorising is not. It could be open to the criticism of ‘comparative genocide studies’ (Palmer, 2018) that miss their

common grounding in colonial modernity, but one needs to delve deeper into the complex local circumstances, something that Bauman did not accomplish.

Elias raised important questions about the ‘modernity’ of Nazi Germany, which is crucial to Bauman’s claim that modernity was the Holocaust’s necessary condition. Elias refers rather to the German ‘failed bourgeois revolution’ and subsequent dominance by the Prussian aristocracy after 1871, the perseverance of the warrior cult, that Fascism was most successful in countries with large rural sectors, the mobilisation of heterophobia and antisemitism which were symptoms of incomplete modernisation, so that the ‘Nazi doctrine was full of ideas more appropriate to a pre-industrial than industrial world’ (Elias, 1996: 380). Indeed, rather than view the totalitarian project as the epitome of the modern ‘garden-ing’ imperative, the Promethean, hierarchical statist warrior cult was a regression from functional democratisation, organisational impersonality, formal legality and detached scepticism as characteristics of modernity.

Again, resisting explanations of the Holocaust that refer to *differentia specifica* of concrete circumstances, Bauman responds to suggestions that genocide might arise in periods of acute crisis with the retort that it is precisely in crisis that ‘modernity comes in to its own’ because ‘deep social divisions are endemic in modernity’ (MH: 114). As Palmer (2018: 27) argues, genocide is not an *inevitable* outcome of societal crisis (nor of ‘modernity in general’) but as many in genocide studies have argued, where it has occurred, multiple societal crises often provided the backdrop. In his analysis of ‘extremely violent societies’, for example, Gerlach (2010) documents mass violence following crises involving a drastic drop in living standards; the formation of new elite groups empowered through foreign occupation; widespread ethnic, religious, class conflicts; radical dislocation of social relations in countryside; established ‘middlemen’ accused of being linked to foreign powers; extreme violence then perpetrated by local militias and state agents in a context where ethical norms have been discarded. By contrast, Bauman rules out, or at least does not explore, any dynamic relation between state formation, class and power, habitus and personality.

Nazi Germany was a state of extreme hierarchy combined with the arbitrary exercise of power. This was an exceptional form of the state in which real power rested with the Gestapo and the SS and not with the formal state institutions that were merely a façade. In this ‘legal abyss’, where there was no ‘overarching political entity that might protect its citizens’, the Nazis could do as they pleased with the Jews and any other victims (O’Kane, 1997). Vetlesen (2005: 105) notes that violence then enters the spaces vacated by institutional governance, legality, civic trust and legitimate power, again then the negation of organisational modernity.

Pleasure, violence and gender

Bauman does not deny that ‘some of the participants in mass murder did enjoy their part in crime, either because of their sadistic inclinations or because of their hatred of the Jews or for both reasons simultaneously’ but continues (without

citing evidence) that for each of these ‘there were dozens and hundreds’ who ‘contributed to the mass murder . . . without feeling anything about their victims and about the nature of actions involved’ (Bauman, 2000: 16). One problem with this assertion is that the kind of *jouissance* of cruelty that was evident in the camps and ghettos is never impersonal. Bauman was committed to the idea that proximity engenders pity as opposed to the morally neutralising effects of distance and anonymity. But evildoing *thrives* on proximity rather than distance. Bureaucracy is impersonal, but this is not a condition for the kind of institutionalised, routinised mass brutality, where the victim *must* be dehumanised but also capable of suffering. The victims of the Holocaust were not anonymous but were ‘known’ as racially stigmatised Others, as degenerates and scheming enemies. Killing often involved close proximity, not only in the *Einsatzgruppen* shootings but also in the camps. Further, in civil wars, ethnic violence and genocide, the body is the site of horrifying acts of what Appadurai (1998) calls ‘vivisectionist violence’. Rather than see genocide as impersonal then, it is better understood as an *intimately* violent politics of the body. A community that has often shared social spaces and had habitual interactions with the majority for centuries becomes ‘unimaginable’, frequently following state-initiated segregation and exclusion. This is not only physical segregation, but also a symbolic division of purity (a particular obsession of the Nazis) and deception. The stigmatised group is accused in state propaganda of treachery, betrayal, secrecy and conspiratorial cabals with the enemy, which were typical antisemitic myths. Appadurai (1998) suggests that brutality perpetrated by ordinary persons is culturally formed as the body becomes a ‘necro-graphic map’ of intimate brutality that ‘demand the brutal creation of real persons through violence’. The restoration of purity involves not just killing, but symbolic opening of the body, hence his description of the violence as ‘vivisection’. The frequent use of rape as a weapon of war is a further example, in which the penis is an instrument of degradation, of ‘grotesque intimacy’ and the enactment of ethno-patriarchal power (Clifford, 2008).

This leads to another crucial and under-researched aspect of the Holocaust, the systematic misogynistic gendered violence that was routinised in the camps. Raul Hilberg argued, ‘[t]he road to annihilation was marked by events that specifically affected men as men and women as women’ (Hilberg, 1993: 126). Judy Batalion says that the ‘sexual violation against Jewish women, ranging from humiliation to rape was extant, even widespread during the Holocaust’ (Batalion, 2020: 285). The Nazis set up at least 500 brothels in the camps in which Jewish women were ‘sex slaves’ and some Nazis kept personal sex slaves. Many women were killed after being raped – at a camp near Grodno girls and women were given evening dresses for parties where they were forced to dance with SS officers, after which they would be shot by the commandant (Batalion, 2020: 286–287). On arrival at the camps, women were subject to degradation, sexual violence and medical ‘experiments’ and at Auschwitz, dogs were trained to savage and rape young girls (Batalion, 2020: 354).

There is no evidence that the SS were under orders to rape women, as happened during genocides in Rwanda and former Yugoslavia. The institutionalised sexual

violence was part of the communitarian ethical code of extreme violence and cruelty that was noted earlier. Rather than most perpetrators being indifferent to violence then, their political and ideological commitments significantly contributed to the proliferation of sexual violence during the Holocaust. This promoted the cult of physical strength, hegemonic masculinity and homicidal misogyny that legitimates sex crimes, especially in the case of gang rape, which can serve as a means for building military brotherhood (Card, 1996). The construction of the male soldier is often based on notions of virility and exaggerated heterosexuality and Nazism epitomised the ethic of hostile masculinity among uniformed rapists. Henry et al. suggest that there are moments in war when men become ‘different men’, who can do things that in their peacetime lives they would call monstrous and inhuman (Henry et al., 2004), a tendency that was greatly amplified in the situation of absolute power in the camps. The rapes of Jewish women in the camps and ghettos were committed to achieve total humiliation and thus destruction of an ‘inferior’ Jewish race, despite the strict prohibition against ‘contaminating’ Aryan blood. At the same time, as ‘the enemy’ the victims could be regarded as deserving of their fate, which restored the perpetrators’ evil actions into excusable or justifiable behaviour. There might well, as Bauman suggests, have been elements of sadistic inclinations among perpetrators, but the evidence suggests a more complex process of institutionalising violent hegemonic masculinity underwritten by Nazi ideology and the warrior cult, reflecting a profound process of decivilisation.

Rationality and the Holocaust

What then of Bauman’s analysis of rationality in the Holocaust? We have seen how he claimed that the majority of the perpetrators were *Schreibtischtäter*, the desk-bound bureaucrats who organised and made the genocide possible. It was perhaps possible for someone working for a company contracting slave labour from the camps, or say in a Reich ministry ordering building materials for camps, to be distanced from the totality and consequences of their actions. However, it has been suggested here that analysis of the Holocaust cannot address only these *Schreibtischtäter* because it was those on the ground, in the camps and the perpetrators of mass killings in forests who enacted the Holocaust. Here the model of the banal detached functionary is untenable. Nonetheless, in the only chapter where Bauman addresses lives of the victims, on ‘Soliciting Co-Operation’ he seeks to identify a different play of ‘rationality’.

Here he claims to find the debasement of rationality in the choices made by desperate actors:

[T]he game in which the Jews were forced by the Nazis to participate was one of death and survival, and thus rational action in their case could be . . . measured by the increase of the chances of escaping destruction. . . . [T]he Nazis had to induce them to act in the ‘rational mode’.

(MH: 129–130)

The prime example here is Chaim Rumkowski, the head of the Jewish Council of Elders in the Łódź Ghetto appointed by Nazi Germany during the German occupation of Poland. In the hope of enabling some Łódź Jews to survive, he negotiated with the Nazis to provide first slave labourers and then deportees to the extermination camps. Bauman suggests that ‘In the rational world of modern bureaucracy’ he ‘had to behave as if the adversaries were indeed rationally acting agents’ (MH: 138).

This analysis reveals the paucity of Bauman’s concept of the rational. He does not go so far as Arendt in claiming that but for the cooperation of the *Judenräte*, the Holocaust could not have happened; but he does suggest that in attempting to postpone the final defeat, the Jewish prisoners worked enthusiastically for the Nazis. In the most egregious line in the book, he says, ‘Before the twisted road wound up in Auschwitz, many Bridges on the River Kwai were built by skilful and keen Jewish hands’ (MH: 138). More recent Holocaust scholarship has shown there was far more resistance to ghettoisation and deportations than was previously thought (e.g. Batalion, 2020). But it is anyway inappropriate to speak of ‘cooperation of the victims’ where slave labour was deployed in spaces that were merely fragments of destroyed states unhinged from civil codes.

In a reference to the rationality of evil, ‘or’ he says somewhat opaquely, ‘the evil of rationality?’ (MH: 202) he recounts a story from Sobibór, where 14 captured escapees who were about to be killed were told to choose a companion in death, otherwise the commandant would choose another 50 for each victim. So gradually they complied with the commandant’s request. This was not a ‘rational’ choice though but a moral one, of impossible gravity, whether to be both victim and selector, or to leave moral responsibility firmly with the Nazi. Again, was it ‘rational’ as Bauman suggests, for *Sonderkommandos* not to relax the pace of herding prisoners into gas chambers because their food rations would then be reduced (MH: 201)? He finds a kind of rationality in the camps only because his understanding of the rational is so attenuated. As Arendt said, in relation to life in the camps, ‘The alternative is no longer between good and evil, but between murder and murder. Who could solve the moral dilemma of the Greek mother, who was allowed by the Nazis to choose which of her three children should be killed?’ (Arendt, 2017: 452). Primo Levi described the Holocaust as ‘useless violence’ in its deliberate creation of pain and humiliation as ends in themselves, for example, registration numbers tattooed on the forearms of Auschwitz prisoners that ‘wrote the inmates’ sentence in the flesh’. During the furious round-ups in cities and villages, why ‘violate houses of the dying’ and force those already dying from infirmity on to the transports? Because the ‘best choice’ was the one that entailed the ‘greatest amount of affliction’ and suffering – the ‘enemy must not only die but die in torment’ (Levi, 1988: 83ff). This was not a place of *Zweckrationalität* but one might say, *Zweck der Grausamkeit*, cruelty as an end in itself.

Finally, this does foreground the limited scope of the concept of rationality in MH and thereby of modernity itself. As Freeman (1995) says, if modernity produced the Holocaust, it also produced the sociological and moral critique of genocide. To discredit modernity, Bauman renders the Holocaust a rational enterprise

like the factory system, but this obscures the sadistic the brutality and ideological zeal on which it was founded (Cannon, 2016). In this sense, Bauman might be open to Habermas's critique of earlier critical theory, that their denunciation of rationalisation is one-sided because it fails to distinguish instrumentality from critical reason. Further, critical reason is crucial to public life in modern societies and is potentially realised in institutions of democratic government, civil society, the public sphere, critical debate and rights-based constitutions (Habermas, 1984: 241). Nazism was not the outcome of bureaucratic rationality so much as the collapse and suppression or inadequate formation of the public sphere. Healy (1997) makes the similar point that Bauman reifies reason to the point where the political contingencies that underlay Nazism, and has been alluded to here, are overlooked. Bauman did not examine reason *per se*, but rather the deployment of power and domination to destroy it. The outcome was not a modernist movement but a counter-modernity that took one some of the symbols and language of modernity. This brings us back to the aforementioned point about the comparative approach to sociology that envisages multiple modes of modernity that are grounded in cultural, psychological and structural configurations. As with Elias' theory of the civilising process though, the warning that MH poses should not be treated lightly.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Jack Palmer for organising the symposium at the Bauman Institute on 'Modernity and the Holocaust 30 Years After' and for his editorial assistance with this chapter. Thanks also to the other participants at the symposium for their constructive discussions, and to Hannah Holtschneider and Maria Diemling for their assistance with this chapter.

Notes

- 1 Janina Bauman's witness to the Holocaust adds to knowledge and it is a matter for discussion to what extent MH was influenced by this. My view is that there is little acknowledgement in MH of the phenomenological or autobiographical accounts of the lived experience of the Holocaust. Some others here will have a different view.
- 2 See Jack Palmer in this volume.
- 3 This can be read in two ways. It could (and in places does) mean that modernity was driving the Holocaust but also the weaker claim elsewhere that modernity could not prevent it. Either way though, it is 'modernity' rather than concrete actors and structures that are giving rise to outcomes.
- 4 The intentionalist-functionalist debate dates the book in the mid-1980s to mid-1990s. Since then, with changing generations of historians and with the opening of archives in Eastern Europe, the discussion shifted and Holocaust historiography caught up with developments in the wider field and became more fragmented. Arguably, a modified functionalism won the argument, making it clear that some form of intent was necessary. I am grateful for Hannah Holtschneider's observations on this.
- 5 More recent Holocaust research on archives in former Communist countries has emphasised more the 'Holocaust by Bullets' than he 'factory-like' mass murder in the camps. See, for example, Kay and Stahel (2018).

- 6 The image can be found here: <https://thepolisproject.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/1927-48.jpg>
- 7 It is unclear what level of ‘bureaucracy’ Bauman refers to – functionaries or high-ranking Nazis who would propose and decide matters like the ‘Madagascar plan’.

Bibliography

- Adorno, T., and Horkheimer, M. 1974. *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. London: NLB.
- Appadurai, A. 1998. Dead Certainty: Ethnic Violence in the Era of Globalization. *Public Culture*, 10 (2), 225–247.
- Arendt, H. 2006. *Between Past and Present – Eight Exercises in Political Thought*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Arendt, H. 2017 [1951]. *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Batalion, J. 2020. *The Light of Days – Women Fighters of the Jewish Resistance Their Untold Story*. London: Virago.
- Bauman, Z. 2000. The Holocaust’s Life as a Ghost. In R. Fine and C. Turner (eds.) *Social Theory After the Holocaust*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 7–18.
- Bauman, Z. 2006. *Liquid Fear*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Best, S. 2014. Agency and Structure in Zygmunt Bauman’s Modernity and the Holocaust. *Irish Journal of Sociology*, 22 (1), 67–87.
- Cannon, B. 2016. Towards a Theory of Counter-Modernity: Rethinking Zygmunt Bauman’s Holocaust Writings. *Critical Sociology*, 42 (1), 1–21.
- Card, C. 1996. Rape as a Weapon of War. *Hypatia*, 11 (4), 5–18.
- Clifford, C. 2008. Rape as a Weapon of War and its Long-term Effects on Victims and Society. *Seventh Global Conference on Violence and the Contexts of Hostility*. Budapest. Available at: www.peacewomen.org/assets/file/Resources/NGO/vaw_rapeasaweaponof-war_stopmodernslavery_may2008.pdf
- De Swaan, A. 2015. *Killing Compartments*. Newhaven: Yale University Press.
- Dudai, R. 2006. Understanding Perpetrators in Genocides and Mass Atrocities. *British Journal of Sociology*, 57 (4), 699–707.
- Dunning, E., and Mennell, S. 2018. Elias on Germany, Nazism and the Holocaust: On the Balance between ‘Civilizing’ and ‘Decivilizing’ Trends in the Social Development of Western Europe. *British Journal of Sociology*, 49 (3), 339–357.
- Eisenstadt, S. N. 2006. Multiple Modernities in the Framework of a Comparative Evolutionary Perspective. In A. Wimmer and R. Kössler (eds.) *Understanding Change*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 199–218.
- Elias, N. 1994. *The Civilizing Process*, revised edition. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Elias, N. 1996. *The Germans*, with a Preface by E. Dunning and S. Mennell. New York: University of Colombia Press.
- Freeman, M. 1995. Genocide, Civilization and Modernity. *British Journal of Sociology*, 46 (2), 207–223.
- Gerlach, C. 2010. *Extremely Violent Societies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Goudsblom, J. 1994. The Theory of the Civilizing Process and Its Discontents. In *Papers in Progress*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam School of Social Science Research. Available at: www.norberteliasfoundation.nl/docs/pdf/GoudsblomDiscontents.pdf
- Grunwald-Spier, A. 2017. *Who Betrayed the Jews?* Stroud: Amberly.
- Habermas, J. 1984. *Reason and the Rationalization of Society. Vol. 1: The Theory of Communicative Action*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

- Habermas, J. 1987. Eine Art Schadensabwicklung: Die apologetischen Tendenzen in der deutschen Zeitgeschichtsschreibung. In Rudolf Augstein (ed.), *Historikerstreit* "Die Dokumentation der Kontroverse um die Einzigartigkeit der nationalsozialistischen Judenvernichtung". München: R. Piper, 62–76.
- Healy, M. 1997. The Holocaust, Modernity and the Enlightenment. *Res Publica*, 3 (1), 35–59.
- Henry, N., Ward, T., and Hirshberg, M. 2004. A Multifactorial Model of Wartime Rape. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 9, 535–562.
- Hilberg, R. 1993. *Perpetrators, Victims, Bystanders: The Jewish Catastrophe (1933–1945)*. London: Harper Press.
- Jones, A. 2011. *Genocide: A Comprehensive Introduction*. London: Routledge.
- Katz, F. E. 1982. A Sociological Perspective to the Holocaust. *Modern Judaism*, 2, 273–296.
- Katz, F. E. 1993. *Ordinary People and Extraordinary Evil*. Albany: SUNY Press.
- Kay, A. J., and Stahel, D. (eds.). 2018. *Mass Violence in Nazi-Occupied Europe*. Bloomington, ID: Indiana University Press.
- Leder, A. 2019. *Polen im Wachtraum: Die Revolution 1939–1956 und ihre Folgen*. Osnabrück: Fibre Verlag.
- Levi, P. 1988. *The Drowned and the Saved*. London: Abacus.
- Mann, M. 2000. Were the Perpetrators of Genocide 'Ordinary Men' or 'Real Nazis'? Results from Fifteen Hundred Biographies. *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, 14 (3), 331–366.
- Marx, K., and Engels, F. 2020. *The Holy Family: Or Critique of Critical Critique*. Pattern Books (A Radical Reprint).
- Meštrović, S. 1994. *The Balkanization of the West*. London: Routledge.
- Moore, B. 1966. *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
- Moses, A. D. 2010. Genocide and Modernity. In D. Stone (ed.) *The Historiography of Genocide*. London: Palgrave, 156–193.
- Münch, R. 1990. Differentiation, Rationalization, Interpretation: The Emergence of Modern Society. In J. Alexander and P. Colomy (eds.) *Differentiation Theory and Social Change*. Oxford: Blackwell, 441–464.
- O'Kane, R. H. T. 1997. Modernity, the Holocaust and Politics. *Economy and Society*, 26 (1), 43–61.
- Palmer, J. 2018. *Entanglements of Modernity, Colonialism and Genocide*. London: Routledge.
- Proctor, R. 1988. *Racial Hygiene – Medicine Under the Nazis*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Ray, L. J. 2018. *Violence and Society*, 2nd edition. London: Sage.
- Rubenstein, R. 1992 [1966]. *After Auschwitz*. Baltimore: John Hopkins Press.
- Rubenstein, R., and Roth, J. 2003 [1987]. *Approaches to Auschwitz*. Westminster: John Knox Press.
- Silverman, D. 1988. Nazification of the German Bureaucracy Reconsidered: A Case Study. *Journal of Modern History*, 60 (3), 496–539.
- Sznaider, N. 2016. Multiple Modernities and the Nazi Genocide: A Critique of Zygmunt Bauman's Modernity and the Holocaust. *The Society Pages*, Centre for Holocaust and Genocide Studies. <https://thesocietypages.org/holocaust-genocide/multiple-modernities-and-the-nazi-genocide-a-critique-of-zygmunt-baumans-modernity-and-the-holocaust/>
- Varcoe, I. 1998. Identity and the Limits of Comparison. *Theory, Culture and Society*, 15 (1), 57–72.
- Vetlesen, A. J. 2005. *Evil and Human Agency*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

2 The sociology of modernity, the ethnography of the Holocaust

What Zygmunt Bauman knew

Joanna Tokarska-Bakir

“The Holocaust has more to say about the state of sociology than sociology is able to add to our knowledge of the Holocaust”, reflected Zygmunt Bauman in 1989, and he pledged to fill that gap: “This event had been written down in its own code which had to be broken first to make understanding possible” (MH: 3). The upshot was his diagnosis of the modern roots of the catastrophe, which he expounded upon in *Modernity and the Holocaust*.

I countered Bauman’s diagnosis over two decades ago, in 1999, while analysing the work of Oskar Kolberg, a key figure in the canon of nineteenth-century Polish ethnography (Kolberg, 1857–1890). In my essay “Jews in Kolberg” (Tokarska-Bakir, 1999), I pointed to both the premodern antecedents of the Holocaust and the confusing picture of premodernity in Bauman’s work. Shortly afterwards, Jan Tomasz Gross’s book *Neighbours* (Gross, 2000) was published in Poland, sparking a major national debate – one that had been delayed for five decades – about the participation of Poles in the Holocaust. Under the influence of Gross’s book, I set about studying ethnographic aspects of the Holocaust in Polish backwaters, areas that witnessed the event at very close range.

Now, after many years, I am returning to this debate, equipped with new arguments. What I have to say concerns two matters: firstly, the idealisation of the premodern in Bauman, and secondly, the way in which the inhabitants of Polish villages and towns, using completely unmodern “ant-like” techniques, adeptly participated in the advanced German project of the Holocaust. I would like to pose some questions to Zygmunt Bauman, just as he has questioned us over several decades.

Bauman’s diagnosis

Firstly, I shall include a brief recap on the standpoint that I am debating with. This is how the author himself summarised it: “In *Modernity and the Holocaust* I suggested that the unprecedented condensation of cruelty which marked the twentieth-century genocides could be the result of the application of modern management and technology to unresolved pre-modern tensions and conflicts” (Bauman, 1991: 260).

Understanding what the author had in mind when he was talking about modernity may be easy enough, but it is more of a challenge to grasp what he meant by premodernity and its “unresolved tensions”. In *Modernity and Ambivalence*, he stipulates that “clean borders between epochs are but projections of our relentless urge to separate the inseparable” (Bauman, 1991: 270), but more frequently he speaks of the connection between postmodernity and modernity (Bauman, 1991: 271) than modernity with the epoch that preceded it. This looks like a rupture. “Never during the process of destruction [of German Jews] did popular antisemitism become an active force” (MH: 32), Bauman says, paraphrasing Henry L. Feingold. “There was an evident discontinuity between the traditional, pre-modern Jew-hatred and the modern exterminatory design indispensable for the perpetration of the Holocaust” (MH: 185). Certainly, during the 1980s, the existence of a threshold between premodernity and modernity was treated as a dogma in social sciences, a factor which indeed is noticeable in the history of research on antisemitism. Until recently, fearing accusations of being ahistorical or mockery for a tendency to be maudlin, researchers of these issues shied away from speculating on the links between antisemitism’s religious and modern varieties.¹ The situation did not change until Sander Gilman and Steven Katz described the continuance of the structure of exclusion,² and David Biale showed that the issue of blood libel, which had been neglected for so many years, yet which had flourished in conspiracy theories in the past, was the keystone of both religious and modern antisemitism.³

Zygmunt Bauman’s approach to the chronology of modernity was always full of contradictions. He essentially uses two criteria to distinguish between what is “pre” and what is “post”: the criterion for the level of control over the world and the relation to what is foreign. The criterion of control, which makes use of Ernst Gellner’s gardening analogies (Gellner, 1983), was discussed by Bauman in *Legislators and Interpreters*, in which he contrasted self-reviving “wild” cultures with systematically tended modern gardens, and the figure of the “gamekeeper” who is unsure of himself with the gardener who is full of initiative (Bauman, 1987: ch. 4). His material ceases to be nature that manages to take care of itself, rather it becomes a garden: “an object of designing, cultivating and weed-poisoning” (MH: 13).

The second criterion of defining premodernity and modernity is their attitudes towards otherness:

The pre-modern eye viewed difference with equanimity; as if it were in the pre-ordained order of things that they are and should remain different. Being unemotional, difference was also safely out of the cognitive focus. After a few centuries during which human diversity lived in hiding (a concealment enforced by the threat of exile) and it learned to be embarrassed about its stigma of iniquity, the postmodern eye (that is, the modern eye liberated from modern fears and inhibitions) views difference with zest and glee: difference is beautiful and no less good for that.

(Bauman, 1991: 255)

This is one of several of Bauman's opinions that appear false at first glance: post-modernity turned out to be not the end, but only the return of history, and its relation to otherness – an endless regression.

If we venture deeper into Bauman's diagnosis of modernity, we find more misunderstandings and paralogisms. He ignores the legacy of anthropology which, as of 1902, when Durkheim and Mauss's essay *Primitive Classification* (Durkheim and Mauss, 1963) was published, downright obsessively stressed the meaning of these forms for premodern societies. Bauman instead presents classifications as the quintessence of modernity, if not the invention. And thus he considers the Holocaust as among others a consequence of "the boundary-drawing tendencies under the new condition on modernization", and also links it with "the emergence of the racist form of communal antagonism, and the association between racism and genocidal projects" (MH: xiii). The problem is that both classificational obsessions, much stronger than in the twentieth century and racism or genocidal antagonisms, can be pointed to without difficulty in the premodern world, when people supposedly "looked at otherness without being moved" (see Douglas, 1999).

A digression on premodernity

It is doubtful that Zygmunt Bauman, who chiefly read theory, formulated the previously described assessment of premodernity while being acquainted with the sources pertaining to premodern antisemitism. A reading of the Latin *Historiae Memorabiles* by the Dominican friar Rudolf von Schlettstadt (1974) would surely have dissuaded him from coming to the previously described conclusions. The work includes an account of the butchers' revolt, led by a man named Rindfleisch, chronicling how at the end of the thirteenth century, a mob went from town to town in Franconia, murdering Jews. The account lingers long in the memory:

The butcher Rindfleisch was praised for his vigilance, for he did slay Jews across the entire land of Franconia, most notably in Würzburg. From the Last Supper [Maunday Thursday, 3 April 1298] until the Exultation of the Holy Cross [14 September 1298], it is believed that he and his people did slay in excess of 30 thousand Jews. There were some who did claim that the undertakers were given 1120 deniers so that they would remove the bodies of the slain Jews beyond the city, so that there they could be burned by the butcher's helpers. The Jews of Würzburg, seeing that they would not be able to flee the punishing hand of the Christians, took it upon themselves to slay their wives, brothers, sisters and kin, above all their sons, and then they did throw themselves into the fire, together with their property. One of these Jews, stricken with terror by this sight, fled to the woods, where he did hide for many days. Yet while he was roaming there, some servants did see him, and they did tell their masters. These men and others did then diligently search for him, until finally they brought the captured man to their seat. The Jew did say: 'In what manner have I harmed you?' And they did say: 'You and your fellows,

in so far as you are able, crucify once again the true God and our Lord Jesus Christ, the son of Mary, casting insults upon him and tormenting him'. The Jew did say: 'If you choose to kill us for this, not one Jew will be left alive in this province. For across the entire terrain, for over forty years, there has not been one Jew who has not used pleas or money to conquer your God and cast insults upon him, in so far as he could and did know how to do so'. And they did say: 'Thus a harsh penalty dost await you too'. Presently, they did order him to be burned at the stake.

(von Schlettstadt cited in Tokarska-Bakir, 2008: 660–661)

The style of von Schlettstadt's account is as disturbing as the material, as we can recognise in it the 20th-century logic of the mass crime, where justification is not of paramount importance. They provide proof that contrary to the view that all evil was derived from colonialism, racism was not created by either Catholic Spain, or the imperialism of the modern era (Bethencourt, 2013). The Jews who Rindfleisch killed did not mutilate the host because they wanted to, but because they had to – this was allegedly dictated to them by their innate deicidal nature, which they were not even aware of. Only their persecutors, including the "poor" folk surrounding Rindfleisch, can make them painfully aware of this:

In that year, at the time when the Jews were persecuted across all of Franconia, a certain soldier did meet two Jews walking hastily near Konstanz. He did ask them: 'Whence do you come?' And they did say: 'From Franconia'. And the soldier did say: 'Why do you flee from such a fine country?' And they did say: 'We are fleeing from a man by the name of Rindfleisch, who has condemned many of us to death without trial'. And the soldier did say: 'Yet what evil hast thou done? Truly they would not act in such a manner without cause'. And the Jews did reply: 'Verily we do not know the cause'.

The soldier compelled them to say more, at which point the youngest Jew could no longer contain himself and confessed to the serial purchase and stabbing of the host, for which 'they are presently being punished and they await further punishments in the future' (von Schlettstadt cited in Tokarska-Bakir, 2008: 662).

It has been assumed that the religious persecution of Jews ended after conversion, and that it was the very claim of the existence of a 'Jewish defect' that distinguished modern antisemitism from the premodern version. There was a lot of truth in this. In Poland, for example, Jewish converts were ennobled, and the Polish nobility grew considerably when the Frankists were absorbed during the eighteenth century. Yet counterexamples exist too. One of these can be found in a work by Szymon Syreński [Simon Sirenus] entitled *Zielnik* [*Herbarium*]. This work, published in Kraków in 1611, contains a racist theory about "baptised Jews" (converts), for whom baptism does not wash away the stain, as "they preyed on Christian children with furious resolve year in, year out, since times of old" (Syreński, 2017). The imputation that baptism is ineffective was not made incidentally, because Sirenus above all promotes his faith in the blood

libel concept, in the spirit of Nazi newspaper *Der Stürmer*, and for the same reasons.⁴ The herbarium contains a litany of stupendous events, each of which involves an alleged Jewish murder of a Christian child. There is a crucifixion in Imbestar, somewhere “between Chalcis and Antioch”, in the year 419. There is a murder in “Norwik [Norwich], an English city” in 1234.⁵ Another case is cited from Pfortzheim, in 1261, where uniquely, the victim is a girl.⁶ This is followed by Munich, in 1285. Two years later, there is another case in Bern, Switzerland. In 1303, there is one in Weissensee, Thuringia. In 1475, there is a murder in Trento, northern Italy.

Sirenus dwells on the murder in Trento at length, as a woodcut from Hartmann Schedel’s *Weltchronik* (1495), one of the first printed bestsellers, turned the event into an iconographical model for accusations of “blood libel” in Southern and Central Europe. The story of Simon of Trent, as the child was known, is significant for Polish premodern antisemitism as it was also used by the Jesuit Piotr Skarga, who immortalised it in his work *Żywoty Świętych* [The Lives of the Saints], which became the most widely read Polish book after the Bible. The book shaped high-ranking ecclesiastical thinking, then found its way into Polish households through the channels of Jesuit education. Furnished with the name of the perpetrator, the narrative highlights the cruelty of the crime so as to justify that of the punishment:

The child Simon was deceived into entering the house of Samuel the Jew, who took him to his prayer house, and in the hour of the Lord’s Passion, they placed him on their altar, and splayed him across it, and pulled his neck tight with a kerchief, and then they used scissors to cut a certain part [the male member], then they stabbed the right cheek, and then, using sharp ironware, such as needles, they stabbed the body for such a long time, shedding blood, that the innocent child perished.⁷

It would be wrong to regard the Trento story as simply a malicious example of religious ideology. Blood libel functions here as a political strategy. To put it in Zygmunt Bauman’s words: “Like all politics, it needs organization, managers and experts. Like all policies, it requires for its implementation a division of labour and an effective isolation of the task from the disorganizing effect of improvisation and spontaneity” (MH: 74). As stressed by Norman Cohn, who was cited by Bauman, let’s not be deceived by the idea of completely spontaneous pogroms (Cohn, 1967: 266–267).

Today, the events referred to by Sirenus seem like grotesque folk tales, yet at the time they resulted in the end of the Jewish world in each of the cities mentioned: the stake for the rabbi and the extermination of the community. It was a far-ranging, cyclical extermination. Following an instance of alleged blood libel, Jews were almost always expelled, which was a way of cancelling debts that were due to be paid to them. After a certain amount of time, the banished returned and the story started all over again. There are dozens of such lessons about “Jewish malice” in old Polish literature, as exemplified by Sirenus and Father Mojecki,

and there are hundreds in European literature as a whole. Is this “looking at otherness without being moved”?

A second digression on premodernity

The seventeenth-century saying about Poland as ‘a paradise for the Jews, heaven for the nobility, hell for the peasants and purgatory for the townsfolk’ is often taken at face value, as evidence of the prosperity of those who had fled from antisemitism in Western Europe.⁸ At the recently launched Polin Museum in Warsaw, this quotation opens the section about the so-called golden age in the history of the Jews. However, in fact, the saying is polemical. Its ironic tone is echoed in Sebastian Miczyński’s lament about the disappearance of “a once sacred and praiseworthy custom . . . , when a boy and innocent children, on seeing a Jew in the city, avenged God’s grievances, by casting stones and mud at him, and pulling his beard” (Miczyński cited in Bartoszewicz, 1914: 80). The true nature of seventeenth-century Poland as “a Jewish paradise” is testified to by the contemporary “Song about Vilnius’s Swindling Jews”:

Pamiętasz dobrze, ty narodzie zgniły,
 Jakie bankiety za Wili-ją były,
 Gdy was jako psów do wody rzucano,
 Drugich drągami niezmiernie chwostano.
 Drudzy po piasku pod mostem pływali,
 “Adonaj, pro Boh, nie zabij”, wołali.
 (Bartoszewicz, 1914: 100)

You remember well, you rotten people,
 What feasts were held by the Viliya,
 When you were thrown into the water like dogs,
 And others were beaten with poles,
 And some swam to the sand beneath the bridge,
 “Adonai, for God’s sake, don’t kill us” they cried.

Indeed, Josef Sommerfeld’s treatise “The Jews in Polish Proverbs and Sayings” begins with the saying about *Paradisus Judaeorum*, thus providing another example of the blurred borders between modernity and what preceded it. His work is a peculiar collection of proverbs, furnished with a commentary, and it gives the impression that the Nazi historian was trying to find legitimacy in Polish folklore for Hitler’s plans to carry out the Holocaust.⁹ It was published in 1942 by the Institute of Eastern Labour, a German foundation in occupied Kraków.¹⁰ The subject was introduced in an academic manner:

The official terms ‘Israelites’ and ‘Orthodox’ have not permeated the language of the masses, who to this day often refer to Jews as ‘*parchy*’, an expletive that cannot be directly translated into German. ‘*Parch*’ means ‘scabies’

or ‘ringworm’, and the given forms are plural constructs, which likewise cannot be translated. The contempt contained in this term is inherent in the fact that in Polish, Jews are treated not as people, but as objects. Furthermore, dialectal insults have developed from this etymological theme: *parchacz*, *parchal*, *parchul*, *parchulec* for a Jewish man, *parchula*, *parchówka* for a woman and *parchowina* for both, which accounts for the popularity of this graphic form of expression.

(Sommerfeld, 1942: 7)

Viewers of Claude Lanzmann’s *Shoah* will find it hard not to be reminded of the Nazi German terms *Stück* and *Figuren*, as used in nearby Auschwitz at that time (Lanzmann, 1993: 24).

The reader is struck by an over-representation of violence in the Polish proverbs about Jews, which the author of the paremiological study notes with satisfaction:

“Bij Moška, Żyda, niech wie, co to bieda” [Beat Moška the Jew, let him know what penury is].

“Drzyj, chłopie, Żyda, niech wie, co bieda” [Boy, squeeze the Jew, let him know what penury is].

“Dębak trzeszczy, a Żyd wrzeszczy” [The oak cane squeaks, the Jew hollers].

“Żyd, jak bije, już nie krzyczy. Podzielił się z nami, dał nam krzyk” [When the Jew beats, he no longer screams. [Yet when he is beaten] he shares with us, and gives us a scream].

“Konewka spuchła jak żydowska broda” [The watering can is swollen, like a Jewish beard].

“Nabił jak Żydów w Pińczowie” [Whacked like the Jews in Pinczów].

On baptised Jews: “Żyda ochrzczonego tylko utopić” [A baptised Jew is only fit for drowning].

On kind-hearted Jews: “Najpocziwszy żyd szubienicy wart” [The kindest Jew is fit for the noose].

On extorting money from Jewish passers-by (Kraków students often did this): “Żydzie, kup ten kij. Widzisz, jako smagły?” [Jew, buy this stick. Do you see how swarthy he is?]; “Idzie Żydek, będzie dydek” [Here comes a Jew, some money for you].

On the value of Jewish life: “Umarł jeden Żyd, to nic; umarł drugi żyd, jeszcze nic,” [A Jew dies, it’s no loss; a second Jew dies, still no loss. “Lepiej zatłuc Żyda, niż . . .” [It’s better to batter a Jew, than . . .” (e.g. to break a fast).

On crimes against nobleman, priests and Jews: “Pana i Żyda nie szkoda” [Lord or Jew, no qualms]. “Księdza [okraść] nie szkoda, pana nie grzech, a Żyda zasługa” [No qualms [about stealing] from a priest, no sin when from a lord, a virtue when from a Jew].

By including references to Samuel Adalberg’s *Księga Przysłów* [*Book of Proverbs*] (1889–1894), the author follows the principle of providing credible sources. He depicts Jews as unmanly, lazy and weak. “Their cowardice is an open secret, as

is also the case with their insolence and shamelessness when they are not endangered". Further findings concern Jewish deceitfulness and unreliability:

The Jew is a stranger to honour, loyalty and dependability. One can never count on a Jew. He does not recognise the existence of ties and obligations if he himself has nothing to gain from them. In countless comparisons with the virtues of other peoples, deceitfulness emerges as an essential characteristic of the Jews. This deceitfulness and lack of character of the Jews, the tendency to ruthlessly subjugate the community with all available means, regardless of laws and customs, excludes the Jews from every other community of humanity.

The Nazis' favourite subject, purity and blood, was of course included too:

Their moral downfall is reflected in their neglect of their bodies. The expression 'Jewish cleanliness' is an allusion to their repellent dirtiness. Jews fear water and rarely wash. That is why they stink and are leprous.

Jews try to overcome the divide that separates them from hard-working folk [such as Polish peasants] by persistence, which no one is able to defend themselves against. They are compared to wasps, bedbugs or lice, which assail, exhaust and suck blood.

As early as the 17th century . . . a proverb recurred in many variants . . . which testifies to the perversity and deceitfulness of the baptised Jew, who is compared to a trained wolf, a mademoiselle in make-up, a washed sheep's skin, and many other shoddy things. Baptism does not alter a Jew. "A Jew will always remain a Jew", wherever he goes. Neither relocation nor climate is capable of changing his nature, and their descendants even have their faults pointed out nine generations later. And because the Jew is descended from the devil, the Polish people have pithy advice: "drown the baptised Jew". . . . The Polish people decided instinctively that the baptised Jew is still a Jew.

The study, which showcases the similarities between Polish antisemitism and the Nazi version, ends with the summary:

These proverbs . . . bear abundant testimony to the experience of being tormented by the Jews for generations, and they help to lay a bridge between the anti-Judaism of the past and the struggle for liberation of the present. We can see social tensions in them that were caused and endlessly exacerbated by the Jews. And when one day, the expansive terrain of the former Polish state is freed from Jews, the masses will be able to breathe easily, for like all European nations, they recognised the Jews as exploiters and the greatest obstacle to healing and repairing social and economic relations, yet without German leadership they will not be able to cope with the Jews.

(Sommerfeld, 1942: 326)

Declarations in the vein of “Hitler deserves a monument”, which were numerous in wartime and post-war Poland, sadly confirm this conclusion (Cała, 2014: 19).

The helplessness of sociologists: anomie

Having dealt with premodernity, we now return to Zygmunt Bauman.

The reasons for the helplessness of sociologists in relation to the Holocaust were perceived by the researcher in the language of description: “as all languages, it [the language of sociology] defines its objects while pretending to describe them” (MH: 213). This carries with it an acceptance of an image of the world shaped by this language, and in turn, for sociology, the social bond is a fundamental factor. On account of this, the language in question is silent about the procedure, which conditions social organisation: “subjecting the conduct of its units to either instrumental or procedural criteria of evaluation” (MH: 213). Bauman thinks that it is indeed due to a fascination with the social bond that sociologists lose sight of the spontaneous, unpredictable relations between people, including what Emmanuel Lévinas described as “a moment of generosity”, “a gratuitous act” that cannot “be lured, seduced, bought off, routinized” (MH: 214). With his praise for pre-social ethics, Bauman was perfectly in sync with the needs of the time. In 1989, following the downfall of ideology, he was one of very few voices to express faith in the goodness of people as such. Every former Nazi or communist was given a chance at that time.

In the first chapter of *Modernity and the Holocaust*, while referring to the work of Nechama Tec, who was researching the motivations of those who saved Jews during the Holocaust (Tec, 1986), Bauman suggested that “they came from all corners and sectors of ‘social structure’, thereby calling the bluff of there being ‘social determinants’ of moral behaviour” (MH: 5). This decidedly premature conclusion about the non-social roots of altruistic motivation established a point of departure for one of the sharpest critiques of sociological reasoning. Indeed, the author even brands the social organisation in it as a “machine that keeps moral responsibility afloat; it belongs to no one in particular, as everybody’s contribution to the final effect is too minute or partial to be sensibly ascribed as a causal function” (MH: 216).

In the spirit of the Platonic critique of society as a “great strong beast” (Plato, 1935: 39), Bauman condemns the frequent “adiaphorization” present in mediated actions, in other words, the making of the effects of the treatment of others transparent¹¹: “The ‘middle man’ shields off the outcomes of action from the actors’ sight” (MH: 25). He continues:

All social organization consists . . . in neutralizing the disruptive and deregulating impact of moral behavior. This effect is achieved through a number of complementary arrangements: 1) stretching the distance between action and its consequences beyond the reach of moral impulse; 2) exempting some ‘others’ from the class of potential objects of moral conduct, of potential ‘faces’; 3) dissembling other human objects of action into aggregates of functionally

specific traits, held separate so that the occasion for re-assembling the face does not arise, and the task set for each action can be free from moral evaluation.

(MH: 215)

The dangers of instrumentalisation cannot be perceived by sociologists, who interpret the Holocaust as emerging from a *lack* of social regulations, when it was actually caused by an excess of them. Citing Helen Fein's book on the Holocaust, Bauman writes: "In an anomic condition – free from social regulation – people may respond without regard to the possibility of injuring others" (Fein, 1979: 34, cited in MH: 4). Armed with Nechama Tec's diagnosis, the researcher challenges the quoted conclusion of Fein as incorrect, but completely ignores the fact-based reference, although indeed from the sociological point of view, it would urgently require correction.

Reliable research has shown that we cannot speak of anomie either in German war-time society or in occupied Poland, at least not in the sense that the term was used by Emile Durkheim. For can one find it among the Germans, enthusiastically united under the Führer, in the context of the "winter aid" in which parcels were sent to soldiers on the Eastern Front, helping the lonely and weak? This notion of anomie would also be out of place in relation to Polish society, with such aid organisations as the Rada Główna Opiekuńcza (Central Welfare Council), and the widely discussed patriotic front, which motivated a considerable part of adult society to participate in underground activity.

In both cases, the problem was not anomie, but the relation of both these societies to Jewish fellow citizens, who were subjected to a very swift process of being defined, marked, deprived of property, concentrated in ghettos and exterminated in camps (Tokarska-Bakir, 2013). This characteristic omission proves that the medicine for incorrect diagnoses of the Holocaust should not be less but more sociology.

Whoever says "fascism" loses

Zygmunt Bauman, who experienced antisemitism throughout his adult life, by no means intended to dwell on this subject.¹² In the very first chapter of the book, he discredits "the presentation of the Holocaust as the culmination point of European-Christian antisemitism – in itself a unique phenomenon with nothing to compare it with in the large and dense inventory of ethnic or religious prejudices and aggressions" (MH: 1). The author's statements on this subject are as overbearing as they are unfounded:

Antisemitism – religious or economic, cultural or racial, virulent or mild – has been for millenia an almost ecumenical phenomenon. And yet the Holocaust has been an event without precedents. In virtually every one of its many aspects it stands alone and bears no meaningful comparison with other massacres, however gory, visited upon groups previously defined as foreign,

hostile or dangerous. Clearly, being perpetual or ubiquitous, antisemitism cannot by itself account for the Holocaust's uniqueness.

(MH: 32)

Paraphrasing von Clausewitz, Bauman claims:

In so far as it is defined as, so to speak, the continuation of antisemitism through other means, the Holocaust appears to be a 'one item set', a one-off episode, which perhaps sheds some light on the *pathology* of the society in which it occurred, but hardly adds anything to our understanding of this society's *normal* state.

(MH: 1)

This opinion is extraordinarily illogical, for if the well-known phenomenon leads – as the word “continuation” suggests – to an explosion, then how is one to reconcile this continuation with the break suggested by “through other means”? Similarly, why the suggestion of “a one item set”, “a one-off episode”, if one is discussing what may return, for “we live in a type of society that made the Holocaust possible, and that contained nothing which could stop the Holocaust from happening” (MH: 192)? It is also a mystery why the Holocaust understood in this manner would not “[call for] any significant revision of the orthodox understanding of the historical tendency of modernity, of the civilizing process, of the constitutive topics of sociological inquiry” (MH: 1–2). In the spirit of his own observation that each language in fact “defines its subject by pretending that it describes it” (MH: 430), the author assumes here that only new phenomena require consideration. The assumption that there was a break between modernity and that which preceded it emerges as the weakest aspect in the argument about the modern roots of the Holocaust.

By separating the Holocaust from the historical sequence of pogroms, Bauman underlines its “rational” character. Simultaneously, he omits Norman Cohn's thesis, which Bauman himself had previously cited, about the only ostensibly spontaneous nature of the pogroms (see footnote 8). In his view, the planning and lack of it are antitheses, ascribed respectively to modernity and what preceded it:

Contemporary mass murder is distinguished by a virtual absence of all spontaneity on the one hand, and the prominence of rational, carefully calculated design on the other. It is marked by an almost complete elimination of contingency and chance, and independence from group emotions and personal motives.

(MH: 198)

However, did only modern genocidal projects use dispassionate planning? Was the shutting down of emotions, and the effort “to overcome . . . the animal pity by which all normal men are affected in the presence of physical suffering” (Bauman, MH: 20, see Arendt, 1964: 106), only reserved for these? What distinguishes

the rationality of industrial killing methods from circulating rumours about blood libel, which cyclically enabled Jews to be eliminated from cities, or from the dispersed, yet systematic “liquidation” by machete or axe, following which the victims are stripped of their property?

The Holocaust by ants

These questions introduce a second strand of polemics, that of the extent to which the syndromes of premodern Polish backwaters can be discerned in the advanced modern project that was the Final Solution (Tokarska-Bakir, 2021).¹³

Following the liquidations of the ghettos in 1942–1943, the Holocaust machine systematically steamrollered across the occupied Polish lands, triggering local and widespread techniques of hunting down and killing Jews in hiding. Owing to the description of these actions (on the order of partisan units) as “cleansing the terrain”, they are reminiscent of ants entering the scene, once the main extermination has been completed. By drawing an analogy with Patrick Desbois’s book *The Holocaust by Bullets* (2008), one can call the phenomenon “the ant-like Holocaust”.

It is not true that non-Jewish Poles participated in this procedure in a haphazard manner, without following sociological principles. *Szmalcownictwo*, which was the denunciation of and preying upon hiding Jews, involved a group that before the war had taken part in an intensive campaign by nationalist parties and the Church, increasingly supported by the government (Tokarska-Bakir, 2021: ‘When Dawn Breaks’). Suffice it to say that in pre-war Poland, the overwhelming majority of political parties (the socialist party PPS and the prohibited communist one were exceptions) were in favour of the expulsion of the Jews.

The equivalent of the German term for “cleansing” (*Judensäuberung*, *Selbstreinigung*) gained new momentum in occupied Poland, where similar terms had been used in the past.¹⁴ During the war, Polish partisans eagerly adopted this term. In Malenie, near Opoczno, a unit of the National Armed Forces shot two Jewish families, including a baby of no more than a few months, and the partisans then sang the church song “Kiedy ranne wstają zorze” [When dawn breaks]. The commander later explained that “those Jews were liquidated, [because] they hindered our activity and we had to cleanse the terrain of everything that might complicate our action against the Germans”.¹⁵ As Miroslaw Tryczyk writes in his book *Miasta śmierci* [*City of the Dead*], immediately after the Germans declared war on the Soviet Union in 1941, about a hundred more or less encouraged pogroms took place in borderland areas, similar to the one that happened in Jedwabne (Tryczyk, 2015). Lviv gained similar notoriety from 30 June to 2 July 1941, when Ukrainian nationalists received consent from the Germans to carry out a three-day pogrom, as was also the case in Lithuanian Kaunas (25–29 June 1941), where the levels of cruelty were beyond imagining.

As of 1943, Polish partisan units of every political colour engaged in vigilante terror, the victims of which were not only Jews hiding in woodland, but above all those who had been given shelter by Polish peasants (Tokarska-Bakir,

2019: 69–114). The number of victims, sometimes killed with tools that have been described as “low-tech”, such as clubs, staffs, hoes, axes and other archaic implements, has been estimated by Prof. Jan Grabowski at around 200,000.¹⁶

How did partisans themselves describe what they had done to the Jews? The commander of one such action preferred to use the word “job”: “Seeing that the job was done, I called a meeting in the courtyard”. Or: “The job went very well for us”. In the Pińczów district, a partisan said we carried out “[four] liquidation actions against Polish citizens of Jewish nationality”. The same terminology appears in other regions: “after the liquidation of eight Yids near Kazimierza Wielka”. Or: “our [Home Army] unit is to report by the school in Chruszczyna Wielka with the aim of helping the Security Corps [of the Peasant Battalions], which is set to carry out the liquidation of Jews”.

Why were “Yids liquidated”? Because partisan units had a duty “to maintain order in the terrain”, and the victims were viewed as a threat to this order. Jan Pękalski, the commander of a Home Army platoon in Ćmielów, explained as follows: “As far as relations between our organisation and people of Jewish nationality were concerned, there was an order, unofficial of course, to liquidate the Jews, which was known to every member of the Home Army”. The detailed descriptions of crimes that were the focus of trials relating to the August Decree¹⁷ reveal the resourcefulness and high level of competence of the perpetrators in killing (the best items for beating were “cherry wood staffs” or “spruce staffs”), their knowledge of where to shoot so the victim did not scream (“in the ear”) and their expertise in concealing a grave (by “planting serradella”).

These crimes, which took place on a mass scale in Polish backwaters, were carefully covered up, so that the occupier did not demand loot that had been taken from the Jews. Wartime reports and post-war testimonies from the so-called August trials reveal lists of goods, including gold, watches, jewellery, swathes of material, soft and hard leather (the latter for shoes) and plush bedspreads. “There will be sugar for him,” promised one of the perpetrators. Trophies of a lesser calibre were not to be sneered at, such as shoes, dresses, underwear, wadded winter coats, overcoats with beaver-fur collars, canvas or even carbide for lamps.

A case study of the appalling economic rationality of the Holocaust can be found in the vicinity of Garwolin in Masovia. The first step was taken by the Germans: “A huge number of Jewish houses had been devastated and burnt by the Nazi occupiers. In keeping with the plan, rubble and bricks from these houses were used to lay a road: from Łaskarzew to Sobolew”.¹⁸ Then the peasantry joined in:

In Starowola, the looting of the cemetery began just moments after the deportation of the last Jew to the ghetto in Otwock”. Local farmers used matzevahs and bricks from the cemetery walls to rebuild their properties, which had burnt during a fire in the village. Today’s inhabitants claim that the Germans started this process by laying roads. There are a few cowsheds near the cemetery. The owner of one of them gladly shows it to visitors . . . for a fee. He is proud of his property, which generates a lot of interest. . . . He also says that he would return the tombstones, yet on the condition that he

receives an adequate sum beforehand which would enable him to rebuild the cowshed. . . . However, he stresses that the money has to be given beforehand, as he doesn't trust Jews.

(Baksik, 2013: . . .)

Aside from the obvious crimes, it is generally hard to cast accusations at the Holocaust's premodern accomplices (in the sense that Polish village life was in many respects untouched by modern civilisation) with regard to their ant-like ventures. Taking advantage of the situation created by the Germans, they "fleeced" their old, historical competitors: millers, butchers, tailors, fruit farmers, brewers, distillers and owners of lumber mills. Their property, workshops or real estate were seized or bought back. The inhabitants of Polish backwaters still live in this property today. However, above all, surviving Jews were strongly advised to leave for Palestine following the war (Tokarska-Bakir, 2018). Kazimierz Wyka summed up this logic after the conflict: "Blame for crimes was placed on the Germans, while we got keys and cash" (Wyka, 1957: 130–131).

Conclusions

Zygmunt Bauman could draw these conclusions from the autopsy, or from his own experience or that of his wife Janina. However, one looks in vain for them in *Modernity and the Holocaust*. There are two possible reasons why.

Firstly, at the time when he wrote his book, the microhistory of the "epoch of furnaces", which could have provided answers to the questions which absorbed him, was still a subject of the future. No one had yet considered the missing 200,000 Jews who, following the liquidations of the ghettos, had tried to find help and did not receive it. It was only after the opening of the communist-era archives, now accessible in the Institute of National Remembrance, that the subject began to be studied properly. The Holocaust took place in Poland, but in 1989, Poland was only just emerging from communism. And although it was the communist regime that carried out the only systematic attempt to punish the participants in the "ant-like Holocaust" – here I have in mind the upshot of the so-called August Decree, in the years 1945–1970 – the official historical policy of those times did not differ very much from the present one. Poles were supposed to be victims, and not scavengers preying on the dying.

But there is also another, autobiographical answer to the question of why, when writing about the causes of the Holocaust, Zygmunt Bauman pointed to modernity rather than antisemitism. I divulge it with a certain degree of hesitation, but it is hard to pass over such an opportunity: perhaps he really did have the knowledge. His whole life was shaped by antisemitism: in 1939, he fled from it to Russia, after the war he experienced it in the communist army, in 1968 as an adult man he was expelled from his homeland because of it. A book about antisemitism would have appeared like a complaint, and Bauman did not want to lodge a complaint. He wanted to be in control. A negation of the obviousness of antisemitism not only intrigued the public, but also provided an opportunity for a new opening. This was

the task of a beautiful fairy tale about postmodernity as modernity at a mature age, looking at itself intently, without delight.

Translated by Nicholas Hodge

Notes

- 1 “The notion of an unbroken continuity of persecutions, expulsions, and massacres from the end of the Roman Empire to the Middle Ages, the modern era, and down to our own time, frequently embellished by the idea that modern antisemitism is no more than a secularised version of popular medieval superstitions, is no less fallacious . . . than the corresponding antisemitic notion of a Jewish secret society that has ruled, or aspired to rule, the world since antiquity” (Arendt, 1973: xi).
- 2 “The view that the racial or scientific 19th century anti-Semitism, due to its atheist inclinations, stood for a radical break with the ‘medieval’ religious tradition of hatred towards Jews, results from the incomprehension of the nature of the secularisation of this model, taking place in 19th-century life sciences. The primary model of the Jew becomes secularised as late as in the 18th and 19th century. The blindness and inability of the Jews to convert to Christianity, become their ‘psychological limitation’ preventing their full acculturation in the Western society. In-born Jewish perfidy, expressed in constantly betraying Christ across centuries, becomes a biologically determined feature of Jews, which predisposes them to play a heartless role in the establishment of capitalism (or Communism). The destructive role of Jews expressed in literally taking the life of Christians, committing blood murders or poisoning wells, which leads to the outbreak of an epidemic of the Black Death, is transformed into the Jews’ biological participation in transmitting diseases such as syphilis [or typhus in Nazi propaganda – JTB]”(Gilman and Katz, 1991:1).
- 3 “[T]he blood libel served as a kind of bridge between medieval religious and modern secular forms of anti-Semitism, undergoing certain significant changes as it retained other continuities. What had been largely a folk tradition was now given scientific legitimacy by purported academic experts” (Biale, 2007:137).
- 4 “Heinrich Himmler, who greatly admired Schramm’s work [this concerns Helmut Schramm’s pamphlet about ‘Jewish ritual murders’, published in *Der Stürmer* in 1943], ordered one hundred copies to be sent to the Einsatzgruppen, the mobile squads carrying out mass executions of Jews on the Russian front” (Biale 2007: 137).
- 5 Here Sirenus combines the legend of William of Norwich (1144) with that of Hugo of Lincoln (1255).
- 6 This and all the other events mentioned in Sirenus’s *Zielnik* are further developed in Przeclaw Mojecki, 1598, *Zydowskie okrucienstwa, mordy y zabobony*, Kraków: Dru-karnia Jakuba Sibenechera.
- 7 See the 1611 edition of Sirenus’s *Zielnik*, and the chapter “O Żydziech rzecz krótka”, card no. 1536.
- 8 See Kot S. 1937, *Polska rajem dla Żydów, piekłem dla chłopów, niebem dla szlachty*, in, *eadem*, 1957, *Nationum Proprietates*, „Oxford Slavonic Papers,” vol. VII, 99–117.
- 9 On the matter of Nazi researchers supporting their work with ethnographic sources (including Helmut Schramm, author of the previously mentioned pamphlet on blood libel for *Der Stürmer*), see David Biale, 2007:137.
- 10 I would like to thank Jacek Nowakowski from the USHMM in Washington for making this publication available to me.
- 11 From the Greek *adiaphoron*, “meant a thing declared indifferent by the Church”, Bauman, 1989, 215.
- 12 See the very well-informed biography by Izabela Wagner (Wagner, 2020: 21–22, 163–174, 253, etc.)

- 13 Most of the examples come from the chapter *Brother Months*.
- 14 For example, in 1939, right after the verdict was read concerning the pogrom in Przytyk, Col. Zygmunt Wenda (1896–1941), a legionnaire and adjutant of J. Piłsudski, as well as deputy speaker of the Polish parliament, became famous for the following declaration in parliament: “We are just awaiting the order, and we will clean our Polish cottage” (see Urbański, 1993:106).
- 15 The Archive of the Institute of National Remembrance, Łd, 495/47, pt. 1, 324.
- 16 Barbara Engelking, who co-edited the book *Dalej jest noc* (2018) with Grabowski, commented on this estimate: “The issue of ‘200 thousand Jews’ . . . this is an approximate number of Jews (perhaps 150,000, perhaps 250,000 – there is no way of counting precisely), who looked for help from the inhabitants of occupied Poland during the third phase of the Holocaust – following the liquidations of the ghettos. About three quarters of them did not survive to the end of the occupation (about 50,000 survived) – and a portion of these deaths weighs on the Polish conscience. To what extent? How many of them were handed over to the Germans by Poles, and how many were murdered directly [by Poles]? Maybe they handed over half of them? Perhaps they murdered a third? Perhaps the proportions were different: they handed over tens of thousands, and killed a few thousand? The drama of the matter is that the more we discover about the issue, the more convinced we become that there were many more murderers than the rose-tinted national story about the Holocaust would permit.” Available online at <https://wyborcza.pl/7,75968,23900495,sprawa-200-tys-zydow-ktorych-zamordowano-po-likwidacji-gett.html>. (accessed 15/8/2020).
- 17 From the decree issued by the PKWN (Polish Committee of National Liberation) on 31/8/1944, known as the August Decree, ‘Decree on the punishment of fascist Nazi criminals guilty of murders and persecution of the civilian population and prisoners of war, and for traitors of the Polish nation’.
- 18 Archiwum Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego [Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute], ref. no. 301/35, account of Ester Waldman, Łaskarzew – Garwolin district, Warsaw voivodeship.

Bibliography

- Adalberg, S. 1889–1894. *Księga przysłów, przypowieści i wyrażeń przysłowiowych polskich*. Warsaw: Drukarnia Emila Skiwińskiego.
- Arendt, H. 1964. *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*. New York: Viking Press.
- Arendt, H. 1973. *Origins of Totalitarianism*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Jovanovich.
- Baksik, L. 2013. Macewy niecodziennego użytku. In J. Tokarska-Bakir (ed.) *PL: tożsamość wyobrażona*. Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Czarna Owca.
- Bartoszewicz, K. 1914. *Antysemityzm w literaturze polskiej*. Warsaw: Gebethner J. Wolff.
- Bauman, Z. 1987. *Legislators and Interpreters: On Modernity, Post-Modernity and Intellectuals*. Oxford: Polity.
- Bauman, Z. 1991. *Modernity and Ambivalence*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Bethencourt, F. 2013. *Racisms: From the Crusades to the Twentieth Century*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Biale, D. 2007. *Blood and Belief: The Circulation of the Symbol Between the Jews and Christians*. Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Cała, A. 2014. *Ochrona bezpieczeństwa fizycznego Żydów w Polsce powojennej: Komisje Specjalne przy Centralnym Komitecie Żydów w Polsce*. Warsaw: ŻIH.
- Cohn, N. 1967. *Warrant for Genocide*. London: Eyre & Spottiswoode.
- Desbois, P. 2008. *The Holocaust by Bullets: A Priest's Journey to Uncover the Truth Behind the Murder of 1.5 Million Jews*, trans. Catherine Spencer. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

- Douglas, M. 1999. *Leviticus as a Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Durkheim, É., and Mauss, M. 1963. *Primitive Classification*, trans. R. Needham. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Engelking, B., and Grabowski, J. (eds.). 2018. *Dalej jest noc: losy Żydów w wybranych powiatach okupowanej Polski*, volume 1. Warsaw: Stowarzyszenie Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów.
- Fein, H. 1979. *Accounting for Genocide: National Response and Jewish Victimization during the Holocaust*. New York: Free Press.
- Gellner, E. 1983. *Nations and Nationalism*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Gilman, S. L., and Katz, S. T. 1991. Preface. In S. L. Gilman and S. T. Katz (eds.) *Anti-Semitism in Times of Crisis*. New York: New York University Press.
- Gross, J. T. 2000. *Sąsiedzi: Historia zagłady żydowskiego miasteczka*. Sejny: Pogranicze.
- Kolberg, O. 1857–1890. *Lud: Jego zwyczaje, sposób życia, mowa, podania, przysłowia, obrzędy, gusła, zabawy, pieśni, muzyka i taniec*, 33 volumes. Kraków: Drukarnia Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego.
- Kot, S. 1957. Nationum Proprietates. "Oxford Slavonic Papers", VII, 99–117.
- Lanzmann, C. 1993. *Shoah*, trans. M. Bieńczyk. Koszalin: Atext.
- Mojecki, P. 1598. *Żydowskie okrucieństwa, mordy i zabobony*. Kraków: Drukarnia Jakuba Sibenechera.
- Plato. 1935. *The Republic*, trans. P. Shorey, vol. II. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Sommerfeld, J. 1942. Die Juden in den polnischen Sprichwörtern und sprichwörtlichen Redensarten, *Die Burg: Vierteljahresschrift des Instituts für Deutsche Ostarbeit Krakau* [Quarterly of the Institute of German Labour in the East, in Kraków]. *Burgverlag Krakau GmbH*, 3, 313–354.
- Syreński, S. 2017. *Zielnik Syreniusza: Druk Czcionką Współczesną*, ed. M. Łuczaj. Krosno: Krośnieńska Oficyna Wydawnicza.
- Tec, N. 1986. *When Light Pierced the Darkness*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Tokarska-Bakir, J. 1999. Żydzi u Kolberga. *Res Publica Nowa*, 7–8, 30–38.
- Tokarska-Bakir, J. 2008. *Antropologia przęsądu*. Warsaw: W.A.B.
- Tokarska-Bakir, J. 2013. *Incognito ergo sum. O wytwarzaniu obojętności. Studia Litteraria et Historica*, 2. Available online at: <https://ispan.waw.pl/journals/index.php/slh/article/view/slh.2013.016>
- Tokarska-Bakir, J. 2018. *Pod klątwą. Społeczny portret pogromu kieleckiego*. Warsaw: Czarna Owca.
- Tokarska-Bakir, J. 2019. *Pogrom Cries – Essays on Polish-Jewish History, 1939–1946*. Berlin, Bern, Brussels, New York, Oxford, Warsaw, Wien: Peter Lang.
- Tokarska-Bakir, J. 2021. *Jewish Fugitives in the Polish Countryside 1939–1945: Beyond the German Holocaust Project*. Berlin, Bern, Brussels, New York, Oxford, Warsaw, Wien: Peter Lang.
- Tryczyk, M. 2015. *Miasta śmierci: sąsiedzkie pogromy Żydów*. Warsaw: Wydawnictwo RM.
- Urbański, K. 1993. *Kieleccy Żydzi*. Kielce: Małopolska Oficyna Wydawnicza.
- Von Schlettstadt, Rudolf von. 1974. *Historiae Memorabiles. Zur Dominikanerliteratur und Kulturgeschichte des 13. Jahrhunderts*, ed. E. Kleinschmidt. Cologne: Böhlau Verlag.
- Wagner, I. 2020. *Bauman: A Biography*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Wyka, K. 1957. *Życie na niby. Szkice z lat 1939–1945*. Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza.



Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

Part 2

**Rationality, obedience,
agency**



Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

3 From understanding victims to victims' understanding

Rationality, shame and other emotions in *Modernity and the Holocaust*

Dominic Williams

Modernity and the Holocaust begins and ends with the victims. The Preface acknowledges Janina Bauman's memoir (1986) of 'life in the Warsaw ghetto and beyond' as the spur to the book's thinking. The Afterthought's meditation on rationality and shame draws mainly on stories of Jewish prisoners forced to service the workings of extermination sites. Victims' experiences of the ghetto and the death camp, as filtered through survivors' accounts (and Bauman's own way of remembering them),¹ frame a book which is chiefly known for providing a theory of perpetration. How the victims are included in that theory is the topic I will consider here, by engaging with the opposition that the Afterthought articulates. The first of its terms – rationality – is absolutely central to the book's argument. According to Bauman, rationality is modernity's chief characteristic, and reason enabled key features of the Holocaust. Reason transformed premodern prejudice into modern antisemitism, through rational utopianism. Reason shaped bureaucratic forms of modern management. And these two rational elements encountered each other (contingently) in the preparation and implementation of the Jewish genocide. The victims too, he argues, acted rationally, although this simply trapped them within the logic by which the Holocaust operated. The second term – shame – appears only incidentally and occasionally in the book's main body. In his treatment of it in the Afterthought, Bauman valorises the guilty feelings of survivors precisely because they are irrational. Shame, he posits, liberates those living after: out of the constraints of rationality into an engagement with the Holocaust's moral significance (MH: 205; see also Sánchez and Zahavi, 2018: 183–184). In this chapter, I argue that this opposition between reason and emotions can actually be seen at work throughout *Modernity and the Holocaust*. Attending more closely to how Bauman discusses feelings complicates what appears to be his account of reason. It also provides ways to approach the experience and actions of victims. With reference to the Jewish Councils (*Judenräte*) and the crematorium workers of Auschwitz-Birkenau (*Sonderkommando*), I will show how they drew on both reason and emotions to interpret and communicate their experiences of the ghettos and the death camps.

The opposition between reason and emotions is not the primary thread of the book's argument, but it is a recurrent theme. In making his fundamental point that the Holocaust was not some throwback to premodern barbarism, Bauman often argues against positions that root the Holocaust in irrational emotions (MH: 5, 13, 154). Alongside this, he makes many claims of his own about their role: that emotions were simply not present (MH: 74, 98), or if present they followed rather than drove action (MH: 64), or were not the most salient feature of modern racism (MH: 65), or were insufficient or irrelevant to the perpetration of genocide (MH: 73, 89–92, 124, 189, 245), or even stood in its way and so were often discouraged (MH: 20, 97, 184–185; cf. p. 246). While there are some tensions between these different claims, they are broadly in line with an idea of modern reason overcoming passions.² The 'etiological myth' of modernity entails the battle of 'rationality against passion' (MH: 95–96). This version of their relationship, especially given the Afterthought, suggests that Bauman accepts the myth of the triumph of reason but laments it. Passion is premodern, reason is modern. Passion is moral, reason is not. That is certainly the main way that the thesis is presented, both within the book itself and in his related works on modernity, and developed through *Post-modern Ethics* (1993) and *Life in Fragments* (1995), where reason is rejected as a foundation for morality, and the attainment of the 'moral condition' is routed through an 'emotional relationship with the Other' (1995: 62; see also Vetlesen, 1993; Hookway, 2017). In this book, Bauman asserts forthrightly: 'the only hard-core meaning of sentiment/emotion/feeling/passion is the defiance, disregard and snubbing of Reason' (1995: 53).³

But the claim wavers. At other times – both in Bauman's frequent generalisations and in his occasional treatment of specificities – reason and emotion are presented as much more closely bound up together. On the general level, Bauman's critique of modernity's 'etiological myth' often takes a different form, revealing reason's irrational roots. In the chapter 'Gamekeepers and Gardeners' of *Legislators and Interpreters*, which prefigures his account of the Holocaust as a modern gardening operation, Bauman characterises reason's supposed triumph over passion as more a case of early modern intellectuals rejecting lower-class emotions and valorising the feelings of the ruling class (1987: 55–58). In *Modernity and Ambivalence*, Bauman describes the art of 'cool calculation of costs and effects' holding sway only after the 'desirability of order has been established' (1991: 30). The desire for order is entirely emotionally based: it stems from (and generates) the feeling of ambivalence.⁴ Feelings of anxiety prompt the quest for order; the attainment of happiness is part of its goal (1991: 22, 258). Even in a discussion of love in *Postmodern Ethics*, terms used to describe modernity – fixing and floating, gardening – recur (1993: 98–109), suggesting a range of possible feelings informing these strategies. At the very least, therefore, there is a rich emotional foundation – or framework – to modernity's desire for order.

In *Modernity and the Holocaust* too, modern reason is sometimes described as intertwined with passion or even unreason. Reason grows out of and into the same conditions that created 'the irrationality of witchcraft myths and witch persecution': 'anxieties and tensions provoked or generated by the collapse of the

ancien régime and the advent of the modern order' (MH: 40). In another passage, the triumph of modernity represses anti-modern forces that return as feelings: 'the acute fear of the void, the never-satiated lust for certainty, paranoid mythologies of conspiracy and the frantic search for ever-elusive identity'. The end point of this process sees 'anti-modernist phobias . . . unloaded through channels and forms only modernity could develop' (MH: 46).

In these moments, which in *Modernity and the Holocaust* often seem to me to operate at the paragraph level rather than being sustained across a chapter or the book, the grand sweep of Bauman's claims gives way to more writerly concerns of phrasemaking and the creation of metaphors.⁵ This creates a certain productive looseness in Bauman's approach, allowing another account of modernity and emotion to be reconstructed from it, where a distinction between reason and passions is hard to sustain. Feelings are repressed and channelled by, arise from and give rise to modernity. The relationship seems more dialectical than dichotomous.

That account of the passions entwined with modernity is often couched at this abstract level, but other discussions do come closer to describing individuals' feelings. In one of the few direct mentions of shame before the Afterthought, Bauman describes how German bystanders eventually grew to accept the actions against the Jews in the aftermath of the November pogrom ('Kristallnacht'):

Another remarkable thing about the surrender is that however painful it might have felt at the beginning, it tends to travel from shame to pride. Those who surrender become accomplices of the crime, and deal appropriately with the cognitive dissonance the complicity generates. People who watched with disdain and disgust the antisemitic inanities of Nazi propaganda and kept silent 'only for the sake of saving the greater values' a few years later found themselves rejoicing in the blessed cleanliness of universities and purity of German science. Their own, rational antisemitism

grew stronger as the persecution of the Jews grew worse. The explanation is plain, if depressing: when people know even with half their minds that a great injustice is being done, and lack the generosity and the courage to protest, they automatically throw the blame on to the victims as the simplest way of easing their own consciences.

(MH: 128)

In this passage laced through with affective vocabulary, a complex and quite subtle examination of emotions and their part in creating complicity is punctured by the phrase 'rational antisemitism', inserted as if in a vain attempt to fix the flood of feeling around it. The incongruity of this phrase becomes even greater when checking the text from which Bauman quotes (Cohn, 1967). In Norman Cohn's original words, it is not 'rational antisemitism' but a 'feeling' (and an apparently rather unreasonable one at that) which 'grew stronger as the persecution . . . grew worse' (p. 267).⁶ Perhaps, then, the passage could be read another way: as saying that 'rational antisemitism' is itself absolutely suffused with emotions, or even that emotions operate in a rational way.

While on one level this might look like simply attaching the label of ‘rationality’ to emotions (in a way at odds with much of what Bauman argues), on another it implies quite a complex relationship between reason and the emotions. This is not a new way to think about emotions: debates about what (if anything) separates the cognitive from the affective have a long history (Dixon, 2003) and writers had been exploring their links in the years before Bauman’s book (e.g. Solomon, 1976). It is also an issue that has been discussed much more extensively since its publication (Nussbaum, 2001; Reddy, 2001; Leys, 2017). However, this way in which, as well as working on subjects, emotions can be worked with and worked up is not something that has been much explored in Holocaust Studies. Reading Bauman as a writer as much as reading him as a theorist offers an opportunity to address this issue.

Emotions: bureaucrats, perpetrators, victims

As has frequently been pointed out (O’Kane, 1997; du Gay, 2000; Stone, 2010), Bauman’s thinking on modern rationality draws primarily on Max Weber. Indeed, in making a broad distinction between reason and emotions that becomes rather less clear on closer examination, Bauman might also show similarity to Weber: scholars have found variation in Weber’s statements on emotion over time (Barbalet, 2000) or depending on subject (Hein, 2007). The fact that Weber has been revisited for insights into emotion in the past two decades indicates the increasing interest in this area. In the years since the publication of *Modernity and the Holocaust*, more work has been done on emotions in a wide range of disciplines, and unsurprisingly they have been found everywhere: even at work in bureaucracy (Albrow, 2002), with specific studies ranging from the emotional regimes of Norwegian immigration officials (Eggebo, 2012) to the feelings of interwar Austrian civil servants (Garstenauer, 2018).

More surprisingly given the vehemence with which Bauman argues against explanations of the Shoah based in emotion, the lack of focus on feelings is also true of Holocaust history for much of its existence (Wachsmann, 2021). Or at least explicit focus: one of the issues at stake in the now well-worn controversy between Christopher Browning and Daniel Goldhagen (which Bauman referenced in his afterword to 2000 edition of *Modernity and the Holocaust* [MH: 222–250]) was the status of emotions – particularly those of researchers (Ball, 2008). And both took interest in the emotions of perpetrators. Goldhagen insisted that ‘the emotional components’ of perpetrators’ deeds needed to be acknowledged as part of understanding them (1997: 31); Browning carefully recorded the words describing how they felt after the first action (1998: 237n78; see also Haynes, 2002).⁷ More recently, Alon Confino (2014) has made direct reference to the history of emotions in his work on Nazi ideology as collective fantasy rather than planned programme. Even the ‘bloodless’ bureaucratic element of the Holocaust has had its emotional side acknowledged. Michael Thad Allen argues that bureaucracy includes enthusiasm, noting accounts of the head of the Auschwitz design bureau working ‘with excitement’, and of the SS *esprit de corps* (Allen, 2005: 45).⁸

In conceptualising victims' experiences, the long prevailing paradigm of trauma may in fact also have resulted in their emotional lives being understudied. In one of the central definitions of trauma, Dori Laub (1992) essentially characterises it as a cognitive, not an affective issue (84–85). But victims' feelings, alongside embodiment and the senses, have now started to feature in historians' work (especially Wachsmann, 2021, but also, e.g., Gerlach, 2018; Flaws, 2021).⁹ This is often part of an attempt to give a victim's eye view of the events, which also complicates – one might even say 'muddies' – the bureaucratic-industrial – or 'clean' – version of the Holocaust that appears in Bauman-like interpretations. Instead of a Holocaust that functions efficiently, impersonally and mechanically, these accounts see it playing through the bodies of perpetrators, bystanders and victims. In Nikolaus Wachsmann's recent essay especially, the key vocabulary of historians of emotions helps raise questions about prisoner experience and its expression in order to combat images of Auschwitz 'as a highly automated "factory of death"' (2021: 29).

This approach might be said to overturn Bauman the theoriser by accepting and then inverting his terms at their broadest and starkest: the emotional aspects of the Holocaust are invoked because of their opposition to rationality. But the complex entanglement of reason and emotion explored by the writerly Bauman suggests that there may be more to be said about victims' feelings than the rather passive account that Wachsmann gives of them as responses to situation and perpetrators' actions. Scattered through Bauman's writings are a set of ways of thinking about emotions and their relationship with reason that allow us to think about how emotion might have been a resource or a strategy as much as a simple set of effects.¹⁰ To elaborate on this possibility, I now turn to the specifics of Bauman's discussion of the victims' actions, one of the less discussed parts of *Modernity and the Holocaust*.¹¹

The chapter 'Soliciting the Co-Operation of the Victims' exemplifies both the problems and the productivity of Bauman's ambition. In this chapter, the critique of rationality is applied to the actions of the victims, demonstrating reason's ineffectualness when sundered from power. With reference to the *Judenräte* (Jewish ghetto councils) especially, Bauman characterises each decision that they took as rational, but also a step that required a further, even more anguish-inducing and self-defeating decision to follow. Rational calculations of cooperating with the 'resettlement' of some ghetto inhabitants, allowing some to die so that other could live, were simply making the goal of the perpetrators easier to achieve.

Based on this characterisation, in a way that is both intriguing and disturbing, Bauman claims that the Holocaust is not simply the product of its perpetrators. The victims were, in some sense, its co-creators. Without their cooperation, the Holocaust would have been simply an instance of 'massive coercion and violence visited upon a disempowered population by blood-thirsty conquerors guided by vengeance or communal hatred'. With it, the Holocaust provides a case study 'of such processes as have been brought into being by the thoroughly modern art of rational action' (MH: 118). Note that the distinction made here is between an emotional event and a rational one.

This is not a claim that I think can simply be endorsed. But rather than taking it as a simply falsifiable assertion, I want to think with it as a prompt to considering a number of aspects of the victims' experience. Before Saul Friedländer's attempt to do so, Bauman might be said to have offered an 'integrated history of the Holocaust', and not one to which the victims are 'tacked on' (Kushner, 2006: 280). His account of modernity as rationality provides an underlying logic of how both acted. In addition to highlighting what he sees as the dangers of rationality, that also strikes me as a way of paying the victims some kind of respect.

In the rest of this chapter, I shall explore the implications of what I have identified earlier in *Modernity and the Holocaust* with regard to two case studies, linked in the book (as well, famously, by Primo Levi in his essay of just a few years before, 'The Grey Zone'): the *Judenräte*, and the Auschwitz *Sonderkommando*. Working from the strands in Bauman's writing that shows the emotional elements playing through rationality, and from his attempt to identify a logic in the victims' actions, I shall argue that emotions are not simply causes or effects of situations in the Holocaust. They can also be seen as strategies, just as victims had 'rational' strategies too. How we characterise the nature of the event has to take into account the ways in which victims acted – rationally and emotionally.

Judenräte

The *Judenräte* are Bauman's prime example of victims being 'incorporat[ed] into the power structure' in such a way that they might 'bring closer their own perdition, while guided in their action by the rationally interpreted purpose of survival' (MH: 122; in italics in original). Bauman's discussion places a great deal of weight on the rationality of the councils, going so far as to characterise perpetrators as *irrational* in contrast (MH: 138, 142–143).¹² Emotions are discussed, at times explicitly, but mostly as secondary phenomena arising from or managed by the central rational process. The Jewish Councils are 'frantic and desperate' in their efforts to 'find rational solutions' (MH: 136); they serve as 'lightning rods' for '[a]nxiety and aggression' of other victims (MH: 134) that would have been more reasonably targeted at the oppressor. Such an account of leaders of the Jewish councils acting in an entirely rational manner could be taken as a useful corrective to the stories of madness and ludicrous vaunting exhibited by figures such as Chaim Rumkowski, the chairman of the Jewish council in Łódź (e.g. Bloom, 1949a; Friedman, 1980; Levi, 1988). Rather than concentrating on other council leaders, however, Bauman attempts to apply this description to precisely the most notorious figures among them: Rumkowski and Jakub Gens of the Vilna ghetto. Under the aegis of reason, Bauman provides an ideal type of the self-justifying speeches they gave:

After each successive 'action' the likes of Gens and Rumkowski felt the need to call general meetings of the remaining ghetto prisoners in order to explain why they decided 'to do it ourselves'. . . . The stunned audience was then treated to a display of rational mind; calculation of numbers. 'If we left the

job to the Germans, many more would have died'. Or, more personally still; 'Did I refuse to be in command, the Germans would have put in my place a much more cruel and sinister man, with unimaginable consequences'. Rationally calculated 'gain' was then re-forged into a moral obligation. 'Yes, it is my duty to foul my hands', decided Gens, the self-appointed God of Vilna Jews, the killer who died convinced that he was the Saviour.

(MH: 141–142)

In a similar way to his discussion of increasingly complicit bystanders, Bauman presents rationality with an entourage of attendant feelings and other irrational or non-rational elements: the need to have an audience, the mood of that audience (resulting from the action or perhaps simply from the speech), the demands of morality and delusions of grandeur. The overall argument foregrounded by the chapter, and the book, suggests that the concept of rationality is being used to manage all these other elements and keep them in their place. But another reading – both of this passage and of the speeches themselves – is possible, one in which reason and emotion are entangled with each other, indeed enable each other.

Rumkowski's speech of 4 September 1942, in which he called on inhabitants of the Łódź Ghetto to give up their children to be transported to their deaths, did indeed make use of a number of appeals to reason and logic, but it was also a highly emotive, and highly rhetorical, performance. Many reports of this speech discuss Rumkowski's bent posture, hoarse voice and tears (Singer, 2002; Zelkowicz, 2015). It had a powerful effect on his audience, with several accounts paying more attention to their reactions than the words of the speech (Nirnberg, 1948; Singer, 2002; Löw, 2009). The fullest text, given by Josef Zelkowicz, also includes interjections from the crowds. Unlike those who speak before him appealing for 'calm' and dismissing 'sobbing and cries' for not being 'any help to us now' (2015: 212, 213), Rumkowski describes himself deliberately eliciting signs of emotional torment: '[Dreadful wailing from the crowd] I have not come today to console you. I have not come to calm you down today either but to uncover the fullness of your sorrow and woe' (216, square brackets in original). These emotional peaks are not distinct from, but work *with* the use of numbers and statistics:

We have many sick with tuberculosis in the ghetto whose remaining life can be numbered in days, or in weeks at most. I don't know – maybe it's all the devil's plan [*efsher iz es a tayvlonisher plan*], maybe not – but I cannot prevent myself from saying to you, 'Give me the sick, and in their place, the well will be able to be saved'. I know how tenderly the sick are tended to at home – especially by Jews. But anytime there is a new decree, the following question must be considered carefully [*muz men dokh vegn un mestn*]: Who can be saved, who should be saved and who is it in fact possible to save?

(Zelkowicz, 2015: 216; Trunk, 1962: 312)

Weighing and measuring (*vegn un mestn*) are equivalent to a 'devilish plan' – which may be that of the Germans, or of Rumkowski. Statistics are a form of necromancy.

This is a display on Rumkowski's part, but not of a rational mind sundered from its physical circumstances; rather of someone who is able to both to calculate and to sense the terrible costs of doing so. Rumkowski is justifying less his decision (in the limited way that it is his) and more himself as the person who is able to think *and* feel, and thus embody the thoughts and feelings of the ghetto.

As Bauman's own quotations from him show, Jakub Gens too included the balancing of numbers ('With a hundred victims I save a thousand people; with a thousand I save ten thousand') and imagery of being tainted by evil ('If I, Jacob Gens, survive . . . I shall have come through all covered with dirt and with blood dripping from my hands'). And this speech is also one that stunned his audience, who were attending a literary gathering. With a degree of irony, perhaps (although at whose expense it is hard to tell), Mark Dworzecki notes that Gens gave the 'most powerful [*shtarkste*] speech of that literary meeting in the ghetto, and on many it made no less deep an impression than the prize-winning works of the ghetto writers' (Dworzecki, 1948: 308).

There is a remarkable consistency here, such that one could almost identify a set of *topoi*: numbers, grotesque imagery of blood and flesh, readiness to stand before a court, creation of an outsize persona. Both men provide a performance of anguish, self-pity and self-aggrandisement – an expression and a channelling of feelings that result from and make possible the 'decisions' that they make. A twisted, deluded sense of being unholy saviours, the only ones who are able to work with the dark powers necessary to take ruthless actions that will preserve a saving remnant both makes this acceptable to them, and seems to batter their audiences into submission. The submission they obtain, though, is not so much to the decisions themselves, as to the significance of the *Judenältesten* in ghetto life. Rumkowski and Gens place themselves at the centre of events, and in doing so lodge themselves in the minds of their witnesses. The fascination with the ghetto dictators that later historians and writers have evinced (from Bloom, 1949a, 1949b to Levi, 1988) follows on from their own demand to be perceived as fascinating. The speeches do explain the reasoning behind the decisions, but not in order to persuade. Rather, they bring it together with emotions to make meaning.¹³

The Auschwitz *Sonderkommando*

Although Bauman's main case studies for this part of his argument are the *Judenräte*, he does make some reference to the *Sonderkommando* (SK), the groups of workers at extermination sites, and most famously in Auschwitz-Birkenau, forced to work as part of the machinery of murder. Bauman mentions them briefly alongside his accounts of the *Judenräte*, claiming that the SK's silence at the doors of the gas chambers was also rational, but only eased the passage of the victims into them.

While the only accounts Bauman makes use of are post-war ones – especially that of Abraham Bomba who escaped from Treblinka – some members of the Auschwitz *Sonderkommando* actually recorded their own accounts while in Birkenau, and before their deaths there (Chare and Williams, 2016a). In these accounts too, the question of emotions is very frequently addressed. I want to suggest that

similarly to (and perhaps less problematically than) the speeches from members of the *Judenräte*, the writings of the SK show emotions to be a complex resource that they drew on to understand and communicate their painful situation.

This is true even when at first they seem to be claiming not to have had any emotions at all. Many of the *Sonderkommando* described entering a state that might now be explained as being psychically numbed or dissociated, but for which they used the words ‘robots’ or automata (e.g. Gabbai, 1996; Gradowski, 1977: 103). Zalman Lewental, for example, explained how new recruits to the SK responded to their new ‘work’ and the treatment given them by the SS:

We ran, pursued with sticks by the sentries of the SS watching over us, so that we simply completely forgot ourselves, just none of us knew what he did, when he did, what was done to him overall. So we lost ourselves completely, simply like dead people, like robots [*oytomatn*], ran pursued, not knowing how we had to run and what we ran after and what we did. We didn’t look at each other. I know for sure that not one of us was living, nor aware, nor thinking. That’s how they treated us until we . . . began to regain our senses . . . we were doing, who we were dragging to be burnt, what . . . had happened to us. This was soon after the . . . already dragged away all the people . . . bunker. Dumped onto carts, transported to . . . already burnt people from a day ago, two days ago . . . bodies thrown there in the fire. After work, coming to [*kumendik tsu zikh*] in the block, when each man . . . lay down to rest, then the nightmare began.

(Mark, 1977: 387, with reference to MS in Auschwitz Archive)¹⁴

Amos Goldberg interprets the first part of this passage literally, seeing Lewental as describing his ‘very own death’ (Goldberg 2017: 56–57, 40–41). This is consistent with Goldberg’s reading of Jewish diaries as traumatically enacting the schemata perpetrators imposed on their victims. But it is important to see Lewental’s writing as *figuring* what happened to him when he was first recruited into the SK: using similes and parallel structures. Similes allow connections to be made and some sense to be derived. Repetitions serve to enact the state of being an automaton caused by the initial shock of being forced to carry out the SK’s work. But they also manage feelings that arise on returning to oneself (*kumendik tsu zikh*) and even to communicate them to a reader. This is an analysis and explanation of carrying out orders, not simply an example of their taking effect.

The handwriting itself suggests a certain emotional tenor. As Nicholas Chare and I point out in *Matters of Testimony*, the letters SS are written in Roman script and appear repeatedly traced – perhaps on top of two *samekhs* which are used elsewhere to denote SS. The physical gestures that Lewental made while writing (repeated, revisited) come more to the fore at this point, and we interpreted them as having possible emotional import – hatred, perhaps – while also acknowledging that their actual meaning is not straightforwardly available to us. The manuscripts, we argued, ‘manifest the affective circumstances in which they were written. This affective register operates in excess of the overt narrative’ (Chare and Williams, 2016a: 38). What could be added to that account is that these are

physical gestures that are *consciously* made – a decision to revisit and reinscribe these letters, a decision (probably) to go over them more than once in order to make their ‘romanness’ stand out. So at this point, the bodily, the conscious and the emotional become ‘visible’ – that is interpretable – together. The feelings that we imagine Lewental having as he retraced the characters are not ones that take over bodily gesture against the conscious mind, but rather can be interpreted in tandem with it.

Another member of the SK, Leyb Langfus, wrote of a number of moments where the shell of a Sonderkommando man cracks and he begins to cry: traumatic numbing replaced by a moment of feeling. This is one of a series of paragraph-long ‘details’ that Langfus recorded occurring on the threshold of the gas chamber:

Two Hungarian Jews asked one of the Sonderkommando ‘Should we say *viddui* [the deathbed confession]?’ He answered that they should. They then took out a bottle of spirits, drank *l’chaim* [a toast, literally ‘to life’] with great joy [*mit groys freyd*], then with all their might they urged the man from the Kommando to drink with them [*er zol mit zey mitrinken*]. He felt deeply ashamed [*tif farshemt*] and did not want to drink. They would not leave him be, ‘You must avenge our blood, you must live, so . . . *l’chaim!*’ and drank to him. ‘We understand you . . .’ He drank too, and was so deeply moved [*tif gerirt*] that he burst out sobbing terribly, he ran out into the great burning area and wept bitter tears for hours on end: ‘Comrades! Enough of burning Jews! Let us destroy everything and lay down our lives together [*mitgeyn af kidesh hashem!*]’

(Mark, 1977: 351, with reference to MS in Yad Vashem Archive)

Bauman’s comments on shame as an irrational, overwhelming and (in some ways) liberating feeling seem to speak to this event, as the man breaks down and sees the moral significance of what he is doing. But we also need to take into account the emotional strategy in play from the Hungarian Jews. Their joy is a performance: for themselves, probably for perpetrators, but also for the member of the SK himself. His feelings are called forth by their actions and by a technology for eliciting emotional expression (alcohol), but also managed: from being ashamed (*farshemt*), which closes him in on himself, to being moved (*gerirt*), which pushes him to expression and a call for action. And Langfus witnesses (assuming that he is, in fact, describing someone else) an emotional performance from the member of the SK too, one that does not simply take place in the depths of his body, but is acted out – and on – in his cry to resist. The two Hungarian Jews want the member of the SK to do something, but the way in which they communicate that desire suggests the need for it to take place through feeling something. That adds an element of unpredictability to the result. The SK man takes this feeling as a call not to live and take vengeance but to resist and die: drinking together (*mitrinken*) leads to a call to die together (*mitgeyn af kidesh hashem*). These are a set of ‘emotives’ (Reddy, 2001) or ‘emotional practices’ (Scheer, 2012), speech and bodily acts in which feelings are navigated, expressed, called into being, (mis)recognised

and changed, with unpredictable effects. Reddy argues that cognition and emotion are inseparable, and the feelings described in this passage are not separate from assessments of the situation and attempts to act upon it.

Why has Langfus chosen to include this story in his selection of details? They mostly seem to be bearing witness more to victims than to a crime. People sometimes seem to be offered for judgement – positive or negative – but at other times less clearly so. Langfus selects moments of high emotion as a way of communicating something to his reader: the moral quandary of the SK, or the suffering and resilience of victims. Or perhaps simply the emotion itself is the meaning of the event, the reason for its being recorded. Overall, then, what we see here is the importance of emotions: the need to perform emotions, to share and elicit emotions, to record emotions and perhaps even to connect to a future reader via emotions.

Zalman Gradowski's writing also seeks to connect with his readers emotionally, through a highly rhetorical prose style. But unlike Langfus's rather more cryptic purposes in recording particular incidents, Gradowski's aim in one lengthy prose piece ('The Separation') is clearly to explain the way in which some individuals of the SK could consent to others going to their deaths rather than resisting collectively:

The Rapportschreiber begins to call out the numbers of the comrades not registered for work. And it is remarkable to see how the mood gradually changes, how the general tension [*algemeyne shpanung*] dissipates. From general fear [*algemeyner shrek*] grows an individual fear. From the general trembling [*algemeynem tsiter*] have been freed, little by little, those who were one hundred percent sure their number would not be called. And then a great rift split our family. Little by little, invisibly, imperceptibly, the abyss [*tom*] widened between us and them. The strands which had bound us together began to show. The brotherly thread, the familial bond was broken, little by little, unfelt [*nit filendig*]. And all the weakness and nakedness of this being called man began to show. The survival instinct smoldering deep inside was transformed into an opiate [*opium*] which imperceptibly, invisibly took hold of the man, the comrade, the brother, and began to banish all fear and apprehension.

(Gradowski, 2017: 80 translation adapted)

This passage is clearly readable in the terms that Nikolaus Wachsmann uses, as evidence of 'a highly complex emotional life in Auschwitz, full of anguish and envy, pity, friendship and love' (2021: 48; see also Chare and Williams, 2016b). It describes an incident that would be easy to explain in the rational-calculative terms that form the top-line of Bauman's arguments. Gradowski's ambition, however, is to combine the two – in a way consonant with the emotional undertones of Bauman's writing. Gradowski shows how the feelings of the SK were managed by a process that worked to the SS's advantage, at the same time as expressing those emotions. The rhetorical figures and repetitions (and it does not matter whether

this strikes the reader as overwritten or not) give shape to emotions in line with both these aspects of his writing. His ambition does not stop there. The passage offers an analysis and an enactment not just of the ‘emotional community’ of the SK in Auschwitz, but also makes claims about human beings and about civilisation in general (Stone, 2013: 56), evidencing a desire to range widely over human experience, not so distant from that in Bauman’s own writing. And that closeness is not just intellectual. Gradowski was separated by only a few degrees from Bauman: as brother-in-law to the father-in-law of one of Bauman’s children.¹⁵

Conclusions

This chapter has offered a reading of *Modernity and the Holocaust* attuned to the points where emotions are shown to be significant, and more closely entwined with reason than is often claimed – both in Bauman’s book itself and by its interpreters. Drawing on these moments, I have revisited two victim groups that Bauman also discussed, examining their own accounts of themselves, produced from within ghettos and even at sites of extermination. In such accounts, emotions are clearly expressed, but in a complex relationship with the rational and calculative. At times this may simply be in the classic rhetorical relationship of *logos* and *pathos* working together to persuade an audience: as with Rumkowski’s speech (at least, as it is often read), or the actions of the Hungarian Jews calling forth the feelings of a member of the SK. But even at those points, perhaps, and certainly at others, persuasion is less important than making and communicating meaning, providing interpretations of events that are often said to defy sense at the same time as they are taken to exemplify reason in action. Here I would read Bauman’s points that the victims acted rationally and that their actions helped to define the nature of the Holocaust against their grain. Rather than seeing their rational actions as leading to their doom, I see at work in their own accounts a rationality that was improvisatory, attuned to feeling, that created moments of opportunity, at times for resistance, but certainly for offering their own characterisation of events and for ensuring that it was communicated. These opportunities were not just cracks in the system created by its own imperfect functioning, but were made by the victims themselves. And in that sense, by not allowing the Holocaust to be defined simply on Nazi perpetrators’ terms, they play a part in determining its nature.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to Jack Palmer, Dariusz Brzeziński and Christin Zühlke for their very helpful comments on earlier drafts of this chapter.

Notes

- 1 On how well Bauman’s memory serves these stories, and further discussion of both Preface and Afterthought, see Chapter 10 in this collection.

- 2 Compare the critique of Bauman offered by Andrzej Walicki: ‘the holocaust was not a problem of soulless modern bureaucracy. It involved genuine hatred, genuine cultural repulsion. . . . Modern bureaucracy could mobilize and employ these feelings but could not create them’ (cited in Moses, 2008: 174). See also Brudholm and Johansen 2018 (especially pp. 83–86) for a critique of Bauman’s conceptualisation of hatred.
- 3 Bauman’s lumping together of emotion words in this sentence suggests an impish and rather refreshing rejection of the overly fine distinctions in emotional terminology on which some scholars insist. I follow it in not trying to impose a system of differences on the terms that he uses. See also Rosenwein 2008 (pp. 3–5) on the elasticity of emotional terms.
- 4 While Jacobsen (2019) describes ambivalence as a meta-emotion for Bauman – at least in his 1990s work – which he ‘treats it in a quite unemotional manner’ (p. 104), it is clearly framed in terms of feelings.
- 5 For other readings of Bauman that focus on his writerliness, see Hell 2010, Davis 2013 and Cheyette 2020. The contrast I draw between ‘writing’ and ‘theory’ does seem to me to reflect what is happening in *Modernity and the Holocaust*, but it is starker and perhaps cruder than that proposed, e.g., by Davis 2020.
- 6 ‘The very widespread indifference, the ease with which people dissociated themselves from the Jews and their fate, was certainly in part a result of a vague feeling that, even if there were no Elders of Zion, Jews were somehow uncanny and dangerous. And ironically enough, this feeling grew stronger as the persecution of the Jews grew worse.’ (Cohn, 1967: 267). Note that Bauman also quotes the first of these sentences earlier in the book (MH: 32).
- 7 In his discussion of Milgram’s experiments, Bauman notes that other factors not present in the experiment would make participation in harming victims more likely, including ‘solidarity and a feeling of mutual duty (the “I cannot let him down” feeling)’ (MH: 164). This in fact anticipated very similar discussion of Milgram from Christopher Browning, and later (nuancing rather than disputing Browning’s point) Harald Welzer’s reading of a weeping Major Trapp as calling forth his men’s willingness to carry out a mass shooting (Welzer, 2005: 114; see also Kühl, 2016: 20).
- 8 Allen explicitly mentions Bauman, although his primary target is Hannah Arendt.
- 9 For a recent attempt at a comprehensive explanation of victim behaviour that only makes passing reference to emotions, see Finkel 2017.
- 10 Brudholm and Johansen (2018) and Sánchez and Zahavi (2018) make similar arguments, albeit by distancing themselves from Bauman’s treatment of emotions. Whereas the former essay discusses perpetrators and the latter survivors, I am focusing here on the feelings of victims *during* the Holocaust.
- 11 Although see O’Kane 1997, as well as Chapters 4 and 5 in this collection.
- 12 At these points, Bauman’s position seems quite close to that of Dan Diner (2000), who discusses the Jewish Councils’ rational attempts to understand what he calls the counter-rational project of the Final Solution.
- 13 Of course, that meaning is not one that all historians have accepted. Dan Michman (2004), for example, seeks to displace the centrality of the *Judenältesten* and to question their status as community ‘leaders’.
- 14 The ellipses in this passage indicate damage caused to the manuscript by being buried in the ground. See Chare and Williams 2016a.
- 15 Bauman’s daughter Anna married Leon Sfar, the son of Dovid Sfar. Dovid Sfar’s first wife Zisel was the sister of Sonia Zlotojablko, who married Zalman Gradowski. Zisel, Sonia and Zalman were murdered in Auschwitz (Sfar, 1977; Nalewajko-Kulikow, 2009: 83, 108n3; Rudoren, 2012). As with the other writers of the Sonderkommando, Gradowski is chiefly known through the manuscripts discovered after his death, but see Chare and Williams 2016a (62–64) for some gleanings of biographical details.

Bibliography

- Albrow, M. 2002. *Do Organizations Have Feelings?* London: Routledge.
- Allen, M. T. 2005. Grey-Collar Worker: Organisation Theory in Holocaust Studies. *Holocaust Studies*, 11 (1), 27–54.
- Ball, K. 2008. *Disciplining the Holocaust*. New York: SUNY.
- Barbalet, J. M. 2000. *Beruf*, Rationality and Emotion in Max Weber's Sociology. *Archives Européennes de Sociologie*, 41 (2), 329–351.
- Bauman, Z. 1987. *Legislators and Interpreters*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Bauman, Z. 1991. *Modernity and Ambivalence*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Bauman, Z. 1993. *Postmodern Ethics*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- Bauman, Z. 1995. *Life in Fragments: Essays in Postmodern Morality*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Best, S. 2014. Agency and Structure in Zygmunt Bauman's *Modernity and the Holocaust*. *Irish Journal of Sociology*, 22 (1), 67–87. doi:10.7227/IJS.22.1.5
- Bloom, S. 1949a. Dictator of the Lodz Ghetto: The Strange History of Mordechai Chaim Rumkowski. *Commentary*, 7, 111–122.
- Bloom, S. 1949b. Dictature au ghetto: Le gouvernement de Chaim Rumkowski à Lodz. *Les Temps Modernes*, 39, 96–121.
- Browning, C. 1998. *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland*, revised edition. London: Penguin.
- Brudholm, T., and Johansen, B. 2018. Pondering Hatred. In T. Brudholm and J. Lang (eds.) *Emotions and Mass Atrocity: Philosophical and Theoretical Explanations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 81–103.
- Chare, N., and Williams, D. 2016a. *Matters of Testimony: Interpreting the Scrolls of Auschwitz*. New York: Berghahn Books.
- Chare, N., and Williams, D. 2016b. Questions of Filiation: The Scrolls of Auschwitz and *Son of Saul*. *Mémoires en jeu/Memories at stake*, 2, 63–72.
- Cheyette, B. 2020. Zygmunt Bauman's Window: From Jews to Strangers and Back Again. *Thesis Eleven*, 156 (1), 27–44. doi:10.1177/0725513619898287
- Cohn, N. 1967. *Warrant for Genocide: The Myth of the Jewish world-conspiracy and the Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. London: Eyre & Spottiswoode.
- Confino, A. 2014. *A World Without Jews: The Nazi Imagination from Persecution to Genocide*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Davis, M. (ed.). 2013. *Liquid Sociology: Metaphor in Zygmunt Bauman's Analysis of Modernity*. Farnham: Ashgate.
- Davis, M. 2020. Hermeneutics *Contra* Fundamentalism: Zygmunt Bauman's Method for Thinking in Dark Times. *Thesis Eleven*, 156 (1), 27–44. doi:10.1177/0725513619898285
- Diner, D. 2000. *Beyond the Conceivable: Studies on Germany, Nazism, and the Holocaust*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Dixon, T. 2003. *From Passions to Emotions: The Creation of a Secular Psychological Category*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Du Gay, P. 2000. *In Praise of Bureaucracy: Weber, Organization, Ethics*. London: Sage.
- Dworzecki, M. 1948. *Yerusholayim diLite in kamfun unkum*. Paris: Folks-Farband.
- Edgebø, H. 2012. 'With a Heavy Heart': Ethics, Emotions and Rationality in Norwegian Immigration Administration. *Sociology*, 47 (2), 301–317. doi:10.1177/0038038512437895
- Finkel, E. 2017. *Ordinary Jews: Choice and Survival During the Holocaust*. Princeton: Princeton UP.
- Flaws, J. 2021. Sensory Witnessing at Treblinka. *The Journal of Holocaust Research*, 35 (1), 41–65. doi:10.1080/25785648.2020.1858583

- Friedman, P. 1980. *Roads to Extinction: Essays on the Holocaust*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America.
- Gabbai, D. 1996. *Interview with Carol Stulberg*. USC Shoah Foundation. Interview Code 142.
- Garstenauer, T. 2018. 'Beamtengefühl': Soziale Funktionen von Emotionen im österreichischen Staatsdienst der Zwischenkriegszeit. *Administory*, 3, 61–79. doi:10.2478/ADHI-2018-0039
- Gerlach, C. 2018. Echoes of Persecution: Sounds in Early Post-liberation Jewish Memories. *Holocaust Studies*, 24 (1), 1–25. doi:10.1080/17504902.2017.1319247
- Goldberg, A. 2017. *Trauma in First Person: Diary Writing During the Holocaust*. Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.
- Goldhagen, D. 1997. *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*. New York: Vintage.
- Goodlet, K. W. 2012. Rethinking *Modernity and the Holocaust*: The Application of Zygmunt Bauman's Thesis to the Jewish Council of Lodz, 1940–1944. *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 25 (3), 504–530. doi:10.1111/j.1467-6443.2012.01423 x
- Gradowski, Z. 1977. *In harts fun gehenem*. Jerusalem: Wolnerman.
- Gradowski, Z. 2017. *From the Heart of Hell*, trans. Barry Smerin and Janina Wurbs. Oświęcim: Auschwitz Museum.
- Haynes, S. 2002. Ordinary Masculinity: Gender Analysis and Holocaust Scholarship. *Journal of Men's Studies*, 10 (2), 143–163.
- Heins, V. 2007. Reasons of the Heart: Weber and Arendt on Emotion in Politics. *European Legacy*, 12 (6), 715–728. doi:10.1080/10848770701565064
- Hell, J. 2010. Modernity and the Holocaust, or, Listening to Eurydice. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 27 (6), 125–154. doi:10.1177/0263276410382026
- Hookway, N. 2017. Zygmunt Bauman's Moral Saint: Reclaiming Self in the Sociology of Morality. *Acta Sociologica*, 60 (4), 358–367. doi:10.1177/0001699316688947
- Jacobsen, M. H. 2019. Liquid-modern Emotions: Exploring Zygmunt Bauman's Contribution to the Sociology of Emotions. *Emotions and Society*, 1 (1), 99–116. doi:10.1332/263168919X15580836411878
- Kühl, S. 2016. *Ordinary Organisations: Why Normal Men Carried Out the Holocaust*, trans. Jessica Spengler. Cambridge: Polity.
- Kushner, T. 2006. Holocaust Testimony, Ethics, and the Problem of Representation. *Poetics Today*, 27 (2), 275–295.
- Laub, D. 1992. An Event Without a Witness: Truth, Testimony and Survival. In S. Felman and D. Laub (eds.) *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis and History*. New York: Routledge, 75–92.
- Levi, P. 1988. *The Drowned and the Saved*, trans. Raymond Rosenthal. London: Abacus.
- Leys, R. 2017. *The Ascent of Affect: Genealogy and Critique*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Löw, A. 2009. *Juden im Getto Litzmannstadt: Lebensbedingungen, Selbstwahrnehmung, Verhalten*, 2nd edition. Göttingen: Wallstein.
- Mark, B. 1977. *Megiles Oyshvits*. Tel Aviv: Yisroel-Bukh.
- Michman, D. 2004. Jewish Leadership. In D. Stone (ed.) *Extremis. Historiography of the Holocaust*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 319–340.
- Moses, D. 2008. Genocide and Modernity. In D. Stone (ed.) *The Historiography of Genocide*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 156–193.
- Nalewajko-Kulikow, J. 2009. *Obywatel Jidyszlandu: Rzecz o żydowskich komunistach w Polsce*. Warsaw: Neriton.

- Nirnberg, Y. 1948. Di geshikhte fun lodzher geto. In *In di yorn fun yidishn khurbn: Di shtim fun untererdishn bund*. New York: Undzer tsayt, 211–294.
- Nussbaum, M. 2001. *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- O’Kane, R. 1997. Modernity, the Holocaust and Politics. *Economy and Society*, 26 (1), 43–61. doi:10.1080/03085149700000003
- Reddy, W. 2001. *The Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of Emotions*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Rosenwein, B. 2006. *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Rudoren, J. 2012. A Champion for the Displaced in Israel. *New York Times*, 27 July. Available at: www.nytimes.com/2012/07/28/world/middleeast/in-israel-michael-sfard-fights-for-the-displaced.html
- Sánchez, A., and Zahavi, D. 2018. Unraveling the Meaning of Survivor Shame. In T. Brudholm and J. Lang (eds.) *Emotions and Mass Atrocity: Philosophical and Theoretical Explanations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 162–184.
- Scheer, M. 2012. Are Emotions a Kind of Practice (And is That What Makes Them Have a History)? A Bourdieuan Approach to Understanding Emotion. *History and Theory*, 51, 193–220. doi:10.1111/j.1468-2303.2012.00621.x
- Sfard, D. 1977. Eynike zikhroynes vegn Zalman Gradowski. In Zalman Gradowski, *In harts fun gehenem*. Jerusalem: Wolnerman, 6–8.
- Singer, O. 2002. “Im Eilschritt durch den Gettotag . . .” *Reportagen und Essays aus dem Getto Lodz*, ed. Sascha Feuchert, Erwin Leibfried, Jörg Riecke, et al. Berlin: Philo Verlagsgesellschaft.
- Solomon, R. 1976. *The Passions: Emotions and the Meaning of Life*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press.
- Stone, D. 2010. *Histories of the Holocaust*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Stone, D. 2013. *The Holocaust, Fascism and Memory: Essays in the History of Ideas*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Trunk, I. 1962. *Lodzher geto: A historishe un sotsyologishe shtudye mit dokumentn, tableles un mape*. New York: YIVO.
- Trunk, I. 1972. *Judenrat: The Jewish Councils in Eastern Europe under Nazi Occupation*, trans. Chaim Finkelstein with Jacob Flynn and Jacob Robinson. New York: Macmillan.
- Vetlesen, A. J. 1993. Why Does Proximity Make a Moral Difference? Coming to Terms with a Lesson Learned from the Holocaust. *Praxis International*, 12 (4), 371–386.
- Wachsmann, N. 2021. Lived Experience and the Holocaust: Spaces, Senses and Emotions in Auschwitz. *Journal of the British Academy*, 9, 27–58.
- Welzer, H. 2005. *Täter: Wie aus ganz normalen Menschen Massenmörder werden*. Frankfurt: Fischer.
- Zelkowitz, J. 2015. In Those Nightmarish Days, trans. D. Suchoff. In S. Kassow and D. Suchoff (eds.) *In Those Nightmarish Days: The Ghetto Reportage of Peretz Opoczynski and Josef Zelkowitz*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

4 Warsaw Jews in the face of the Holocaust

‘Trajectory’ as the key concept in understanding victims’ behaviour

Maria Ferenc

In this chapter, I apply a sociological concept of ‘trajectory’ coined by Anselm Strauss and further developed by Gerhard Riemann and Fritz Schütze into a scholarly analysis of the behaviour of Shoah victims. I will also demonstrate how this concept can respond to some of the issues regarding soliciting, co-operation and resistance of the Holocaust victims that Zygmunt Bauman had raised in his classic work, *Modernity and the Holocaust*. This text demonstrates how empirical, historical data regarding the behaviour of the Holocaust victims (in this case, residents of the Warsaw ghetto) may shed new light and inspire to reformulate Bauman’s argument.

The powerlessness of the Jewish victims in the face of Nazi terror is a complicated subject. For various ethical and political reasons, scholars who recently have been investigating the life of Jews during the war have focused on their agency rather than helplessness. The growing interest in hiding and survival strategies (see, for example, Engelking and Grabowski, 2018), as well as the concept of *amidah* – a spiritual and everyday resistance to the Nazi occupation, are some good examples of such an approach (Rozett, 2004). On the other hand, there is plenty of valuable research focusing on the perpetrators as well as famous texts, including Bauman’s *Modernity and the Holocaust*, that present victims as passive or even to some extent cooperative with their oppressors.

This chapter investigates the intellectual consequences of focusing on the suffering of individuals and groups who no longer have full control of their lives. The notion of ‘trajectory’ allows acknowledging the fact that powerful ‘outer forces’ influence lives and fates of individuals who no longer understand the world they live in, without believing them to be ‘indifferent’, ‘passive’ on one hand, nor ‘complicit’ on the other. The concept of ‘trajectory’ allows redefining our understanding of power, agency, resistance and co-operation during the Holocaust while enabling additional interpretations to those proposed by Bauman in that respect.

Bauman’s view on victims and its shortcomings

Modernity and the Holocaust is primarily devoted to creating a multilayered, sociological conceptualisation that aims to grasp the Holocaust as a whole and to explain its interconnectedness to modernity. At the same time, Bauman subjected

various aspects of the Shoah (mechanisms of racism and genocide in general and the Holocaust in particular; roles and psychological positions of victims, perpetrators and bystanders; bureaucratic realm of the genocide; definition of modernity in which the Holocaust had happened, etc.) that need to be taken into consideration while reinterpreting the complex history of the Jewish genocide to a common line of understanding. In other words, it is the global, holistic interpretation (and not, for example, new research or accuracy to the complexity of history) of the Holocaust as the modern event that is a primary rule in Bauman's book. The approach taken had to result therefore in omissions and inaccuracies, which do not render Bauman's arguments irrelevant.

On the other hand, some of Bauman's statements deserve critique and reconceptualisation that would include and respond to still-growing empirical data regarding the history of the Holocaust as well as broaden the theoretical basis of the sociologist's argument. The goal of this chapter is to propose a new perspective on some of the issues raised by Bauman and to combine his perspective with a more complex understanding of power and agency during the Holocaust.

Let us look closer at Bauman's representation and view of the Holocaust victims' behaviour. It is one of the main themes of this classic book that demonstrates how important this particular issue was for sociologists and philosophers discussing the Holocaust since Hannah Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem*. One of the main sources of controversy surrounding the latter book was Arendt's argument regarding *Judenräte* and their organisational participation in the extermination of their people (Arendt, 2006; Sacks, 2013: 128) that springs out from her interpretation of Raul Hilberg's work. Hilberg too saw *Judenräte* as composed of those Jews who 'had staked everything on a course of complete cooperation with the German administration' (2003: 521). As I will demonstrate, Bauman replicates this argument and broadens it to include the behaviour of ordinary Jews whose behaviour he had categorised as 'co-operation'. Arendt had painted a portrait of Eichmann as a cold-hearted bureaucrat, a clerk, and her description of the war criminal rhymes surprisingly well with Bauman's vision of the Holocaust as the modern event. 'The nature of every bureaucracy is to make functionaries and mere cogs in the administrative machinery out of men, and thus to dehumanize them', wrote Arendt (2006: 289). Bauman adds that the bureaucracy dehumanises also 'objects of bureaucratic operation' (MH: 102) (in case of the Holocaust, Jewish victims), which makes it much easier to achieve the genocidal goal as only humans are potential 'objects of ethical propositions' (MH: 103). He had also interpreted Arendt's argument along these lines by underlining that it had raised controversies (or, in his words, 'was shouted down'), because the philosopher dared to suggest that 'victims of an inhuman regime might have lost some of their humanity on the road to perdition' (MH: x). In other words, in Arendt's and Bauman's view, both perpetrators and victims are subjected to 'progressively dehumanizing impact' (MH: xiii) of modernity and 'the pattern of authority' (MH: xiii-xiv) that it entails. It should be underlined that a key element of Bauman's definition of modernity is 'the instrumental rationality' rather than its connection to the Enlightenment (Goldberg, 2020: 70).

Indeed, Jews were part of the chain of command subjected to the Nazis – just like other citizens living in the German-occupied countries. By suggesting that there was something special about Jewish behaviour in relation to German authorities (which is an inevitable consequence of the fact that he discusses only Jewish behaviour), Bauman collapses into stating that Jews co-operated with the Germans in their own destruction and suggests that this behaviour was somehow unique. Because of that Bauman's penetrative observations regarding the connection between the shape of power and authority in the modern state and their impact on the functioning of the society and behaviour of people subjected to the totalitarian power lose their general claim. Surprisingly, though it seems to be a logical consequence of his argument regarding the relationship between modernity and the Holocaust (or a genocide), Bauman had not concluded that any other minority group defined as 'morally invisible' (MH: 24) would, under comparable circumstances, have behaved in a similar way to the Jews. He did observe mechanisms that led to the isolation of the Jews before and during the Holocaust and indicated social and political consequences of 'sealing off' the entire category of people. The observation that for the Jews Nazi power was the only other agent, however legitimate, does not lead him to the obvious conclusion that as a result of 'sealing off' Jewish agency was diminished (if not minimalised) (MH: 122–129). Quite the contrary, Bauman wrote: 'at all stages of the Holocaust, therefore, the victims were confronted with a choice' (MH: 130) and failed to see how much their agency was reduced. Even though Bauman stressed that the choice was illusionary, 'pre-empted by the secret decision of physical destruction', he still used the word which distorted the accurate description of the situation (MH: 130).

At the beginning of chapter 5 entitled 'Soliciting the Co-operation of the Victims', the most important part of the book devoted to the victims, Bauman framed their behaviour as 'co-operation' and stressed that it enabled the full realisation of the Nazi plan of extermination. In his opinion, it was massive collaboration and cooperation (which was 'rational') that rendered individual cases of disobedience 'ineffective' (MH: 118, 135). This is a strong statement and Bauman does not provide much proof to support it. Quite the contrary, he equals obedience with cooperation and seems to be neglecting historical examples that may contradict his narrative – for example, the Warsaw ghetto uprising, which required much preparation and enormous financial effort and when all those who felt fit for a fight stood against Germans, Jews fought (and quite inevitably, lost their battle) with no more than 1,500 soldiers on the other side (Engelking and Leociak, 2013: 796). Moreover, Bauman seems to neglect the abundance of wartime initiatives that can be labelled as 'civil resistance' (activities of the Jewish underground in the ghetto such as publishing clandestine press, continuation of the political life, projects for gathering of historical documentation) (see, for example, Kassow, 2007) by defining disobedience in the narrow sense, as the acts of open defiance against Germans. Here, once again, Bauman followed Raul Hilberg's footsteps – the famous historian believed resistance to be an entirely strange concept to Jewish history (Patt, 2021: 2). Bryan Cheyette believes that at the heart of *Modernity and the Holocaust* lies the tension between the general (sociology) and the

particular (history) (2020: 75) – maybe this is the reason why so often Bauman’s narrative is subjected to the logic of requiring just one example that is enough to illustrate his hypothesis (while, as I have demonstrated earlier, counterexamples were neglected), which allowed broad generalisations.

Bauman is, however, not entirely consistent in relation to the issue of ‘resistance’. In the preface to *Modernity and the Holocaust*, he clearly states that ‘victims went to the slaughter because they were no match to the powerful and heavily armed enemy’ (MH: vii), which suggests that it is the monopoly of violence and, more generally, the division of power within the modern state that is to blame for the lack of possibility of organising efficient defiance. Bauman noticed that occasionally ‘the proper frame of reference and comparison seems to be provided by the “normal” exercise of power in the running of modern society, rather than by the blood-soaked history of spectacular genocidal violence’ (MH: 119) and yet, in other cases, including the previously mentioned chapter, he argued that the cooperation of the victims was ‘forthcoming’ and large-scaled which made the complex process of mass-murder smoother, easier, more efficient and less costly (MH: 118). He seems to be turning a blind eye to the fact that words such as ‘co-operation’ imply some symmetry of knowledge or comparability of positions of perpetrators and victims. In other words, Bauman ignores the fact the Jews did not know what fate Nazis envisioned for them and, for a long time, did not see their fate during the Second World War as something unique, but rather typical of anti-Jewish violence regularly repeating in the history of the nation (Ferenc-Piotrowska, 2017: 302, 324). Bauman does not seem to acknowledge another important aspect of armed resistance during the Holocaust that his wife, Janina, observed so acutely in her own memoirs from the Warsaw ghetto – on 2 November 1942, she wrote: ‘They say “fight”. Yes, of course, it’s the only way, though there won’t be much chance of survival if we do’ (1986: 84). She and her family survived on the ‘Aryan’ side of Warsaw, through escape rather than confrontation.

On the other hand, Bauman did not stick to this argument throughout the book and his text confronts us with major inconsistencies in relation to how Bauman perceives behaviour of the victims. For example, he observes that Nazis ‘could arrange the rules and the stakes in such a fashion that each rational step would deepen the helplessness of their prospective victims and bring them an inch or two nearer to their ultimate destruction’ (MH: 129). In this and few other fragments, the sociologist points to the subordination to the authority and deception of the victims as the foundations of Nazi power. Further, he wrote: ‘keeping the nature of the Final Solution secret was an integral and crucial part of the Nazi design. . . . The secret was kept until, literally, the last moment’ (MH: 129). He also showed that bureaucratically organised power was able to induce its subjects to behave in a desired way, even though it was at odds with their best interests (MH: 122).

Yet, surprisingly, in most cases, Bauman chose to frame the victim’s behaviour as ‘co-operation’, rather than define it in reference to this deception. In other words, he equalised ‘co-operation’ with the fact that victims, lacking the elementary knowledge, did behave as Nazis expected and predicted them to do (MH: 129–130). This may lead us to the conclusion that he ascribed more agency and

control (and therefore, responsibility) to the victims than they truly had, which may rise serious ethical doubts concerning his line of reasoning. This issue becomes even more disturbing if we follow the argument of Shaun Best, who criticised Bauman for ‘undervaluing of human agency’, especially of the perpetrators and for shifting the responsibility for the genocide to the modern state (Best, 2014: 67–68). As Zoe Waxman has observed, Arendt had done a similar thing when writing about Eichmann, depicted rather as a ‘model Third Reich citizen’ than a personally culpable individual (Waxman, 2009: 96, 104).

This statement is strikingly similar to the famous wording that ‘Jews went like sheep to slaughter’ – the argument first raised already during the war, for example, by the members of the Jewish elites in the Warsaw ghetto in relation to the behaviour of the ordinary people during the deportations. My research suggests that those who formulated this kind of statements, due to their involvement in the underground movement, had significantly bigger and more reliable knowledge on the extermination of the Jews and its massive character than ordinary inhabitants of the ghetto. Elite’s discontent with the behaviour of the people was rooted in the assumed (yet non-existent) symmetry of knowledge between the various strata of the ghetto society. It is worth noting that this approach (and critique of the Jewish ‘co-operation’ with the Nazis during the deportations) was controversial among clandestine political activists in the Warsaw ghetto, some of whom feared that armed resistance may cause more people to be killed as a result of applying collective responsibility rule. It was only in 1943 when majority of Warsaw ghetto residents were already deported to their deaths and remaining inhabitants of the Jewish district had no doubts that Nazis were planning to kill all the Jews, when the idea of the armed resistance received almost unanimous support (Engelking and Leociak, 2013: 767–810). Shifting the responsibility for not seeing the totality of the Holocaust (which to us seems to be its basic, key characteristic) to the victims is a trap of the retroactive gaze that Bauman did not manage to avoid. It is also visible in those fragments of *Modernity and the Holocaust* where he notes how difficult it was for the Jews to generalise the information regarding the persecution of other Jewish communities (MH: 132) – he fails to see the similarity of social and psychological mechanism in those two situations. The main reason for that is, again, his assumption that the Jews knew much more about the Holocaust as it was happening than they in fact did. Bauman wrote: ‘preoccupied with the “save what you can” strategy, the future victims lost from sight, if only temporarily, the awesome identity of imminent fate’ (MH: 133).

Shaun Best argues that Bauman’s work on the Holocaust, as well as his later writings on liquid modernity, undervalue ‘human agency in the face of external forces’ (Best, 2014: 67). I agree with his argument to a certain point, but this text aims to point out that most of all, Bauman did not succeed in representing the external forces that exercise so much pressure on the individual biographies. Bauman took into consideration bureaucracy and Nazi-subjected administration but still argued that victims had some choice and therefore defined their behaviour as ‘co-operation’. This becomes even more problematic when one remembers that the book that had inspired Bauman’s reflections on the Holocaust was the

memoir of survival of his wife Janina, who survived and escaped the Warsaw ghetto (Chayette, 2020: 69, 74).

Introducing the notion of ‘trajectory’ allows us to observe that these were in fact many interconnected processes or phenomena which have been put in motion by the Nazis but were neither envisioned nor totally controlled by them. In other words, Bauman functionalist interpretation of the Holocaust led him to undermine the role of chaos in the experience of the Nazi victims and to give too much weight to factors such as bureaucracy and planning. Janina Bauman’s book, who lived in the Warsaw ghetto as a young girl, is, in fact, a painful picture of ‘trajectory’ – she felt helpless, lost in the situation, almost paralysed by the tragic events that surrounded her. She constantly missed her late father and fantasised that he would have known what to do, how to survive. She felt that her survival was a result of a sequence of improvised decisions, luck, help of others (1986).

In the next part of the chapter, I will propose a different approach to several issues regarding the victims that Bauman had touched upon. My main goal will be to propose a theoretical frame of reference that will more accurately represent the experiences and grassroots perspectives of the Jews without ascribing them more agency, responsibility or knowledge than they had. I believe that introducing the sociological concept of ‘trajectory’ can bring illuminative insight into those issues.

What is a ‘trajectory’?

The notion of ‘trajectory’ is particularly useful in analysing situations in which individuals lose control of their lives and when, in response to that, they experience strong, negative emotions and suffering. According to Gerhard Riemann and Fritz Schütze, uncertainty and incomprehension of the processes that are causing a person to suffer are key components of ‘trajectory’. The forces behind individual suffering remain unknown and inconceivable and a person finds it hard to adequately react to them because (s)he is experiencing the reality in an increasingly chaotic way which is reducing her sense of agency (Riemann and Schütze, 1991). The events become unpredictable, uncontrollable and individuals in the trajectory process do feel as if they were ‘driven’ or ‘pushed’ by overwhelming and incomprehensible phenomena and are less and less capable of active behaviour. As a result, they rather experience than act, become objects rather than subjects (Riemann and Schütze, 1991; Rokuszewska-Pawełek, 2002: 71, 76; Schütze, 1997: 21–22).

The notion of ‘trajectory’ was first applied to the analysis of cases of terminally ill, but later broadened as researchers observed that it allows grasping processes of suffering and its impact on an individual’s identity. Those who suffer feel trapped, isolated, in a way imprisoned in their fate which they are no longer able to control (Schütze, 1997: 21–22; Riemann and Schütze, 1991: 333). These feelings may be accompanied by ‘ongoing sensations of becoming strange to oneself’ which leads to a transformation of one’s definition of their identity (Riemann and Schütze, 1991: 343).

Individuals who experience ‘trajectorial processes’ can feel powerless, but still it does not make them passive but rather overwhelmed or trapped. Schütze argued that the chaotic experience of suffering can be so deep as to provoke fear and despair of the individuals that, in consequence, causes them to surrender to inevitable fate. Considerations regarding the suffering that are rooted in the theoretical framework of ‘trajectory’ take into consideration the experiences of the suffering people which are crucial for understanding their processes (Schütze, 1997: 12–13). The sociologist points also to the loneliness and isolation of the people who are struggling with the trajectorial processes and keep experiencing the hopelessness of their efforts to overcome the situation (19–20). It is the overwhelming, trapping situation that defines the reactions of those subjected to its influence who are no longer capable to behave actively (‘one feels that one is driven’ or ‘conditioned’; Riemann and Schütze, 1991: 337; 342), only respond to the situation imposed on them (Schütze, 1997: 21, 25). Riemann and Schütze note as well that the chaos, intrinsic to a trajectory, is constantly accumulating and cannot be easily overcome (1991: 348).

Schütze also introduces the concept of ‘collective trajectory’ that may influence and strengthen the mechanism of the trajectory experienced by individuals (1997: 34–38). Usually they emerge during wars, natural disasters or the destruction of the community, which translate into chaos, crumbling of expectations and inability to plan ahead (Riemann and Schütze, 1991: 343, 355). Schütze extensively described the individual trajectory of a man named Hermann, who struggled with personal tragedies, but as a German soldier during the Second World War participated in the collective trajectory of the German nation. What is interesting and worth noting is that Schütze underlines that the fact that Hermann was subjected to ‘powerful external forces’ that pushed and to a certain point governed his life, does not mean he wasn’t co-responsible for the crimes and massacres committed by the state he was a citizen of (1997: 43). In other words, even though ‘trajectory’ encompasses human frailty, suffering and losing control of one’s life in the face of the ‘external forces’, it does not imply that individuals are completely passive in this process. Using this concept allows us to see problems posed by Bauman from a different angle – also because it refers to a different school in sociology, originating from Chicago tradition that is more focused on human experiences and allows researchers to demonstrate ‘a sensibility to the suffering of the people whose life circumstances were being studied’ (Riemann and Schütze, 1991: 335).

‘Trajectory’, behaviour and agency of the Holocaust victims

As a sociologist and a social historian dealing mostly with victims’ perspectives on the Holocaust, I argue that introducing the notion of ‘trajectory’ into the analysis of mentalities of Holocaust victims allows a deeper understanding of their ‘powerlessness’ in the face of ‘external powers’ (or ‘powerful events’; Riemann and Schütze, 1991: 342) that had started to delineate the borders – not only physical but most of all psychological and social – within which they were confined to function. It also enables to frame various reactions of the ghetto inhabitants

to the information about the extermination of the Jews (including negotiations and explanations regarding the news on the Holocaust) as a part of a discursive process in which victims are struggling to understand their trajectory and current course of their lives.

In my research, I have looked closely at the sources of information from the outside world circulating in the Warsaw ghetto. The social process of news interpretation was no less important. One of the most important research questions concerned reactions of ghetto's inhabitants to the first news about executions of Jews in other towns and about death camps. What were psychological and social mechanisms that were triggered by such information and by the premonition of the Holocaust?

I have analysed social and psychological mechanisms of coping with such news and the process of its social negotiation. The most important phenomenon I have identified was 'dilution' (along with the suppression, obstruction and familiarisation) of knowledge regarding the Holocaust among ordinary people. Life in the shadow of death required transformation of previously existing mechanisms allowing to push aside the thought of one's and one's family's death. For the purpose of this chapter, I have narrowed down the description of the case to the period of the first liquidation of the Warsaw ghetto (July–September 1942), when the knowledge of the extermination was gradually emerging among the ordinary inhabitants of the Warsaw ghetto (Ferenc-Piotrowska, 2018; Ferenc, 2021).

The deportation of Jews from the Warsaw ghetto started on 22 July 1942 – the transports were allegedly sent 'to the East'. German officials were doing a lot to convince the Jews of Warsaw that they indeed were going to be deported to the East for work. Before the deportation from Warsaw started, rumours and news about executions and deportation from other towns had reached Warsaw. On 23rd July, the chairman of Warsaw *Judenrat*, Adam Czerniaków, had committed suicide. His death gathered a lot of attention and was widely commented and interpreted by the inhabitants of the ghetto. It was seen as a symbolic act, a protest or a warning. It was certain that was not a good omen, but some people read it as a sort of public statement that he could not openly give about the murderous character of the deportation (Dimant, 2001: 45).¹ Despite the rumours, the fate of the deported remained unknown to those who were still in the ghetto for the first few weeks of the action. The inhabitants of the Warsaw ghetto sought information that would allow them to learn about their future fate, they were trying to decipher knowledge concealed from them and confront it with the official explanations presented by the Nazis. To calm people down and to encourage them to voluntarily present themselves for the deportation, there was another order issued on 29th July. Volunteers were promised to receive 3 kg of bread and 1 kg of marmalade. On 30th July, among 6,430 deportees, there were some 1,500 volunteers; on 3rd August, there were 3,000 volunteers. Mietek Pachter wrote in his memoir from the ghetto that people were so desperate and hungry that some of them calculated that 'if Germans are giving bread and marmalade, it means they are not going to do us any harm – if they had such a plan, they would not give us bread, but rather catch us' (Pachter, 2015: 109). Others were suspicious and kept searching for

information regarding the fate of deportees. Some paid Polish railway workers to find out what happened to them.

Between September 1939 and July 1942, Warsaw Jews had experienced 2.5 years of persecution, terror, fear and loss. During the first stages of the occupation, they had experienced restrictions of their rights, freedom of movement and business. Because of hunger and diseases widespread in the ghetto, many had lost family members, friends and other members of the pre-war communities they used to belong to – their social and private worlds were shattered. Throughout the months preceding the deportation from Warsaw, they had heard rumours or incomplete news about killings and deportations from other ghettos in occupied Poland and they found that news to be terrifying. Most of them, however, did not see the pattern of systematic extermination in those pieces of news though. It was incomplete, chaotic and seemed exaggerated (Ferenc-Piotrowska, 2017, 2018).

Marek Stok remembered that the residents of the Warsaw ghetto were worried about the terrible news from Vilnius but comforted themselves by saying that it was impossible for such a thing to happen in Warsaw.² Stanisław Gombiński, who had heard about the liquidation of the Jewish communities in Słonim, Równe, Baranowicze, Wilno and Białystok, wrote that the rumours about the events in those locations were supplemented with the following critical comment: ‘even if [this is true] – that is the Kresy, that is the East and not the General Government’ (Gombiński, 2010: 65). This approach allowed the inhabitants of the Warsaw ghetto to mentally distance themselves from the news coming from the East. However, what appears to be symptomatic is the fact that none of the aforementioned authors questioned the veracity of the information received from the Kresy and that the social processes of negotiation of the importance of those reports focused not so much on their credibility as on the lack of analogy between the situation of Jews in Warsaw and in the Kresy.³

On 22 July 1942, when the deportation order was posted on ghetto walls, people started to panic,⁴ some thought that ‘they were lost’ (Obrembski, 2017: 93), prices of food immediately went high, shops had been closed (Binem Motyl, 2011: 105–106; Obrembski, 2017: 95). At the same time, people in the streets were discussing what the orders might have meant and what they should do about it.⁵ Many people did not believe that the deportees would be working in the East, they were afraid of the long journey, so even though the real direction of the transport remained unknown, they decided to do their best to avoid deportation.⁶ Others thought that it might be true and that the deportation would reduce the number of people suffering from hunger, poverty and homelessness – that it may solve some of the gravest problems of the Warsaw ghetto community.⁷ The situation was so dramatic that some thought that any other place might be better than the ghetto (Pachter, 2015: 97).

In the first days and weeks of the deportation from the Warsaw ghetto, the meaning of the word ‘resettlement’ remained unclear. Even before that, the words such as resettlement and deportation were widely used and somehow appropriated also by the occupied societies. Jews, just like other inhabitants of occupied Poland, lived in the German-created linguistic space. Jews were forced to use

words the real meaning of which they did not know. They were filling white spots with the meanings they had produced basing on their collective interpretations of the situation (Ferenc-Piotrowska, 2017; Ferenc, 2021). Those interpretations were rooted in and limited by their mentality – in other words, what could not be assimilated within was rejected or neutralised. Their knowledge was therefore limited and filtered by their cognitive and mental background. Admitting one's powerlessness in the face of the murderous plan of exterminating all the Jews, acknowledging the trajectory was a difficult process that involved denial of one's own as well as the collective understanding of the situation.

In his essay on a trajectory, Schütze gives the example of Joseph K., the hero of Franz Kafka's novel, *The Trial*, who, confronted with the fact that he was going to be arrested and yet still allowed to have one last day at his work, experiences chaos and disorderly processes (such as anxiety and paralysing fear) and seeks peace and normalisation in his interactions with his landlady (Schütze, 1997: 13–16). This shows how denial, dilution, rationalisation and normalisation of the tragic, trajectorial situation may help an individual regain illusionary control (or at least, agency) in the trajectorial situation.

Those phenomena did not cease to exist even when fugitives from Treblinka arrived at the Warsaw ghetto at the end of the deportations to give their eyewitness accounts and the knowledge about the Holocaust became more widespread. In the Warsaw ghetto, there were still thousands of people ready to believe that some of the deportees survived. Many of Warsaw ghetto Jews were filled with the worst fears; however, acknowledging the truth would require them to confront their fear of death, which is the most primeval and deeply ingrained fear in the human psyche. The mental and social energy of the residents of the Warsaw ghetto focused mostly on preserving hope and belief in their own survival. This phenomenon had screened from them the fact that they neither impact nor had control of their lives anymore – that they were living in the trajectory, fully trapped. Possibly this is why 'dilution' that gave them a sense of continuity of experienced world became a permanent cultural practice of the residents of the ghetto (Ferenc-Piotrowska, 2018: 149). Distancing oneself from facts and emotions that were hard to bear became a strategy that allowed one not to acknowledge being in the trajectory.

In the case analysed here, on the one hand, reports about the Holocaust caused disorientation and fear and forced people to change their standard behaviour. Jews of the Warsaw ghetto understood that they no longer have full control of their lives and that the further course of it is going to be determined by the Germans, their orders and policies. On the other hand, the community of the Warsaw ghetto became integrated into the process of negotiating the meaning of the rumours and news about the extermination of Jews and then of their 'dilution'. Optimistic rumours which played down the importance or relevance of the news about the extermination of Jews in other towns helped relieve tension and fear that Warsaw Jews constantly felt and gave them an illusion of agency in the face of German decrees to which they were subjected and that they were not allowed to negotiate. The behaviour of the Holocaust victims was complex, too complex to be

labelled ‘co-operation’, even though many Jews behaved as they were expected by the Nazi authorities. Some of them wanted to believe the official message of the authorities which underlined that Jews were being resettled to the East, for work – it was easier, in a way more natural, to accept this explanation than to confront the horrifying, incomprehensible truth.

Conclusions

Zygmunt Bauman’s classic book, *Modernity and the Holocaust*, first published in 1989, was a groundbreaking work for both sociology and Holocaust studies. Over the years, much was written about the uniqueness of Bauman’s approach, which combined insights regarding the modernity (and the modern states) and how it connects with the genocide of the Jews.

Nevertheless, some of Bauman’s conclusions seem problematic or even troubling and this chapter aimed to tackle one of them – namely what Bauman called the ‘co-operation’ of the victims – and to propose different answers to the questions that the author of *Modernity and the Holocaust* had posed. I have suggested here to incorporate the notion of ‘trajectory’ into the sociological gaze on the Holocaust and to look at the behaviour of the victims from a different perspective that incorporates their experiences of being trapped, isolated and helpless. I argued that Bauman’s argument regarding ‘co-operation’ of Jews during the Holocaust is rooted in the line of thinking represented earlier by Raul Hilberg and Hannah Arendt. Current research on the Holocaust, however, not only tends to focus on macro-analysis, but also to underline agency of the victims and understand their strategies vis-à-vis the Nazi extermination plan. The notion of ‘trajectory’ is a bridge that connects these two approaches – on the one hand, it focuses on the world as experienced by the actors who inhabit it, and on the other hand, it shows that people in liminal, extreme situation do lose control of their lives and are not always able to behave actively and to resist what causes them to suffer. Being trapped in trajectory, pushed by the tragic fate, isolated, is not equal with being ‘passive’ – the latter word involves moral judgement and suggests that other behaviour was possible or even likely. The notion of ‘trajectory’ allows us to observe that in many cases, individuals or groups have no choice as to whether they are subjected to such processes and that despite some attempts to escape the trajectory, many people fail to succeed, just because ‘the external forces’ are more powerful than we acknowledge them to be.

Notes

- 1 See also Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw (further: AJHI), Diaries, file No. 302/203, Diary of Pola Glezer and file No. 302/223, Diary of Łazarz Menes.
- 2 AJHI, Diaries, file No. 302/144, Diary of Marek Stok.
- 3 My understanding of ‘negotiation’ as the essence of the process of social communication and ‘creation of meanings’ is typical of the symbolic interactionism by Herbert Blumer. See Blumer, 1969: 78–90.
- 4 AJHI, Diaries, file No. 302/198, Diary of Stanisław Sznapan.

- 5 AJHI, Diaries, file No. 302/139, Diary of Natan Żelechower.
 6 AJHI, Testimonies, file No. 301/474; AJHI, Diaries, file No. 302/21, anonymous diary.
 7 AJHI, Testimonies, file No. 301/6146, Lucjan Gurman; file No. 301/2466, I. Falk.

Bibliography

- Arendt, H. 2006. *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*. London: Penguin Books.
- Bauman, J. 1986. *Winter in the Morning: A Young Girl's Life in the Warsaw Ghetto and Beyond, 1939–1945*. New York: Free Press.
- Best, S. 2014. Agency and Structure in Zygmunt Bauman's *Modernity and the Holocaust*. *Irish Journal of Sociology*, 22 (1), 67–87.
- Binem Motyl, S. 2011. *Do moich ewentualnych czytelników. Wspomnienia z czasu wojny*, ed. A. Haska. Warsaw: Stowarzyszenie Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów & Żydowski Instytut Historyczny.
- Blumer, H. 1969. *Symbolic Interactionism; Perspective and Method*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Cheyette, B. 2020. Zygmunt Bauman's Window: From Jews to Strangers and Back Again. *Thesis Eleven*, 156 (1), 67–85.
- Dimant, I. 2001. *Moja częśćka życia*, ed. B. Engelking. Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny.
- Engelking, B., and Grabowski, J. (eds.). 2018. *Dalej jest noc. Losy Żydów w wybranych powiatach okupowanej Polski*. Warsaw: Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów.
- Engelking, B., and Leociak, J. 2013. *Getto warszawskie. Przewodnik po nieistniejącym mieście*. Warsaw: Stowarzyszenie Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów.
- Ferenc, Maria. 2021. *Każdy pyta co z nami będzie*. *Mieszkańcy getta warszawskiego wobec wiadomości o wojnie i Zagładzie*. Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny.
- Ferenc-Piotrowska, M. 2017. 'Czarna, ogromna chmura wisi nad nami i na pewno spadnie . . .' Żydzi w miastach i miasteczkach Generalnego Gubernatorstwa wobec wiadomości o Akcji Reinhardt. *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i Materiały*, 13, 295–324.
- Ferenc-Piotrowska, M. 2018. 'All Those Rumors Occupy People's Thoughts . . .' On the Relationship between Rumors and Knowledge about the Holocaust in the Warsaw Ghetto. *Rocznik Antropologii Historii*, 11, 139–158.
- Goldberg, A. 2020. How Modern is the Holocaust? In C. A. Ireland, M. Lewis, A. C. Lopez, and J. L. Ireland (eds.) *The Handbook of Collective Violence: Current Developments and Understanding*. London: Routledge.
- Gombiński, S. 2010. *Wspomnienia policjanta z warszawskiego getta*, ed. M. Janczewska. Warsaw: Stowarzyszenie Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów & Żydowski Instytut Historyczny.
- Hilberg, R. 2003. *The Destruction of the European Jews*, third edition. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Kassow, S. D. 2007. *Who Will Write Our History? Emanuel Ringelblum, the Warsaw Ghetto, and the Oyneg Shabes Archive*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.
- Obremski, T. 2017. *Wśród zatrutych noży: zapiski z getta i okupowanej Warszawy*, ed. A. Haska. Warsaw: Stowarzyszenie Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów.
- Pachter, M. 2015. *Umierać też trzeba umieć*, ed. B. Engelking. Warsaw: Stowarzyszenie Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów.

- Patt, A. 2021. *The Jewish Heroes of Warsaw: The Afterlife of the Revolt*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press.
- Riemann, G., and Schütze, F. S. 1991. 'Trajectory' as a Basic Theoretical Concept for Analyzing Suffering and Disorderly Social Processes. In D. R. Maines (ed.) *Social Organization and Social Process: Essays in Honor of Anselm Strauss*. New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 333–357.
- Rokuszewska-Pawełek, A. 2002. *Chaos i przymus: trajektorie wojenne Polaków: analiza biograficzna*. Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego.
- Rozett, R. 2004. Jewish Resistance. In Dan Stone (ed.) *The Historiography of the Holocaust*. London and New York: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Sacks, A. J. 2013. Hannah Arendt's Eichmann Controversy as Destabilizing Transatlantic Text. *AJS Review*, 37 (1), 115–134.
- Schütze, F. 1997. Trajektorie cierpienia jako przedmiot badań socjologii interpretatywnej. *Studia Socjologiczne*, 1, 11–56.
- Waxman, Z. 2009. Thinking against Evil? Hannah Arendt, Zygmunt Bauman, and the Writing of the Holocaust. *History of European Ideas*, 35 (1), 93–104.

5 Visual representations of modernity in documents from the Łódź Ghetto

Paweł Michna

In *Modernity and the Holocaust*, Zygmunt Bauman presents the actions of the Łódź Ghetto *Judenrat* as one example of the Nazi-enforced rational behaviour of Jews within the framework of a system which the German bureaucracy created for an irrational goal. In each successive stage of the Holocaust, Jews were led to believe that their fate depended upon their own choices (MH: 130). This caused them ‘to be guided by the same behavioural principles as those promoted by their bureaucratic gaolers: efficiency, higher gain, less expense’ (MH: 129). Rationality – one of the key ideas with which Bauman discusses the relationship between modernity and the Holocaust – was therefore, in his opinion, a feature of the survival strategy adopted by the Jewish ghetto administration.

Bauman’s concept itself has rarely been applied, however, to an investigation of specific case studies (Goodlet, 2012: 2). In this chapter, I will apply Bauman’s theory to the interpretation of documents from the Holocaust, thereby demonstrating its value in deciphering the meanings contained within them. These are official visual documents from the Łódź Ghetto – albums and posters of a unique character. Despite their rich visual forms, they have thus far not been the subject of wider interest among researchers, except for a short description by Janina Struk (2005: 120–127), an unpublished master’s thesis (Pietroń, 2007) and my research (Michna, 2020). Created by Jewish artists employed by an administrative unit designated specifically for this goal – the Graphics Office – in the years 1941–1944, the documents include compositions of photo collages which combine graphically designed photographs with text and statistical data. The image they present of the ghetto is propagandistic and false. These materials were created for the needs of the Jewish ghetto administration in order to depict the means of organisation in the closed district of Litzmannstadt.

Łódź Ghetto was the longest-functioning in occupied Europe. Its prolonged existence resulted from *Judenrat* President Chaim Mordechaj Rumkowski’s high-yield production initiative for the needs of the Nazi war industry. The albums were presented to the German industry representative who visited the ghetto in order to convince him to commission orders from its factories, and served as presents and souvenirs for the German ghetto authorities as well (Pietroń, 2007: 54). Department workers would order them as presents for Rumkowski himself or for their supervisors (Fajtlowicz, 1971: 4). They were also presented during ghetto

celebrations organised by the *Judenrat*, and the posters decorated department-seat walls.

Looking at these materials today, it is difficult to avoid a feeling of dissonance. As I seek to demonstrate, the appeals to modern discourses which appear in the albums and on the posters are one reason for this. These appeals are also visible on the level of their geometric-style forms, as well as in the medium of and the narration created within the photomontage compositions. In their deviation from means of representing the Holocaust with which we have become familiar, these documents avoid entering the network of ideas and theories which we are accustomed to applying to the interpretation of visual materials from the Holocaust.¹ In seeking categories which enable a description of these materials, I will refer to Bauman's proposed means of looking at the relationships between the Holocaust and modernity. Sociological theory can serve as a theoretical framework which, in the case of these Łódź Ghetto documents, enables the interpretation of meanings within the posters and in the albums' pages, which have until now relied upon conceptualisation.

I do not plan to apply Bauman's theory uncritically, however. In order to use it in this analysis, I need to examine some of accusations with which it has been met – above all, Bauman's failure to include the victims' perspective and its treatment of them as passive subjects deprived of agency (Bauer, 2001: 80). In analysing these official visual materials of the Łódź Ghetto, I would like to consider, through the appeals to modern ideas within them and as proposed by Bauman, the strategies of survival through work which the Jewish ghetto administration adopted. I will treat the visual documents from the ghetto as an expression of the *Judenrat*'s initiative and a consciously constructed means of conveying content. I believe that the information they contain can be read not only as a Nazi-enforced reaction to the created conditions, but also as an action that stood in opposition to them – one undertaken by victims who had their own subjectivity. I would especially like to emphasise that, in this text, I do not enter into deliberations on the moral aspect of the activities of the Łódź *Judenrat*, on the evaluation of the legitimacy of the survival strategies adopted or ultimately on Rumkowski's conduct, given that 'we are faced with insoluble (but perfectly explicable) dilemmas' (Bauer, 2001: 82).

The *Judenrat*

The Łódź Ghetto was a workshop ghetto, operating as a large camp of unpaid labour carried out by its prisoners (Hilberg, 1985: 257) and manufacturing many products for the needs of the Third Reich's wartime economy. Such organisation of the ghetto is attributed to the initiative of Rumkowski, who was appointed by the Nazis as Chairman of the Council of Elders of the Ghetto (Lów, 2012: 81). Rumkowski saw that the establishment of factories in the restricted area of Łódź, working primarily for the needs of the Reich's wartime economy would enable the Jews imprisoned in the ghetto to survive. The expression of Rumkowski's politics was continually repeated in his motto – '*Unser einziger weg ist Arbeit*'

[Work is our only way]. The desire to make the ghetto into an industrial centre was based on rational premises which appealed to modern values associated with productivity and labour rationalisation.

Many controversies have broken out around the president of the Łódź *Judenratē* and the survival strategies which he adopted. It is not my intention to formulate an evaluation of the conduct of the head of the Łódź *Judenratē* – the impossibility of which has been acknowledged by researchers and authors working on the Holocaust, along with Primo Levi and his concept of the ‘grey zone’. However, it is important to examine Rumkowski’s activities. As I will attempt to demonstrate in later sections of this text, the documents I describe bring nuance to the descriptions which are most often adopted for the Łódź *Judenratē*’s activities around collaboration and cooperation with the enemy.

The albums and posters created by the Graphics Bureau may themselves serve as a vehicle allowing us to examine the profession of a faith in modern values, and as an example of this strategy’s realisation. In these documents, many elements of the functioning of the modern world come into focus, as if through a ‘window’ to use Bauman’s metaphor. In a false, propagandistic way, these materials present information which the ghetto overlords considered important to disseminate. The documents also describe the mode of operations, the bureaucratic structure of the Jewish ghetto administration as well as the predominating relations between high-ranking officials and ordinary workers. The Jewish ghetto administration was unusually well-developed, incorporating every area of life for the people imprisoned in the ghetto into its practical activities. At the height of its operations, it counted 12,000 workers (Lów, 2012: 84). The developed bureaucratic system, created in order to run the ghetto efficiently, reproduced the means of organising a modern authoritarian state (Sitarek, 2017: 328). This was to guarantee its effective functioning as well as cooperation with the Nazis. However, the administration did not concentrate on the delivery of food and the organisation of work alone. At least at the beginning of the ghetto’s functioning, it maintained, despite the tragic circumstances, the operation of education and health services and also undertook cultural initiatives. In further evidence of the Council of Elders’ faith in the effectiveness of the solutions adopted, there is the fact that photocopies of the albums and posters were made for the ghetto’s half-legally operating archive. These materials were to serve, in the hypothetical post-war future, as a source for research on the ghetto’s history, or as a kind of alibi – or simply as documentation of the important role which Rumkowski had taken on. In post-war testimony, the painter Sara Fajtlowicz, one of the creators of the albums, considered them to be materials created for the future, with the thought that they would serve as a testament of the ghetto’s functioning and of its president’s competencies:

These albums did not show the truth; rather, they were biased, because Rumkowski wanted to pass on the story that he was our caregiver and our father. . . . I got the sense that he wanted to demonstrate that to the future.

(Fajtlowicz, 1971: 4)

The Graphic Office

The documents created in the Graphic Office comprise a large collection of visual materials. A total of 101 posters as well as 29 albums of various sizes, containing up to several hundred pages, represent only what was saved from the output of this Statistical Department unit. The archival collection is complemented by materials which were not saved and are thus known only from photographs and testimonies. The documents which were compiled have the character of official materials, distinguished by a modern, geometric style. Photocopies of them were filed in the ghetto archive. In this text, I will analyse only certain pages from this rich collection, concentrating on the appeals to modernity which are present within them. As I demonstrate, these relationships can also be examined on the levels of form, of the application of iconography as well as of the short texts and statistical data presented in the form of charts. However, I would like to begin with a description of the very place where these documents were made and of the creators who worked there.

The Graphic Office was a part of the Department of Statistics, which was assigned to study data related to the ghetto's operations. The Department was organised in connection with the Nazis' need for information on deaths and illnesses. After a short time, at the initiative of the Department's directors, it also began collecting and studying, aside from the statistics demanded by the Nazis, very specific information on all aspects of the ghetto administration's operations. The men and women who worked in the Graphic Office were artists imprisoned in the ghetto, some of whom had been living in Łódź before the war, while others were Western European Jews (who had been deported from Berlin, Vienna and Prague). Fajtlowicz highlighted, while describing the intention of her direct supervisors in creating these materials, the stylistic requirement that the documents be 'of a high quality' (Fajtlowicz, 1971: 4), without specifying the artists' sources of influence.

Inspirations which undoubtedly draw from the avant-garde are visible not only on the level of style but also in the medium in which the documents were created. The compositions were created with the avant-garde-derived technique of photomontage. Photomontage effectively changed the way in which a narrative was built. It connected media which had up to this point been used only individually into compositions which formed an image. Thus, a sequence of time, along with many other aspects of the phenomenon presented, could be shown simultaneously. This served to render the medium clearer and more convincing. The history of photomontage as an individual medium, in a visual form approaching the one applied in these ghetto documents, begins together with dadaism and Soviet constructivism. Dadaistic photomontage concentrated on criticising capitalism and the bourgeoisie. In Soviet photomontage, form resulted from an aesthetics of economy and was intended to bring art closer to industrial production, but the presented image was not so much a critique of the here and now as a means of serving a utopian, purified and sublime vision of the future (Czekalski, 2000: 43). However, it is important to note that this medium, which derived quickly from the

avant-garde, was adapted for the needs of industrial advertising, of the popular press as well as of propaganda, both within and outside of the USSR. Photomontage which referred to constructivism was a means of conveying specific means and values associated with modernity (Rypson, 2011: 134–137). In this context, the selection of the documents' style, which referred to the industrial designs circulating in the 1930s iconosphere, appears to be not an accident but rather a well-thought-out effort. In the albums and on the posters created in the Graphic Office, photomontage was used in order to create a utopian vision of the ghetto as a space of rational management and modernisation. The visual form, which also has a conventional character, can be perceived in addition as operating as a carrier of meanings similar to iconographic motifs. Through the use of geometric forms, lines and right angles, the style evoked modernity, fitting morphologically to the shapes of machines – but influencing first and foremost the medium's legibility and its evocative style.

Charts and diagrams are important elements of these photomontage compositions. They present data related to the organisation and efficacy of production, the distribution of food, residents' health and hygiene as well as the educational system – all of the aspects of life over which the *Judenratē* maintained control. This had a fundamental propagandistic meaning, as it served, in relation to the ghetto archive, to legitimise the *Judenratē*'s actions in the future as well. The appeal to 'rational' statistical data arose from a belief in the measurability of the world and progress, one which is characteristic of modernity. The graphically designed and geometrically ordered, thus easily legible, statistical data served as a tool of the rational system and of propagandistic language. In a view of rationalism in aesthetic categories which is representative of enthusiasts of high modernism, James C. Scott points out: 'For them, an efficient, rationally organized city, village, or a farm was a city that looked regimented and orderly in a geometrical sense' (Scott, 2008: 4).

In referring visually to modern designs and incorporating statistics, the documents presented the activities of the ghetto's departments and factories. These materials were part of a survival strategy and were also intended to provide a kind of alibi for the future, should Rumkowski and his subordinates need to explain their activities after the war. As such, they presented an image incongruent with the predominating conditions in the ghetto. Could they be seen, however, as a kind of active resistance strategy on the part of the victims? To what role can we ascribe the appeal to modernity which is present within these documents?

Modernity and the ghetto

Bauman interpreted the Holocaust not as a distortion of modern Western civilisation – a manifestation of its not entirely fulfilled, premodern barbarism – but as its product, which 'was a legitimate resident in the house of modernity; indeed, one who would not be at home in any other house' (MH:17). The scholar has demonstrated the overlapping of specific elements found in modern society which enabled the Shoah and signalled a lack of protection against such events. In

consecutive chapters of his book, Bauman points out a number of modern characteristics which determined that the Holocaust would take its form as we know it. In later parts of this text, I will focus in particular on the bureaucracy's role, as Bauman describes it, in the process of the Holocaust, on the rationality which steered its activities, as well as on propaganda as an instrument of state operations which served to isolate social groups.

Rationality, being a feature of the modern bureaucratic system, determined a framework for the bureaucrats' actions. It obligated them to choose the solutions which were the most optimal in the sense of economic efficacy. According to Bauman, the ideological project of the Holocaust took its particular shape at the desks of bureaucrats, where it evolved from a plan to expel Jews from the Reich to orchestrating their physical extermination. It was a response to the mundane organisational problems connected with the expansion of the territory of the Third Reich through its conquests (MH:55).

Bauman assumed that rationality also motivated the behaviour of Holocaust victims. He saw the entire formula of the ghetto's organisation and functioning as grounded in a strategy of actions considered rational according to Nazi politics. The German bureaucratic authorities devised a model of cooperation which assumed victims would behave rationally, applying this to its own ends. The sociologist states that the *Judenratē*' activities enabled the Nazis to carry out the Holocaust more efficiently (MH:118). The Jewish ghetto administration allowed the Nazis to exercise control, through little means or effort, over the people imprisoned there. Bauman sees the bureaucracy of the Jewish administration's activities, which organised life in the restricted areas, as a prerequisite which enabled the later stages of the Holocaust. In several cases, and in the name of rational premises, the Jewish administration even actively participated in the organisation of transport. This was the case in the Łódź Ghetto – where Rumkowski, guided by the survival strategy he had adopted, believed that the Jewish administration would make better choices, from the point of view of the community, in selecting Jews for deportation (Löw, 2012: 81).

For Bauman, Rumkowski's behaviour is simply an ideal exemplification of Jews' adaptation to the standard of behaviour the Nazis created. He does not explicitly condemn Rumkowski, acknowledging that the president 'had to behave as if the adversaries were indeed rationally acting agents; there was no way one could decide one's own course of action without making such an assumption' (MH:137). Rational decisions undertaken in the name of the 'lesser evil' were, however, a trap – one which brought the Holocaust closer rather than moving away from it.

There is a question as to whether Bauman's assessment of the *Judenratē*'s activities is too one-sided. Collaboration or cooperation with the enemy becomes a buzzword which prevents the discernment of nuances in the activities Jews undertook. Independent from evaluations of the *Judenratē*' role, the assertion that their adopted survival strategies were the result of a calculation which was only rational, yet completely dependent on the activities of the Germans, serves as an acceptance of the perpetrators' behaviour – of which Yehuda Bauer also accuses

Bauman (Bauer, 2001: 111). A consequence of adopting such a point of view is to see the (rational) decisions the victims undertook as in fact irrelevant. It deprives Jews imprisoned in the ghetto of their agency and assumes they did not enact any form of resistance. It ignores the meaning of the concrete survival strategies which the victims themselves chose. Others have pointed out a lack of consideration of agency in *Modernity and the Holocaust*, but by focusing on the perpetrators, not the victims (Vetlesen, 2005; Best, 2014).

Bauer points to another important aspect that ignores the particularity of the victims' reactions. He criticises Bauman's disregard for the local specificities of individual ghettos and for the differences in how Jewish councils undertook forms of organising life in the restricted areas. Bauer highlights the diversity of individual *Judenratē* reactions to the Nazis' activities. According to the historian, examining them 'is no less worthy of analysis than is the objective fact of their becoming part of a machinery of destruction whose aims they recognized too late, if at all' (Bauer, 2001: 116). It is worth emphasising that in reference to the Łódź Ghetto, which in *Modernity and the Holocaust* is in fact a metonymy for all *Judenratē*, Bauer actually agrees with Bauman. However, it is also important to put forward a more nuanced analysis of the survival strategy which Rumkowski undertook.

It is impossible to deny that Bauman was correct in recognising the criterium of rational actions as a key operating principle for the victims, but to reduce them to 'hapless, collaborating sheep led to the slaughter by an efficient bureaucratic machinery' (Bauer, 2001: 80) seems to be at the very least insufficient. This would omit the entire spectrum of the victims' various reactions, as well as their complexity – not only armed resistance, but also forms of cultural resistance. In looking at the materials created in the Graphics Office, we might wonder if the survival strategy undertaken by 'by far the most pious apostle of the industrial faith', as Bauman called Rumkowski (MH:137), was in fact a form of resistance itself.

I believe that including the victims' agency in the framework of the sociologist's theory will allow us to read the meanings contained in these documents, which have until now relied upon decipherment. Thanks to this, we can see the appeals to modern discourse present in the materials ordered by the *Judenratē* as meaningful elements of a narrative which was consciously constructed in these albums and posters. An analysis of a concrete example of the visual documents from the Łódź Ghetto will allow us to look at the *Judenratē* authorities' activities from a new perspective – and also to better understand them. It will allow for the perception of Jews imprisoned in the ghetto not as passive victims who reacted in the way the perpetrators expected, thus bringing themselves closer to the Holocaust, but as subjects who truly endeavoured to survive.

Documents

I will now transition to an analysis of selected archival materials by revealing the appeals to modern discourse which can be found within them. Such references are present on the levels of both form and narration. In all of the documents

described, it is possible to point out certain shared elements, even though they describe different aspects of the ghetto's functioning.

The documents depict the bureaucratic structure and activities of the Jewish ghetto administration. These are revealed specifically in the case of the albums, where a layout across two pages reflects the bureaucratic hierarchy of the departments described. Many albums open to a first page which features an image of Rumkowski, after which, on subsequent pages, the next workers in the bureaucratic hierarchy appear.

Each of these documents was created in the same style and using the same technique, which drew from the achievements of the avant-garde. These borrowings were, however, rather conservative, which is common among examples of interwar industrial commercial design. Arrangements of simple geometric figures, planes and lines in primary colours frame the photocollage compositions. The compositions are typically titled and presented in contrast to one another with regard to their direction on the diagonal. Thanks to this, the materials were highly visually appealing and the message more direct, more legible and easier to immediately assimilate. Such a style also evoked modernity, thanks to the fact of their morphological correspondence to the geometric shapes of machine parts.

In addition, all of the documents present a propagandistic and false image of the predominating conditions in the ghetto. The statistical data which report progressive improvements are false (Fajtlowicz, 1971: 4). The goal was to convince the Nazi state to keep the ghetto functioning for as long as possible and also to convince it of the legitimacy of the ghetto's existence. These materials can also be seen as an attempt to change the Western European stereotype of Jews, which was consistently created by Third Reich propaganda in order to alienate them from society. While Bauman views the overlap between the process of dehumanisation and the essentialisation of Jewish society as an expression, above all, of bureaucratic activities (MH:103), this was also achieved on the level of propaganda. This can be seen clearly in Nazi press, posters and films. It can also be linked directly to the Jews imprisoned in the ghetto, where antisemitic materials were created for the needs of Nazi propaganda (Loose, 2014: 28). In the materials created at the Graphics Office, the ghetto and the people imprisoned there were presented in a different light than in the inconsistent image of the Jew which was exploited in Nazi propaganda (Confino, 2014: 30). The Germans, in building this propagandistic image, merged contradictory constructs in one narrative which united, on the one hand, the image of a capitalist making a fortune from the work of the Aryan labourer, and on the other hand, a Bolshevik (Herf, 2008: 32, 37) – in the dehumanising image of a parasite and carrier of infectious diseases, directly juxtaposed with typhus-carrying lice (MH:27). In the framework of this inconsistent logic, Jews were presented as a society responsible for any and all failures and changes which had been brought about by the progression of modernity (MH:240). The materials ordered by the *Judenrat* also contained an appeal to modernity, but this was in order to depict an alternative, positive image of the ghetto's society. They presented the prisoners of the restricted area in Łódź as healthy and efficient labourers, and the ghetto itself as a place of progress and

modernisation. Demonstrated progress was presented in the form of diagrams and charts with ever-increasing statistical indicators. The ghetto was not only a place of efficient work but also one where attention was paid to the health, hygiene and education of the labourers working for the Reich's economy. I will show this in the example of selected pages from the album of the Labour Department and from the album of the Health Department, as well as on posters illustrating the educational system in the ghetto.

The Labour Department album

This album, prepared in 1943, opens with a photomontage composition which features a photo of Rumkowski giving a speech, which is placed against a rectangular background – on the surface of which is written: *'Unser einziger weg ist ARBEIT'* (Figure 5.1). This serves as an abstract frame for the composition and an anchor for the photographic silhouette of the *Judenrat* chairman. The arrangement, with its propagandistic content, presents Rumkowski as a leader full of majesty and dignity, as indicated by the size of the figure and the monumentalising perspective from below, as well as in his authoritarian gesture. The background is a photograph of a crowd gathered in a square. The crowd is turned away from the viewer, and in the distance, there is the place, without a doubt, from which the president is speaking. The composition takes advantage of photomontage's possibilities for showing one event from different perspectives simultaneously. The

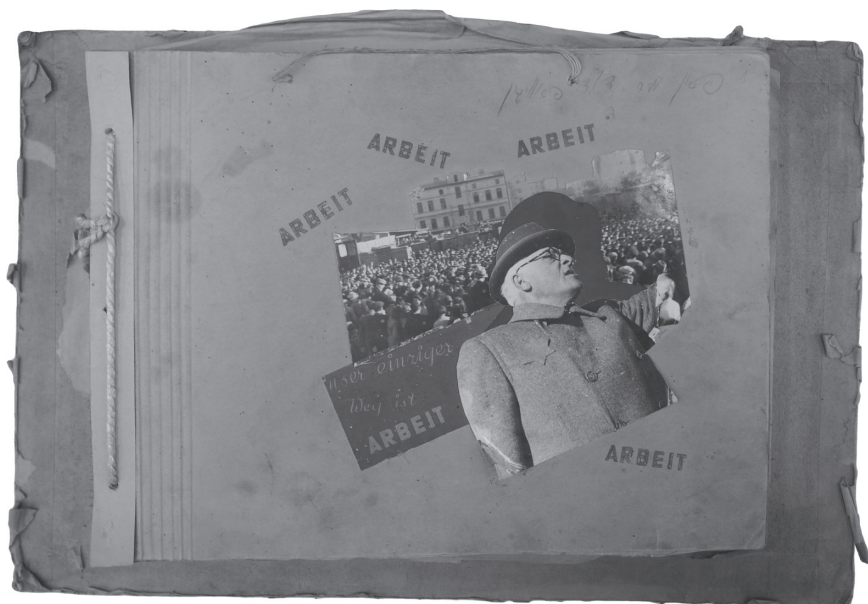


Figure 5.1 Opening page of the Labor Department album. From the collections of the State Archive in Łódź (APL). File No. 39/278/0/12/825, Catalogue 1.

keyword of the slogan – *Arbeit* – has been made to stand out and is repeated. The arrangement of the words around the figures makes them appear to reverberate.

Work was the foundation of the ghetto's existence. In this, Rumkowski saw the only way for the ghetto to survive. Thus, in the ghetto, everyone had to work. On one of the subsequent pages, we see a composition depicting children working at sewing machines under the watch of an older man. Above it, there is a slightly sloping phrase: *'Die Jugend wird ebenfalls in Evidenz geführt!'* [Children will also be entered into the register!] (Figure 5.2).

In considering the question of the subjectivity of Jews imprisoned in the ghetto, it is important to note the image which the album presents of the work performed there, as well as of the Jewish workers themselves. These should be considered alongside the image of Jews as propagated by Hitler's propaganda. Antisemitic propaganda frequently took up the topic of work and alleged economic profit (Herf, 2008: 37). In the photomontage compositions created in the Graphics Office, the image of Jews presented can be seen as an anti-propaganda strategy – one adopted for the goal of re-encoding the figure of the Jewish worker as an honest and efficient one. The goal can be seen as not only to convince the Nazis of the efficiency and effectiveness of the work performed in the ghetto, but also to depict



Figure 5.2 Page from the Labor Department album showing youth vocational training. From the collections of the State Archive in Łódź. File No. 39/278/0/12/825, Catalogue 22.



Figure 5.3 Page from the Labor Department album presenting the number of staff delegated to work outside the ghetto 1940–1943. From the collections of the State Archive in Łódź. File No. 39/278/0/12/825, Catalogue 16.

of another vision of Jews in the framework of a strategy of resistance – created also with future generations of ghetto researchers, who would use the materials gathered in the ghetto archive, in mind. The Jewish worker presented on card number 16 is sturdy, thanks to which he is able to work efficiently (Figure 5.3).

The image of the Jews emerging from these albums is closer to how propaganda showed Aryans, which connects them to these antisemitic materials (Patel, 2005: 232) – although the image of the worker as effective and healthy is also common outside of the Nazi iconography of labour. Such images and themes were used in Bolshevik propaganda as well as in Jewish Zionist graphics (Don-Yehiya and Liebman, 1981).

The Health Department album

The question of health and hygiene also occupied an important role in the *Judenrat*'s propagandistic image of the ghetto. The idea of care for citizens' health, but also of the extension of state supervision over citizens' bodies, is another important discourse of modernity present in the Office-created documents. Bauman

has pointed out that in exploiting ‘the modern man’s obsession with health and sanitation’ (MH: 124), the Germans slowly perpetrated the marginalisation, dehumanisation and isolation of Jewish society. This was grounded in antisemitic propaganda which presented Jews as carriers of illnesses, bacteria and parasites. Many elements present in the Health Department album combine to build an alternative image to the one present in Nazi propaganda.

The first photomontage composition, which opens the album, presents a half-figure photograph of the president; with a gesture of his hand, he presents points on a map of the ghetto, which is drawn onto the cardboard. These are the units under the department’s control: hospitals, pharmacies, ambulances, emergency medical services, sanatoria and care homes. The points on the map are connected with lines which emerge from the department’s seat, positioned in the corner (Figure 5.4). This depiction of the local authority’s structure was likely intended to show the multitude of its branches and their even distribution throughout the ghetto, in which services were provided in an organised manner, guaranteeing all residents general access to health services.

On the next pages, we see clean hospital rooms and doctors performing operations. The photographs always present the figures in action: Jewish doctors and nurses caring for the sick or using medical equipment. Many of them display

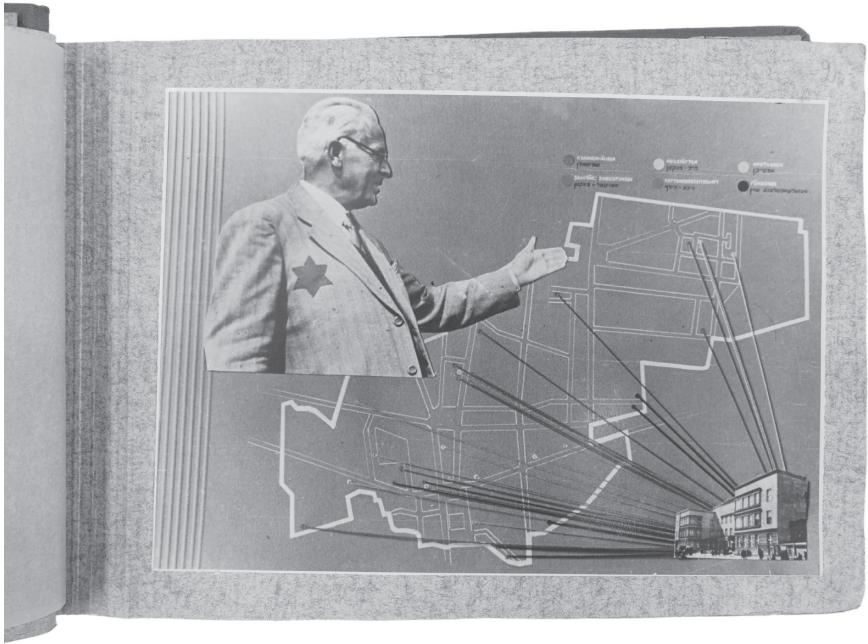


Figure 5.4 Opening photomontage composition of the first volume of photographic reproductions of the Health Department album. From the collections of the State Archive in Łódź. File No. 39/278/0/12/829, Catalogue 2.

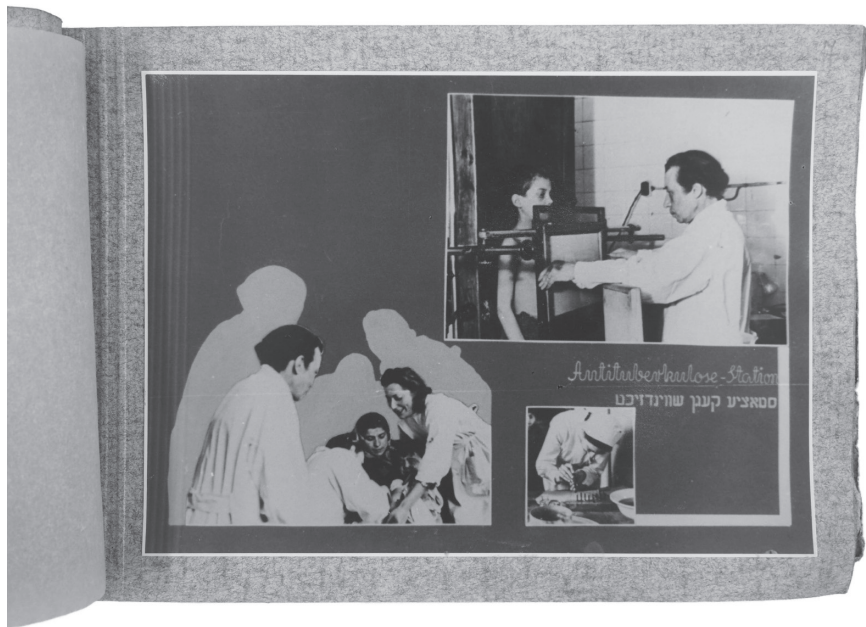


Figure 5.5 Page from the third volume of photographic reproductions of the Health Department album presenting Roentgen therapy for children. From the collections of the State Archive in Łódź. File No. 39/278/0/12/830, Catalogue 7.

machines – as well as research and medical equipment mediating in human labour and enabling modern diagnostics and therapy – as a sign of progress (Figure 5.5).

Besides the question of health, social assistance and hygiene play an important role in the album's narrative. The concern for residents' hygiene is demonstrated in the next part of the album. The composition on page 136 features photos of the ghetto's baths, clippings from prints and a copy of Rumkowski's announcement (Figure 5.6). The large photograph in the upper left corner, which is partially overlapped by the text of the typed document, shows a complicated shower installation being installed or repaired by two men. There are two overlapping photographs in the lower right corner – the smaller one on the left shows men taking a shower, and the larger one on the right shows a man working on the water heating in the baths' changing room. The photographs are not directly related to the text of Announcement No. 227, issued in March 1941. According to it, to prevent epidemics, unemployed men were ordered to clean the properties on which they lived. The issue of cleanliness, which links the document and the photograph, is indicated by two clippings in Yiddish on the sides of the composition. On the right side: 'Cleanliness is the best defense against an epidemic', and on the left side: 'The health of your home depends on the cleanliness of your home'. The card was meant to show the authorities' multifaceted concern for the residents' hygiene and

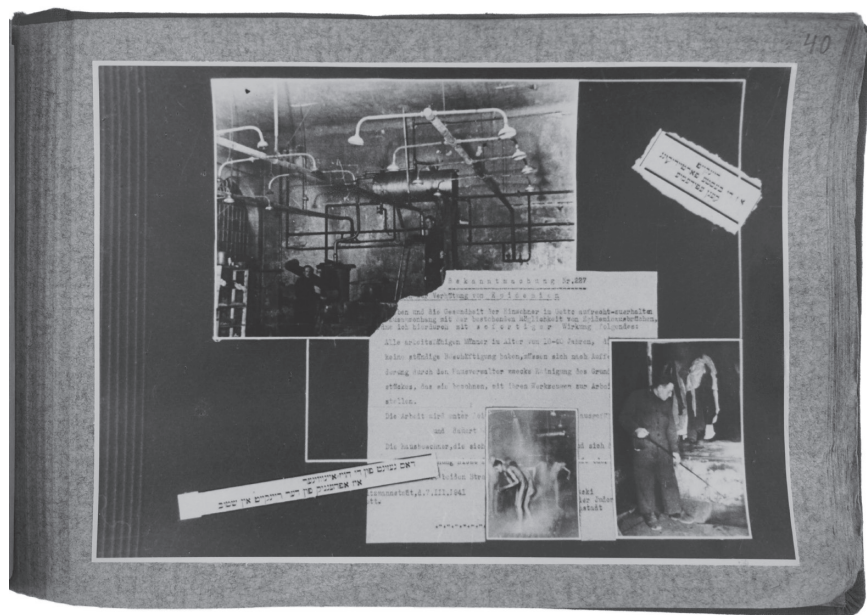


Figure 5.6 Page from the third volume of photographic reproductions of the Health Department album presenting functioning of ghetto bath. From the collections of the State Archive in Łódź. File No. 39/278/0/12/830, Catalogue 40.

their efforts to prevent the development of epidemics. In the face of the spread of disease in the ghetto and the high mortality rate of its inhabitants, this was a critical issue, and counter-epidemic measures were of particular interest to the Nazi administration from the moment the ghetto was established. Composition's meaning can also be seen as an expression of the counter-propaganda strategy, which, by appealing to modern values, opposes the image created by the Nazis of representatives of the Jewish community as dirty and spreading diseases, mainly louse-borne typhus transmitted by lice.

Posters: 'the 1939–1940 school year'

The propagandistic form, with its appeals to modernity, did not exclusively treat questions of work and production or health. The three posters I have selected for analysis from the 1941 series *Schulwesen in Litzmannstadt Ghetto in Schuljahre 1939–40* summarise the ghetto's first school year, which played a substantial role in the policy of the *Judenrat*

The first of these posters presents detailed data on the number of students, broken down into the types of schools they attended. We see the number, among others, of students per teacher as well as the number of students per class, the amount

of floor space per student and even the number of cubic metres – counted individually for each type of school. The comparison between the years 1938 and 1940 is particularly shocking, as it shows the number of students per teacher and the number of students per class was lower in the ghetto than in pre-war Łódź (Figure 5.7).

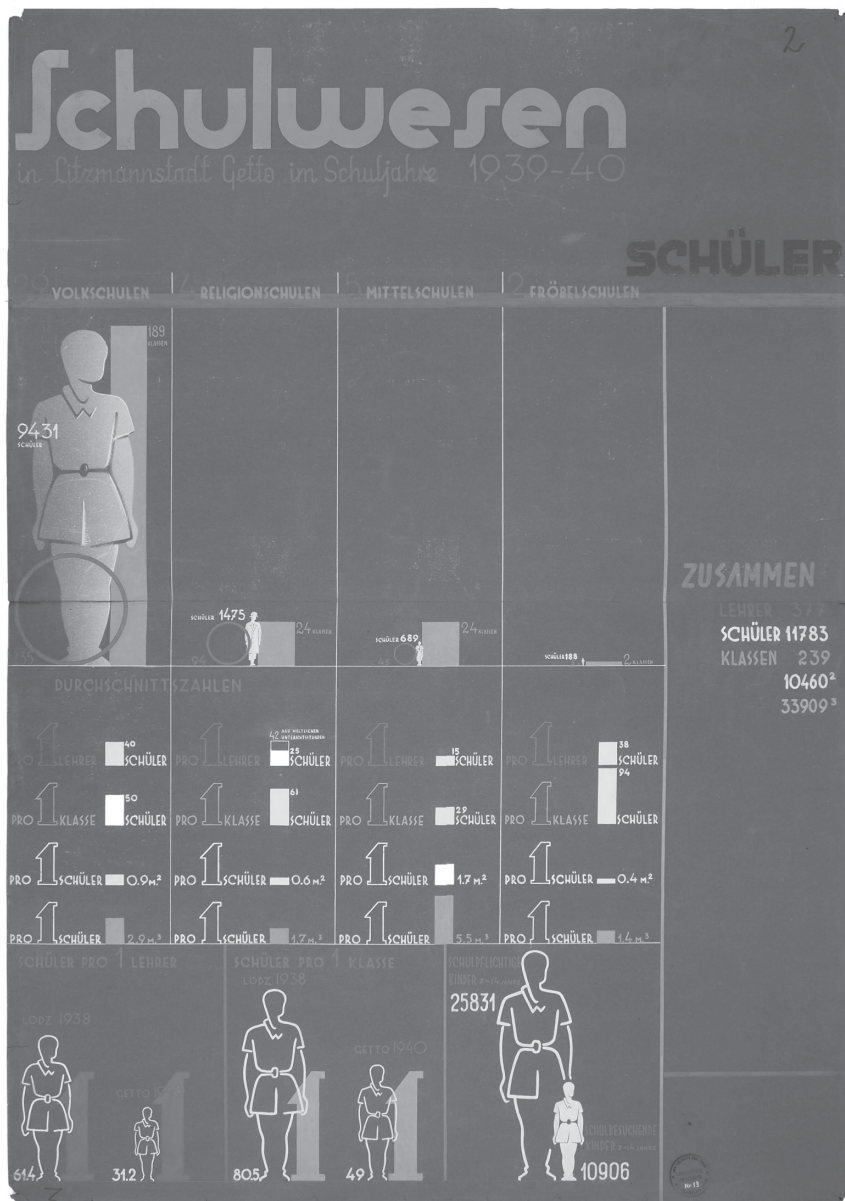


Figure 5.7 Poster with statistics on teachers. Part of a series of posters describing the education system in the ghetto in the 1939–1940 school year. From the collections of the State Archive in Łódź. File No. 39/278/0/12/798, Catalogue 2.

Similarly precise data can be found on the next poster in this series. This time the data concerns the teachers – with graphs presenting their level of seniority, the number of languages they spoke and the hiring structure (Figure 5.8).

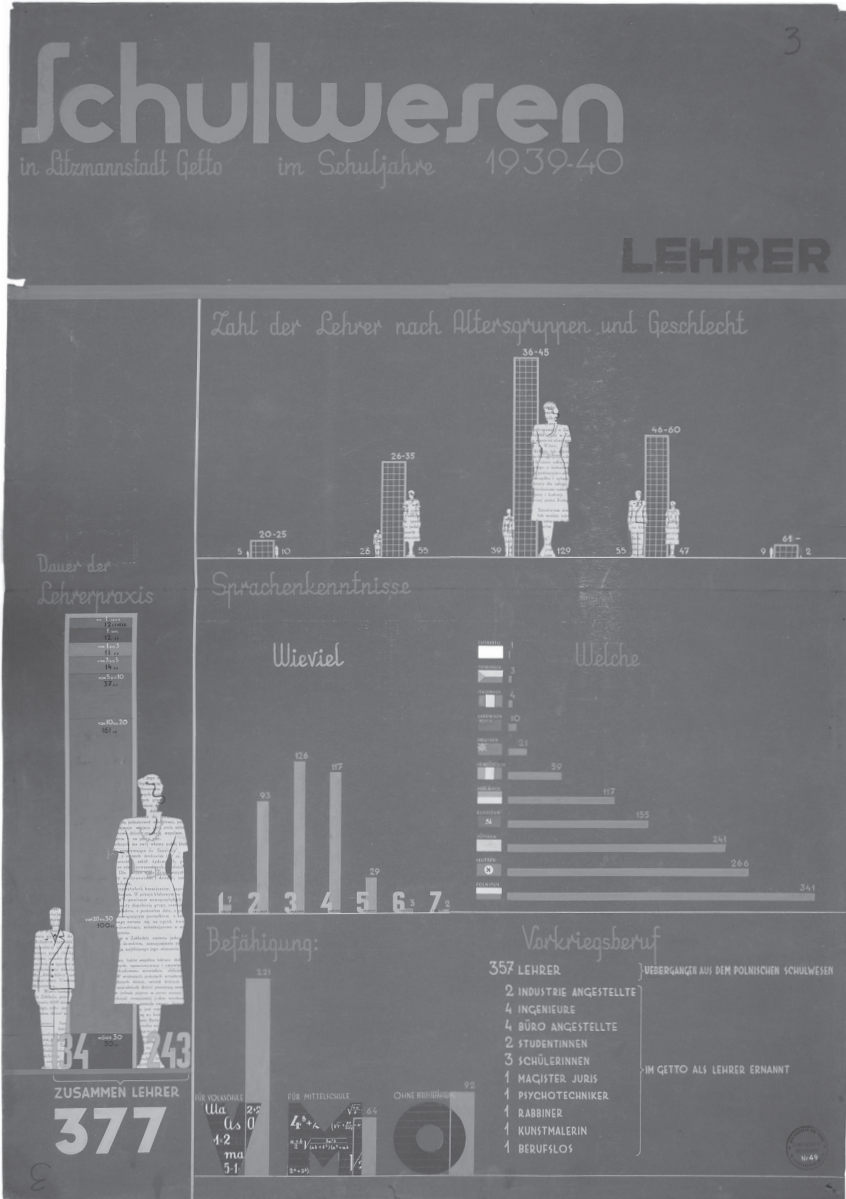


Figure 5.8 Poster with statistics on teachers. Part of a series of posters describing the education system in the ghetto in the 1939–1940 school year. From the collections of the State Archive in Łódź. File No. 39/278/0/12/798, Catalogue 3.

The third poster shows a sanitary-hygienic campaign held in schools as well as activities aimed at feeding the children. Bar charts and pictograms offer precise statistics of the number of children fed (see the pictogram of a girl holding a spoon in her hand), broken down by the number and type of meals and the type of school. This poster is also enriched by two photomontages which present a child eating, as well as medical examination being carried out (Figure 5.9).

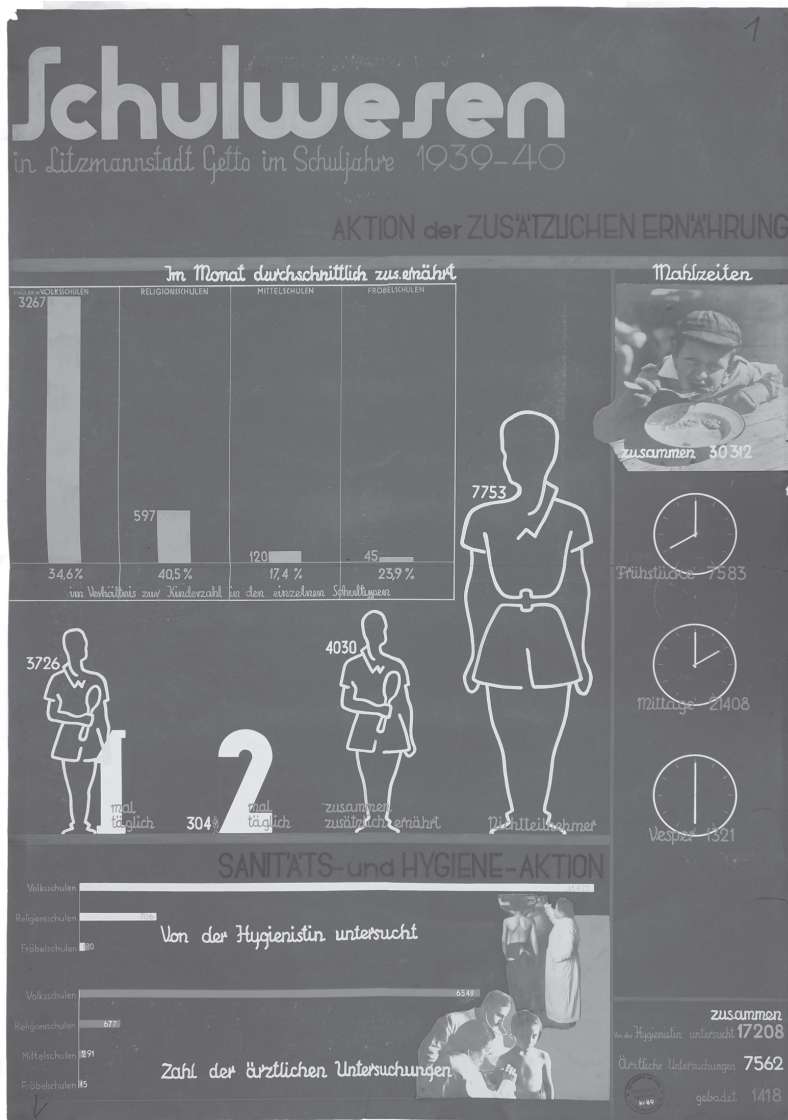


Figure 5.9 Poster illustrating nutrition campaign and sanitation-hygiene campaign. Part of a series of posters describing the education system in the ghetto in the 1939–1940 school year. From the collections of the State Archive in Łódź. File No. 39/278/0/12/798, Catalogue 1.

According to an analysis of these documents, the system of education in the ghetto was also concerned with the children's physical condition – we can consider the campaign encouraging cleanliness and hygiene as well as the question of food. The level of precision in the data presented in the charts, which was of course collected under the difficult conditions of the ghetto's functioning, is striking. It attests not only to the level of bureaucratisation in the ghetto's administrative apparatus, but on the level of propaganda, it was also intended to command effectiveness in the bureaucrats' activities. The phenomena portrayed in the descriptions on the posters and on the pages of the albums, aided by the precise data, are a sign of the control the ghetto administration exercised over every aspect of the functioning of the restricted area of Litzmannstadt.

Conclusions

The content and form of the documents analysed provoke a dissonance, which is due to the incompatibility of how the Holocaust is represented within them versus the representations of the Holocaust to which we are accustomed. Through the use of statistical data – combining, in a transparently modern form, the photomontage compositions of photographs with the diagrams and charts which show increasing employment, the improvement of hygienic conditions and the development of the educational system – the restricted area in Łódź is presented as a modern city. It is an organism which, thanks to its superb planning and the efficient work of its residents, could ensure their survival and contribute to the development of the Third Reich's economy. The constructivist style, the use of the medium of photomontage as well as the data presented in the form of charts, which all clearly and mutually complemented each other, strengthened their propagandistic form. The photomontage compositions, which illustrate the data presented graphically on charts, confirmed the viewer's conviction of the verity of the information presented, while the data itself served to convince the reader that these photomontages of the ghetto were truthful. In the ghetto, the posters served as propagandistic decorations – these materials were also geared towards the residents as well as visiting Germans. They were intended to document the Jewish authorities' proper organisation and their control over the district.

The relationship Bauman presents between modernity and the Holocaust makes it possible to identify and read the meanings these albums contain. In content, the documents analysed refer to modern discourses and were intended to promote survival. The 'rationality', 'effectiveness', 'efficacy', 'economy', 'productivity', 'simplification' and 'directness' which appear in every example of these documents from the Łódź Ghetto can also be found in the utopian theories of the avant-garde, as they strove for a new world order. Such ideas can likewise be found in the messages included within the Łódź Ghetto documents, which were also created in accordance with these assumptions (Strzemiński, 2014: 42). The same applies to the issues of healthcare and of the concern for the hygiene and physical condition of the ghetto's society. There is no mention here of eugenical management of the population, but in the Health Department album, the interest in the residents' physical condition, with the aim of protecting the ghetto from disease and epidemics, is compatible with the population-management policy of the modern 'gardening

state' as conceived by Bauman. The representations of workers at machines, of bureaucrats at their desks or of doctors with microscopes – images taken from advertisements, the press and propagandistic posters – attest to a desire to show the world 'beyond the barbed wire' that modern standards were deeply embedded in the ghetto. These are the same ideas with which the bureaucratic apparatus of the Third Reich governed itself in key administrative decisions on the Holocaust's form and implementation. This entanglement shows the significant role which modern discourses played in many spheres of reality. The appeals contained in the albums demonstrate that the dramatic situation of the fight for Jewish life could hold a faith in survival through the ideas of modernity. The efforts the Jewish authorities undertook to collect extensive data and create propagandistic materials can be seen, in my opinion, as a counter-propagandistic response to the antisemitic propaganda the Nazis carried out – and also as a form of active resistance. Such a reading of these documents is possible, thanks to the application of Bauman's theoretical propositions, while also taking into account the victims' own subjectivity and agency.

Note

- 1 The principles of the appropriateness of means of representing the Shoah, which have not been developed according to precise standards, but which were, after the war, 'a leitmotif of considerations about the Holocaust' (Chmielewska, 2005, 21–32).

Bibliography

- Bauer, Y. 2001. *Rethinking the Holocaust*. Newhaven: Yale University Press.
- Best, S. 2014. Agency and Structure in Zygmunt Bauman's *Modernity and the Holocaust*. *Irish Journal of Sociology*, 22 (1), 67–87.
- Chmielewska, K. 2005. Literackość jako przeszkoda, literackość jako możliwość wypowiedzenia. In M. Głowiński, et al. (eds.) *Stosowność i forma. Jak opowiadać o zagładzie?* Warsaw: Universitas, 21–32.
- Confino, A. 2014. *A World Without Jews: The Nazi Imagination from Persecution to Genocide*. Newhaven: Yale University Press.
- Czekalski, S. 2000. *Awangarda i mit racjonalizacji: Fotomontaż polski okresu dwudziestolecia międzywojennego*. Wydawn: Poznańskiego Towarzystwa Przyjaciół Nauk.
- Don-Yehiya, E., and Liebman, C. 1981. The Symbol System of Zionist-Socialism: An Aspect of Israeli Civil Religion. *Modern Judaism*, 1 (2), 121–148.
- Goodlet, K. W. 2012. Rethinking Modernity and the Holocaust: The Application of Zygmunt Bauman's Thesis to the Jewish Council of Lodz, 1940–1944. *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 25 (3), 504–530.
- Herf, J. 2008. *The Jewish Enemy: Nazi Propaganda during World War II and the Holocaust*. Cambridge: Belknap Press.
- Hilberg, R. 1985. *The Destruction of the European Jews: Vol. I (Rev. and definitive ed)*. Teaneck: Holmes & Meier.
- Loose, I., and Lutz, T. (eds.). 2014. *Twarz getta: Zdjęcia żydowskich fotografów z getta Litzmannstadt 1940–1944 /The Face of the Ghetto. Pictures Taken by Jewish Photographers in the Litzmannstadt Ghetto 1940–1944*. Berlin: Stiftung Topographie des Terrors.

- Löw, A. 2012. *Getto łódzkie: Litzmannstadt Getto. Warunki życia i sposoby przetrwania*. Wydawn: Uniw. Łódzkiego.
- Michna, P. 2020. Modernism in the Lodz Ghetto. *Miejsce (Place)*, 6, 4. doi:10.48285/8kaewzgo3p
- Patel, K. K. 2005. *Soldiers of Labor: Labor Service in Nazi Germany and New Deal America, 1933–1945*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press/German Historical Institute.
- Pietroń, A. 2007. *Fotomontaż jako sposób opisu Zagłady. Analiza albumów fotograficznych z łódzkiego getta* [M.A. Thesis]. University of Warsaw.
- Rypson, P. 2011. *Against All Odds: Polish Graphic Design, 1919–1949*. Kraków: Karakter.
- Sara (Gliksmann) Fajtłowicz, S. 1971. *Testimony Regarding Her Experiences as a Painter in the Statistics Department of the Lodz Ghetto, O.3 – Testimonies Department, ID: 3557434*. Yad Vashem Archives.
- Scott, J. C. 2008. *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition have Failed*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Sitarek, A. 2017. ‘Zaprowiantowanie obozu jest podobno wzorowe . . .’: Wiedza więźniów getta łódzkiego na temat ośrodka zagłady w Chełmnie nad Nerem. *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i Materiały*, 13 (8), 325–341.
- Struk, J. 2005. *Photographing the Holocaust: Interpretations of the Evidence*. London: IB Tauris.
- Strzeмиński, W. 2014. Druk funkcjonalny. In P. Kurc-Maj (ed.) *Zmiana pola widzenia: Druk nowoczesny i awangarda*. Łódź: Muzeum Sztuki.
- Vetlesen, A. J. 2005. *Evil and Human Agency: Understanding Collective Evildoing*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.



Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

Part 3

Extensions and reevaluations



Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

6 Reassessing *Modernity and the Holocaust* in the light of genocide in Bosnia

Arne Johan Vetlesen

Comparing different historical instances of genocide is a difficult undertaking. To be sure, the particularities of relevant factors – be they geographical, ideological, political or psychological – mark not only the complexity, but also the limits of such a project. What does the Nazi genocide against the Jews have in common with ethnic cleansing in Bosnia, occurring as the two cases of genocide did in different eras and cultures, pitting groups of very different identities and relational histories against each other?

In *Modernity and the Holocaust*, Zygmunt Bauman argues that for all the incontestable novelty of the Nazi genocide against the Jews, its essential message lies in what it tells us about *modernity* and its peculiar mindset, rationality and institutions, thus about something general, to be found in other places and nations, within other political movements and therefore facilitating that something like it will happen again. As we all know, the rallying cry of the whole ‘civilized’ world in the wake of the Holocaust was precisely ‘never again’. Because this promise, meant as an imperative, has been disappointed not one but several times since 1945, the question that imposes itself is this: does the repeated failure to prevent genocide that Bosnia exemplifies (Rwanda should also be mentioned) show that there is something deeply mistaken about the dominant understanding of what allows genocide to happen?

Modernity and the Holocaust makes the argument that this is indeed the case. To say that the focus on factors showing up the particularity, understood as singularity – ‘Beispiellosigkeit’ – have come at the cost of hiding from view the fundamental – structurally deep-seated – conditions that make genocide possible, repeatedly so, is only part of the argument, however. Rather than the general being concealed by the particular, the heart of the matter is to do with the specific manner in which modern societies provide and sustain a framework for human interaction, one where the particularities of, say, personality and character of the individuals involved become irrelevant to the actions being carried out and the consequences for those affected.

I begin by setting out the basic claims in Bauman’s book. I then turn to what happened in Bosnia in 1992–1995 to explore how Bauman’s general understanding of the modus operandi of genocide modern style stand up when applied to a different case than the Holocaust. However, my question is not only whether

Bauman's original thesis can be applied to the particular case of Bosnia. Proceeding immanently in the first part, I also wish to reassess Bauman's analysis in the light of recent scholarship on the Holocaust.

Searching for the origin of cruelty

Early in his book, Bauman quotes Herbert Kelman's finding that moral inhibitions against violent atrocities

tend to be eroded once three conditions are met, singly or together: the violence is *authorized* (by official orders coming from legally entitled quarters), actions are *routinized* (by rule-governed practices and exact specification of roles), and the victims of the violence are *dehumanized* (by ideological definitions and indoctrinations).

(MH: 21)

The important point is that it is within the powers of a modern state apparatus to produce and sustain all three conditions. There is nothing extraordinary about any one of them; they are, and remain, perfectly within reach once the central bodies of a modern state have singled out a group of people as the target for 'special treatment'. In his monumental study *The Destruction of the European Jews*, much relied upon by Bauman, historian Raul Hilberg (1985: 999) draws up the following chart to illuminate how a destruction process in a modern society will be structured:

Definition

Dismissal of employees and expropriation of business firms

Concentration

Exploitation of labour and starvation measures

Annihilation

Confiscation of personal effects

The moral relevance of this sequence is that each step contributes to the 'gradual silencing of moral inhibitions'. This ensures that the moment of actual murder – completing the sequence and being the aim of the policies – is unaccompanied by human inhibitions of any kind, including the impact of specific emotions, be it fear, fury or hatred. Every step completed removes the targeted group increasingly from sight. The victims appear as elsewhere, unknown and anonymous; they become invisible, faceless, they cease to be men and women, individual persons partaking in concrete social encounters and in the give-and-take of first-hand human experience. Their being murdered, so utterly concrete, psychologically and physically, to the victims, becomes wholly abstract to those participating in murdering them. The upshot is the complete dehumanisation of the victims, not only in an ideologically induced sense but psychologically as well.

In a way wholly at one with Bauman's analysis, Hilberg sums up what is at stake:

Killing is not as difficult as it used to be. The modern administrative apparatus has facilities for rapid, concerted movements and for efficient massive killings. These devices not only trap a large number of victims; they also require a greater degree of specialization, and with that division of labour, the moral burden too is fragmented among the participants. The perpetrator can now kill his victims without touching them, without hearing them, without seeing them.

(Hilberg, 1985: 1187)

It was crucially important for the Nazis to remove the victims from sight, argues Bauman, because 'morality did not travel that far'. Why? Because 'morality tends to stay at home and in the present' (MH: 190). Encountering distance – distance as systematically brought about by and sustained in the institutional structures of modernity such as bureaucracy – morality halts. Morality – inhibitions against causing suffering – does not bridge the distance increasingly separating ego from alter, perpetrator from victim in the context of mass murder as carried out within and in virtue of the institutions peculiar to modernity. The invisible other – the other rendered invisible by mechanisms of distanciation – is a morally lost other.

Bauman draws upon social psychologist Stanley Milgram's classic experiments, published in his book *Obedience to Authority*, to explain the implications of what he considers Milgram's main finding – namely *the inverse ratio of readiness to cruelty and proximity to its victim*. Bauman writes: 'It is difficult to harm a person we touch. It is somewhat easier to afflict pain upon a person we only see at a distance. It is still easier in the case of a person we only hear. It is quite easy to be cruel towards a person we neither see nor hear' (MH: 155). The increase brought about in the physical and – with that – psychological distance between the act and its consequences – what I as an agent do here and now, and what another person in the role of victim experiences at some other time and place, yet partly as the accumulated effects of my action as one among many – 'quashes the moral significance of the act and thereby pre-empts all conflict between personal standards of moral decency and immorality of the social consequences of the act' (MH: 25). Bauman arrives at the conclusion that 'inhumanity is a matter of social relationships' (MH: 154). Harshly criticising Adorno et al.'s influential study *The Authoritarian Personality* for neglecting the extra-individual factors that induce authoritarian behaviour in people otherwise devoid of an 'authoritarian personality', Bauman launches his thesis that 'cruelty correlates with patterns of social interaction much more closely than it does with personality features or other individual idiosyncrasies of the perpetrators'. Hence 'cruelty is social in its origin much more than it is characterological' (MH: 166). This thesis renders naive the common assumption that it matters just what sort of biography, or personality, as well as what sort of beliefs the individuals involved may have, exhibiting as they do Milgram's so-called 'agentic state', whereby the individual's sense of responsibility has been

shifted away onto the larger institutional matrix, shrinking the focus to the purely technical aspects of one's action – highly specialised as it is – and so highlighting the *how* – as opposed to the *to whom* – of one's performance. In keeping with Milgram's experimental findings, then, Bauman insists that the hallmark of the Holocaust, indeed its necessary condition, is the systematic *uncoupling of large-scale evil from the vicissitudes of human psychology altogether*: killing having turned abstract, the particular personality-based motives, beliefs and feelings (aggression and hatred included) of the individual actor, is *dissociated* from the process of completing the genocide. And should such features as differentiate the one participant from the other be played out, it would only hamper the smoothness and predictability of goal attainment. To echo Hannah Arendt (1951), we may say that a context is established where motives qua emphatically individual have become superfluous, save the purely professional one of the task at hand, viewing oneself and what one does as purely a means and not for a moment entertaining – or needing to entertain – the question of ends. Identity, meaning, pride – these dimensions of one's action do not evaporate, but they concentrate purely and exclusively on the technical performance – the how, not the why or what for. This is Weber's means-oriented mindset in pure form: instrumental rationality.

Bauman calls his theory of morality a sociological one. He does so because he holds cruelty – the readiness to inflict suffering and pain – to correlate with specific patterns of social interaction. Importantly, he rejects the assumption guiding virtually all previous sociological accounts of morality – namely that morality is a product of society, that society is to be regarded as a gigantic morality-producing plant; in short, that 'society promotes morally regulated behaviour and marginalises, suppresses or prevents immorality'. Bauman wages war on the deep-seated trust in social arrangements as 'ennobling, elevating, humanizing factors' (MH: 173). Invoking a famous passage in Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, Bauman praises her for raising the question of 'moral responsibility for resisting socialization'. This, and nothing less radical, is at issue, because 'in the aftermath of the Holocaust . . . moral theory faced the possibility that morality may manifest itself in insubordination towards socially upheld principles, and in an action openly defying social solidarity and consensus' (MH: 177). It takes a *break with the society at large*, with the socially sustained and legally upheld principles, to preserve a genuine moral point of view. To think, judge and act morally would mean to go against the grain, in a situation where, as Arendt noted, taking part in the murder of innocent millions of men, women and children has the status of moral action, being legally sanctioned and induced by all institutions, whereas such acts as stealing a cigarette from a Jewish victim, not to mention trying to hide Jews seeking to escape, qualify as downright immoral and to be punished as such.

In thus turning the tables on Durkheim's model of morality, Bauman has to come up with an alternative to the paradigm he rejects, that morality is a product of society. 'Morality', Bauman asserts, 'is something society manipulates – exploits, re-directs, jams' (MH: 183). If the ability to tell right from wrong is not an achievement of socialisation and is not grounded in society, in what *is* it grounded, then?

The factors responsible for the presence of moral capacity, Bauman tells us, 'must be sought in the *social*, but not *societal* sphere. Moral behaviour is conceivable only in the context of coexistence, of "being with others", that is a social context' (MH: 179). Crucial though this distinction between the social and the societal is, I find it somewhat ad hoc and lacking in analytic and empirical clarity.

More important for my purposes is Bauman's assertion of a direct link between proximity and responsibility: 'Responsibility arises out of the proximity of the other. Proximity means responsibility, and responsibility *is* proximity'. Conversely, the moral attribute of social distance is lack of moral relationship, or heterophobia. 'Responsibility is silenced once proximity is eroded; it may eventually be replaced with resentment once the fellow human subject is transformed into an Other' (MH: 184).

To assess Bauman's thesis that responsibility *is* proximity, we need to know what Bauman fails to tell us in precise terms: What is proximity?

Proximity is a complex phenomenon, involving distinct dimensions that may come in various constellations.

On the one hand, proximity carries a strong *spatial* connotation. This seems to be the sense of proximity illuminated – at least primarily – in Milgram's experiments, crucial to Bauman's account. By manipulating space and placing – or removing – physical barriers between subject and victim, Milgram was able to observe the difference seeing, hearing and touching the victim made to the subject's performance. This supports the thesis of an unequivocal correlation between spatial location and readiness to inflict pain.

On the other hand – and challenging the thesis in its just given form – I will argue that the moral significance of proximity also derives from its non-spatial dimension. Think of the sense in which we say that someone is 'close' to us. Such psychic closeness signifies a meaning of human proximity that cannot be measured in terms of spatial (co)presence/absence. And yet its performative impact is beyond doubt. Would it not make a difference to the subject's performance if he was told that the (unseen, unheard) person behind the wall was in fact someone he knew? The force yielded by this *emotionally charged* variable – knowing the physically non-(co)present other – would diminish the impact of the spatial variable presence/absence; it would inspire increased reluctance to go on obeying instructions to administer shocks known to be painful. They would now be perceived as pain inflicted on a concrete known somebody as opposed to an unknown anybody.

Granted that we generally care more for a person we know than for someone unknown, the factor of knowing may override the factor of physical presence/absence so central in Milgram's experiments. To say this is to acknowledge that a person seen can matter *less* to us than one out of sight. Conduct – the choice whether or not to inflict pain – depends on perception. It depends on how that 'other' is disclosed to us and who he or she 'is' to us. The impact of psychological realness/closeness may outweigh the impact of physical closeness, of proximity in its spatial sense. In conduct-guiding perception, the spatial variable is overridden by

social ones such as knowing/not-knowing and extra-individual ones such as ideological stereotypes, opaque bureaucracy and advanced technology.

These observations draw attention to how Milgram's experiments – so relied upon by Bauman to demonstrate the role played by proximity – are lacking in complexity. In particular, their appropriateness for helping explain how the Holocaust could be carried out is limited by the failure to investigate the significance of knowing the victim's *identity*. The contrast is glaring: Milgram's subjects are not told, do not know, what sort of a person the victim is; personnel carrying out the Holocaust in some capacity or other *knew* that those targeted were Jews: indeed, their group identity as Jews was the very feature that singled them out as targets in the first place.

The all-important point for Bauman is that proximity and responsibility be regarded as two sides of the same coin, as claimed by Emmanuel Levinas. The pair proximity–responsibility contrasts sharply with social distance, the chief attribute of which is 'lack of moral relationship, or heterophobia'. It follows that 'responsibility is silenced once proximity is eroded' (MH: 184).

Levinas, then, has shown us whence responsibility springs: from proximity to the human other. Now, the carrying out of mass murder requires that *such proximity be eliminated*; hence will responsibility, its corollary, be prevented from being felt by the individual agent. The Holocaust, stresses Bauman, was premised upon the Nazi regime's success in 'isolating the machinery of murder from the sphere where primeval moral drives arise and apply, of rendering such drives marginal or altogether irrelevant to the task' (MH: 188). By performatively removing the conditions of responsibility, immorality – in the form of collective evil, genocide – could take place.

In my view, there is a certain vulnerability involved in how Bauman relies on Levinas in making his argument. If it emerges that the Holocaust *retained*, instead of removing and suspending, a context of proximity between perpetrators and victims, then Bauman's use of Levinas' postulation of an intrinsic link between proximity and responsibility, and so between proximity and morality in its positive sense, to help answer the question of how the Holocaust could happen, is seriously undermined.

Mistaking the bureaucratic design for the reality

Among the historical studies contrasting sharply with Bauman's account, Daniel J. Goldhagen's *Hitler's Willing Executioners* figures prominently. Goldhagen identifies 'racial eliminationalist antisemitism' as a 'sufficiently potent motivator' to 'lead Germans to kill Jews willingly' (1996: 417). The camp system encouraged and allowed for a 'world of unrestrained impulses and cruelty' (p. 457).

Goldhagen's study represents a corrective to the *thesis of abstraction* that is all-important in Bauman. The corrective is twofold: it concerns both the theoretical-sociological explanation of *how* the Holocaust could happen and the empirical description of the *way* it was carried out. Focusing on Police Battalion 101's role in the open-air shootings of hunted-down Jews in various parts of the Soviet

Union from 1941 onward, Goldhagen paints a detailed picture of how the killings took place: namely in circumstances of proximity to the victims, all of them – including children – within eminent reach of all the senses. A far cry indeed from the mechanisms of abstraction emphasised by Bauman.

Notwithstanding the valid criticisms that have been directed at Goldhagen's account, spanning everything from his tendency to psychologise the perpetrators to his predilection for simple monocausal explanation, he does draw attention to a dimension largely neglected in Bauman's book: the widespread factual occurrence of perpetrator–victim, person-to-person encounters and proximity in the carrying out of the Holocaust. The Nazi genocide did not exhibit one – all-pervasive, omnipresent – *modus operandi*, highlighted in industrialised killing-centres such as the gas-chambers of Auschwitz, clearly the crime scene that Bauman considers signatory. In addition to such agents as the Police Battalion, consider the *Einsatzgruppen* such as unit 4a, which carried out up-close, murder-by-shooting of 33,771 Jews in the course of less than 48 hours in Babij Jar on 29th and 30th September 1941, the victims being all but anonymous, faceless, a diffuse mass, being instead seen and heard, touched and smelled, within eminent physical closeness.

True, Goldhagen focuses on material taken from different areas of action, and on different units, than those most relevant to Bauman's claims and conclusions, general and sweeping as they are. So we may say that they talk past each other rather than the one account simply refuting the other.

In a study closer to Bauman's than Goldhagen, namely German sociologist Wolfgang Sofsky's *The Order of Terror*, the argument is that the camps were arenas for what Sofsky calls 'absolute power', exercised by individuals who enjoy absolute freedom, willingly – sometimes euphorically so – rather than grudgingly or reluctantly. Like Auschwitz survivor Primo Levi before him, Sofsky emphasises that the bestiality that characterised much of the killings in the camps was of a conspicuously *excessive* kind, going far beyond what can be deemed necessary for the killing of the victims. Far from something avoided, something the killing would better do without, this bestiality becomes an end in itself: it becomes an end in itself to indulge in the destruction of humans, making sure the victims are destroyed in so many more or less subtle ways *prior* to their eventual physical murder, with all that precedes it in terms of humiliation and enforced self-denigration, this being what for the perpetrators captures the essence of the destruction, rendering the end point – the physical death of the victims – trivial in comparison. Primo Levi wrote about the *gratuitous cruelty* he witnessed everywhere he looked in the camp; about the 'useless violence' visited upon the inmates day in day out; a violence that on the one hand seemed utterly pointless and useless, and on the other hand what made the perpetrators' actions meaningful, even deeply satisfactory to them (Amery, 1980; Levi, 1988; Vetlesen, 2020).

What we come to understand, then, is that distance between perpetrator and victim was in no way the rule at every stage of the sequence ending in 'industrialised' killing in the camps. And even there, plenty of direct physical encounters between the Nazi personnel and the inmates took place. The point Sofsky's study helps us recognise is that, far from distantiating being the sought-for *modus operandi* at all

stages, proximity was in many instances the *preferred* – deliberately created and maintained – context of interaction; preferred because it suited the infliction of *maximal* pain that was such a crucial element of the SS personnel’s behaviour towards the victims.

There isn’t the space here to invoke the scholarship of other Holocaust researchers, such as Omer Bartov, Yehuda Bauer, Michael Wildt, Ulrich Herbert and Jan Gross, to substantiate the point that Bauman may be charged with *mistaking the bureaucratic design for the reality*. His Weber-inspired, top-down thesis rests upon the assumption that the abstraction-feeding design – instrumental rationality enjoying free reign over yet another sociological territory ‘freed’ from the moral dynamics of personal intercourse – almost fully translated into the manner in which the killings comprising the whole sequence – the Holocaust – were carried out.

Put differently, Bauman’s claim is that what accompanied, indeed: what made possible the Holocaust was the blurring of any recognised difference between producing dead bodies and producing soap; between handling things and handling humans. To postulate such eradication of distinct boundaries as a Nazi policy, as determining a ‘design’, is one thing. But to hold that it captures the fashion in which individuals *experienced* what they did is quite another, and it makes for a much more contentious claim, vulnerable to be proven wrong by empirical research.

While I agree with the criticism that is sometimes voiced that Bauman pays too little attention to the Nazi ideology, granting pride of place to structural components of modernity such as bureaucracy and other vehicles of abstraction and distanciation, for me the truly important point is that such an ideology (as the Nazi one) can only motivate people to do what they do, and to view it as justified, being morally sanguine about it, on the condition that the ideology in question *resonate deeply and existentially with psychological dispositions* – needs and longings, desires and fears – to be found in the individual, yet malleable, receptive to channelling and manipulation by extra-individual societal forces. Rather than collective evildoing resting on an *uncoupling* between the particular individual’s beliefs and desires, and the goals pursued on the macro-level by large institutions in which individuals perform the action required of them, such organised evil will often occur in a situation where individual motives and institutional forces *meet halfway*; when they are allowed to *merge*, to work in tandem, more or less symbiotically, in the same direction. That such a merging take place, ensuring that the individual has a personal stake, an existential urgency, in participating in large-scale violence, is the pivotal danger, not indifference as implied in Bauman’s notion of adiaphorisation.

Excommunication from shared humanity

I turn now to the case of Bosnia. Consider this account of the *modus operandi* characteristic of what the world would come to know as ‘ethnic cleansing’:

It was one thing to lay siege to Sarajevo, but in the ethnically mixed villages of Bosnia, the Bosnian Serb forces could not pursue ethnic cleansing

successfully on their own. They had to transform these local Serbs who were either still undecided about joining the fight or frankly opposed to it into their accomplices. The natural impulse for self preservation was the fighters' greatest ally, provided they could summon up the necessary ruthlessness. One common method used was for a group of Serb fighters to enter a village, go to a Serb house, and order the man living there to come with them to the house of his Muslim neighbour. As the other villagers watched, he was marched over and the Muslim brought out. Then the Serb would be handed a Kalashnikov assault rifle or a knife – knives were better – and ordered to kill the Muslim. If he did so, he had taken that step across the line that the Chetniks [the Serb forces] had been aiming for. But if he refused, as many did, the solution was simple. You shot him on the spot. Then you repeated the process with the next Serb householder. If he refused, you shot him. The Chetniks rarely had to kill a third Serb.

(Rieff, 1995: 110)

In stark contrast to Bauman's account of the how the Holocaust was carried out, 'ethnic cleansing' in Bosnia seizes upon and *maintains* existing conditions of proximity between perpetrator and victim, and frequently also draws all kinds of bystanders into the violence, enforcing their transition from spectators to fellow participants; indeed, the perpetrators create such conditions if they are not present and prolong them whenever they seem to wane. The result is a deliberately accomplished super-personalised violence, where whole families were forced to be witnesses to torture, rapes and killings; where Serb militia men made a point of singling out for particularly cruel treatment persons known to them beforehand (as classmates, colleagues, lovers, friends or simply neighbours); and where the supreme form of humiliation was to force relatives to rape, wound or kill each other. Such enforced *intra-familial* – hence intravictim – violence was in fact a speciality among the Bosnian Serbs, evolving into a routinised ritual in concentration camps like Omarska, Manjaca, Trnopolje and Kerasame. To my knowledge, we find no parallel to this in the Nazi genocide. A systematic feature of the latter was precisely the separation of family members (husbands and wives, parents and children) immediately upon arrival in the death camp. And correspondingly, whereas secrecy was a key component in the implementation of the Holocaust – secrecy among the perpetrators, towards the victims and towards the outside world – 'ethnic cleansing' in Bosnia was about making sure that the victims as well as their neighbours experience the torture, the rapes and the killings as publicly as possible, exposing the violence to the largest possible number so as to engulf them in it and render no one outside of its reach.

This amounts to the following scenario:

Perpetrators at the Omarska camp referred to each of its three buildings or spaces according to how victims would be made to suffer. In such a manner, surplus cruelty became suffused with the aura of macabresque aesthetics. The Omarska courtyard came to be known as the 'Pista', a place of mass

killings. A crammed hangar building was named the ‘White House’ and housed the implementation of torture. Another building was called the ‘Red House’ because it became the location of immediate execution. Another area was known as ‘the Garage’ because it served as a carceral area crammed with prisoners. Victims placed in the Omarska garage overwhelmingly wilted, fading in the heat of their own sweat, and suffered eventual death by means of dehydration and suffocation from overcrowding. In the building known as the ‘White House’ the rooms were crowded with 45 people in a room no larger than 25 square meters. The faces of the detainees were distorted and bloodstained and the walls were covered with blood. The role of the epidermal surface was erased as bodies became compressed, one against all the others. The detainees were beaten with fists, rifle butts, and wooden and metal sticks. The guards mostly hit the heart and the kidneys, when they had decided to beat someone to death. In the ‘Garage’, between 150–160 people were ‘packed like sardines’ and the heat was unbearable. . . . Macabresque aesthetics of performative transgression typically signify the ludic, a desire for theatricality. . . . When death came to prisoners it was designed to arrive in the company of the many, who die not alone but together, in a bunch. As a result, the victims felt, saw, and heard the death throbs of others, as they themselves were dying. In Omarska, killings were usually by shooting, beating or cutting throats, although on one night of frenzied killing, prisoners were incinerated on a pyre of burning tires. Macabresque theatricality lingers on the *noir* ecstasy of perverse desire realized through performative transgressions that include the near-dead being made to dig their own collective graves. . . . The dead would be loaded on to trucks by their friends or with bulldozers. Sometimes prisoners were taken to dig the graves; they did not return.

(Weisband, 2018: 332)

In his book *The Macabresque*, Edward Weisband sums up as follows:

Torments and agonies are inflicted directly, person to person, and thus in the close proximity of perpetrators to their victims; perpetrators’ hands, fists, boots, rifle butts, clubs go to the bodies and brains of victims; victims are beaten, bludgeoned, pummeled, mutilated, and burned; interrogations are the sites of sustained torment. . . . victims are made to share in the violence of their own violation.

(Weisband, 2018: 333)

I shall spare you further details. The point has been made, and the questions it raises are clear: Is the quality and amount of person-to-person violence enacted in a camp like Omarska necessary to achieve the political objectives ethnic cleansing? Is it necessary to demean, humiliate and degrade the humanity of victims if what is sought is identitarian ‘cleansing’ of space (see Weisband, 2018: 334)? And what is the deeper meaning of ‘cleansing’?

Weisband puts it like this:

Mass atrocity is rarely about political, strategic, or even tactical objectives alone. Surplus cruelty does not stem from rational considerations. It is not about intelligence or reason or even primarily about rational thought let alone rational objectives, however rationalized. Nor does it stem from banal ‘thoughtlessness’. Its roots are in the psyche and emotional character of human personality in its capacities for disordered will that take their toll when shame and humiliation become fueled by mimetic rivalry, envy, the dread of the theft of thing-enjoyment and, thus, the psychodynamics of social antagonism. And so the century of genocide and mass atrocity ended as it had begun with a mimetic struggle by the willful warriors ostensibly of religion but in actuality of their own self-mystifications, Serbian Orthodox against Bosniak Muslims, all futile and altogether self-defeating.

(Weisband, 2018: 334)

As brought out in Bosnia, and the same can be said about the genocide in Rwanda in 1994 (see Jack Palmer in the next chapter), evildoing may thrive in contexts of perpetrator–victim proximity instead of shunning them. To recognise this is to raise the issue of sadism and what role it plays. Sadism is not discussed in Bauman, nor in the work of social psychologists influenced by Milgram, such as Philip Zimbardo (2007) and Harald Welzer (2005).

In my view, sadism is about seeking relief from ineluctably given existential conditions such as vulnerability, dependency, loneliness and mortality; it is an attempt to flee being exposed to the implied suffering, loss, anxiety and dread by projecting such exposedness onto others, placing it there, controlling and manipulating it there, as if it were a thing that can be moved – removed – from one person onto another, reserving vitality and subject-status for oneself, enforcing passivity and object-status onto the other (see Vetlesen, 2020). Sadism is more than sheer relief, however; it is about the joy felt at avoiding victimhood, the pleasure of hurting another and witnessing that the hurting works, proving one’s attained absolute and unrestricted control over a living human being, to paraphrase Erich Fromm (see Weisband, 2018: 345).

The enjoyment of having taken control of the experience of vulnerability in general and of victimhood in particular by inflicting them on another requires the collapse of victims’ lifeworld into the confines of raw and ravaged physicality. ‘Torture is reverse animism’, writes C. Fred Alford; ‘it reduces the world to the human body’. The collapse effected here stands in contrast to the entire life of symbolisation: ‘Body comes to symbolise a world reduced to its bare essentials, pain and power’. This prompts Alford to contend that ‘evil is uncreative because it abandons the quest to translate dread into abstract form and instead translates dread into the body and minds of others. Evil is the failure of creativity, and banality is its slogan’ (Alford, 1997: 104).

In addition to the part that sadism plays in one-to-one encounters between perpetrator and victim, it is also an element in the kind of ‘choice’ that the Serb man

told to kill his Muslim wife is confronted with. In a society where the ethnic and religious groups are mixed by intermarriage through the generations, the ‘choice’ of whom to be loyal to is not only inhuman, it is impossible. Why? Because the collectivist ideology behind ethnic cleansing only allows for the sort of loyalty that amounts to taking sides in a binary either/or, us against them, as opposed to the sort of loyalty that expresses and sustains a plurality and hence ‘a difference within unity, unity in diversity’, to quote Rusmir Mahmutcehajic (2000: 21). As the sociologist Keith Doubt points out, ‘multiculturalism’ is in fact a misnomer for recounting Bosnia’s heritage, distorting its distinctness: ‘In Bosnia, there were not multiple cultures coexisting in the same proximity; nor were there multiple cultures coexisting independently. There was a singular Bosnia culture that encompassed each ethnicity and several faiths’ (2006: 129). So when the prominent Bosnian Serb politician Milorad Dodic says that ‘in Bosnia people only feel safe with their own kind’, he grossly distorts what has been distinct about that people and their culture, pretending that the ‘kind’ he refers to always has been, and needs to be, an exclusivist version of ethnic homogeneity (see Toal and Dahlgren, 2011: 250). Indeed, it is precisely because the facts on the ground *gave the lie* to the one-to-one exclusivist correspondence between ethnicity, religion and territory propagated by the ideologues of ethnic cleansing that the attempt to impose such correspondence – village to village, city to city – had to resort to the enormous use of violence on the ground that it did.

It is difficult to overestimate how much harder reconciliation becomes when the atrocities occur in circumstances where those involved ‘used to be neighbours’, as they all say, many with outright disbelief, given the contrast between ‘before’ and ‘after’. From the perspective of a victim, say, a survivor of the rape camps, the situation can be described like this: ‘*Despite* knowing me, recognizing me, he did that to me’. ‘*Despite* being called by name by my daughter, he raped her in front of me and the rest of the family’. The ‘he’ referred to is precisely a particular individual – Herak, my former classmate; Bogdan, my brother’s friend; Milan, my dad’s colleague – as opposed to a nameless and unknown perpetrator. The contrast is that between, on the one hand, a person, a face, a voice that I will always remember, always recognise should I meet him again, say, on the street tomorrow, where he may walk freely despite what he did, enjoying the impunity that goes for the large majority of the perpetrators we talk about here; and on the other hand, ‘one of them’, unidentified, not really taken in as the particular individual he is when he did that to me, to us. In the courtroom (provided it comes to that), the contrast will typically play out as that between the victim’s ‘it’s him, no doubt in my mind’ and ‘I’m not sure this is the guy; there was so many of them, looking more or less the same’. What is noteworthy here is that the victims will tend to use the phrases we are used to hearing from their perpetrators, the one group echoing the other, such that Herak will say that ‘when you rape so many girls and women for months on end, they end up as a mass; it becomes impossible to distinguish between them as distinct individuals with distinct features’.

There is nothing new under the sun about Herak’s experience; it speaks for numerous other perpetrators, in varying circumstances of committing mass murder

on innocent people, day in, day out. Thus, when Gitta Sereny asked Franz Stangl, commandant of Treblinka, the standard question: ‘So you didn’t feel they were human beings?’, his answer was: ‘Cargo. They were cargo. I rarely saw them as individuals. It was always a huge mass’ (1974: 201).

This, then, seems to be the end point common to such different perpetrators as the hugely powerful Stangl and the low-ranking Herak in so different cases of genocide as the Holocaust and ethnic cleansing in Bosnia: at some point the individuals targeted as ‘legitimate’ objects of persecution shift from being partners in person-to-person relationships to being placed on the outside of such relationships and the sense of individual responsibility that goes with them, vanishing into a mass where they all become grey, the one indistinguishable from the other and as such unable to issue the person-directed appeal for responsibility highlighted in Levinas’ ‘thou shalt not kill’. For all the differences I have pointed to between the *modus operandi* in the two historical instances of genocide, this seems to be a feature they have in common: in the eyes of the perpetrator, his victims end up as ‘cargo’, a huge mass. However, experiencing them as such is not only, or simply, a retrospective act: how they come to be perceived after the fact of tormenting and eventually killing them. Rather it is a perception that very much coincides – kicks in, grows stronger – in the very course of the carrying out of the violence in question, a violence that *always*, no matter the varying actual circumstances, targets individuals. Whether in Nazi Germany or in Bosnia, the work of ideology and propaganda is indispensable in ensuring that what Stangl calls ‘the transition’ takes place: the process whereby the particular person targeted by the violence shifts from being a fellow human being to being dehumanised, excommunicated from the shared humanity where responsibility applies. Such excommunication is the *conditio sine qua non* of genocide, what needs to be carried out symbolically by the organs of ideology, and psychologically by the individual perpetrator. The willingness as opposed to resistance with which so many of the perpetrators played their part in this transition, relishing in the power over life and death bestowed upon them, may well be the darkest lesson to be learnt from a comparative study of genocide.

Bibliography

- Adorno, T. W., et al. 1951. *The Authoritarian Personality*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Alford, C. F. 1997. *What Evil Means to Us*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Amery, Jean, 1980. *At the Mind's Limits*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Arendt, H. 1951. *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. New York: Harcourt.
- Arendt, H. 1965. *Eichmann in Jerusalem*. New York: Viking.
- Bartov, O. 2003. *Germany's War and the Holocaust*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Bauer, Y. 2002. *Rethinking the Holocaust*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Brudholm, T., and Lang, J. (eds.). 2018. *Emotions and Mass Atrocity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Doubt, K. 2006. *Understanding Evil: Lessons from Bosnia*. New York: Fordham University Press.
- Goldhagen, D. J. 1996. *Hitler's Willing Executioners*. New York: Vintage Books.

- Gross, J. 2001. *Neighbors*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Herbert, U. 2001. *Best*. Bonn: Dietz.
- Hilberg, R. 1985. *The Destruction of the European Jews*. New York: Holmes & Meier.
- Levi, P. 1988. *The Drowned and the Saved*. London: Abacus.
- Levinas, E. 1991. *Totality and Infinity*. Dordrecht: Kluwer.
- Mahmutcehajic, R. 2000. *The Denial of Bosnia*. University Park: Penn State Press.
- Milgram, S. 1994. *Obedience to Authority*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Rieff, D. 1995. *Slaughterhouse*. London: Virago.
- Sereny, G. 1974. *Into that Darkness*. London: Pimlico.
- Sofsky, W. 1993. *Die Ordnung des Terrors*. Frankfurt/M.: Fischer.
- Toal, G., and Dahlman, C. T. 2011. *Bosnia Remade: Ethnic Cleansing and Its Reversal*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Vetlesen, A. J. 2020. The Intellectual in Auschwitz: Between Vulnerability and Resistance. *Thesis Eleven*, 158 (1), 24–41.
- Weisband, E. 2018. *The Macabresque*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Welzer, H. 2005. *Täter. Wie aus ganz normalen Männer Massenmörder werden*. Frankfurt/M.: Fischer.
- Wildt, M. 2003. *Generation des Unbedingten*. Hamburg: Hamburger Edition.
- Zimbardo, P. 2007. *The Lucifer Effect: Understanding How Good People Turn Evil*. New York: Random House.

7 The Rwandan genocide and the multiplicity of modernity

Jack Palmer

Thought is only conceivable insofar as it is communicated and communicable. This much was demonstrated in Randall Collins's *Sociology of Philosophies*. Intellectual life, Collins argues, hinges not so much on the production of texts as on proximate situations which 'gather the intellectual community, focus members' attention on a common object uniquely their own and build up distinctive emotions around those objects'. These 'interaction rituals' in the form of lectures, debates and other kinds of structured discussion are 'chained together' with texts; the texts are situationally embodied in the relational networks in which intellectual life is entangled (Collins, 1998: 26–27). It follows that the ideas in *Modernity and the Holocaust* did not gestate in the mind of its author sat at his desk or in the library, but in dialogue with others. Zygmunt Bauman's foremost conversant was, as several chapters in this volume detail, Janina Bauman. But a broader intellectual network is suggested in its acknowledgements. Here, there are interlocutors who contributed to *Modernity and the Holocaust* in relations of physical and intimate proximity, such as Bryan Cheyette (who contributes an Afterword to this volume). But much of this network was sustained virtually, in correspondence, such as with the Budapest School exiles Ferenc Feher and Agnes Heller and the Canada-based Russian political sociologist Victor Zaslavsky.

Especially curious is an acknowledgement to the Israel-based sociologist, Shmuel Noah Eisenstadt. Apart from a brief period of Bauman's writing on postmodernity (Bauman, 1992: ch. 2), these key figures of post-classical sociology are more-or-less absent from each other's writings. In later life, Bauman emphatically denied that he had any affinity with Eisenstadt's particular type of sociology which he dismissed as a reiteration of the 'Durksonian' managerial sociology that he'd skewered throughout the 1970s (Bauman and Weil, 2011; Bauman, 1976). The only apparent reference to Bauman in Eisenstadt's work is in a footnote, named among 'Sovietologists' with expertise on patron–client relations in communist societies (Eisenstadt and Roniger, 1981: 233). Considering their respective oeuvres, there is a sense of two figures monologuing past each other, despite having together attended some of international sociology's Most prestigious 'interaction rituals' from at least the 1960s,¹ including the conferences at Amalfi which shares the name of a prize given to each of them (Bauman in 1989, in recognition of *Modernity and the Holocaust*, and Eisenstadt in 2001).

And yet, in the Janina and Zygmunt Bauman papers at the University of Leeds, there is a series of letters between them that evince mutual admiration and shared preoccupations, including the challenge that the Holocaust – an event that effected both biographically – posed to sociology. In this chapter, I wish to situate their dialogue in an extension of the modernity-genocide thesis to the case of Rwanda, in effect putting the thinkers' dialogue into dialogue with an event which continues to pose significant and largely unarticulated questions for sociology.

The possibilities of a dialogue

In these letters, exchanged prior to the publication of *Modernity and the Holocaust*, Bauman admitted:

I am grappling with the same topics (issues, problems) which are in the very centre of your interests. Though I must admit that by comparison with your work mine is more like groping in the dark. I have neither your immense cognitive horizon nor the ability to pursue ideas with your relentless, grinding logic.²

Bauman sent Eisenstadt a copy of his essay 'Sociology after the Holocaust' (Bauman, 1988), which would become the first chapter of *Modernity and the Holocaust*. Eisenstadt reported having been deeply impressed after reading it during a stay in Krakow, which had included a visit to Auschwitz. Amidst discussions of their increasingly frantic flying schedules, Eisenstadt also informed Bauman that he had been 'busy at home finishing the book on comparative civilizations'.³ This work was the root of his later paradigm of multiple modernities, which first appeared in his scholarly vocabulary a few years after their correspondence (Eisenstadt, 1993). Contact cut off soon after this letter about Bauman's essay and was seemingly not re-established. Apart from a glowing review by Bauman of *Fundamentalism, Sectarianism and Revolution* (Bauman, 2001) – Eisenstadt's longest treatise on the theme of violence – the networks and preoccupations that brought them into dialogue seemed to unravel.

I wish to extend this circumscribed dialogue, approaching it in terms of the questions of mass violence and genocide that they both broach in their writings. This extension is attuned to the *possibilities of the dialogue* rather than to its absences and elisions. It is an imaginative rather than documentary exercise. Moreover, in evoking *possibilities* and *dialogue*, it brings them together around two keywords in their respective oeuvres which have an important bearing on the way that they understood violence. *Modernity and the Holocaust* does not posit that modernity and the Holocaust are inevitably twinned, the modern subject effectively 'living in Auschwitz' (MH: 87). For Bauman, the Holocaust was, and remains, a *possibility* of modernity. It was, and is potentially, a concatenation of modern logics and institutional arrangements actualised in a moment of acute societal crisis. Similarly, Eisenstadt argued that 'barbarism' haunts

modernity as its inner potential, a point that he repeatedly made in his post-2000 era writings:⁴

Barbarism is not a vestige of premodern times, a survival of ‘dark ages’. It is inherent in modernity, it epitomises the dark side of modernity. Modernity bore within itself not only the various great emancipatory visions, not only the great promises of continuous self-correction and expansion, but also very *destructive possibilities* – violence, aggression, war and genocide.

(Eisenstadt, 2003: 561, my emphasis)

Barbarism is, for Eisenstadt, an expression of the ‘traumas of modernity’, derived not from ‘outbursts of old ‘traditional’ forces’ but produced as ‘the result of the ongoing *dialogue* between modern reconstruction and seemingly ‘traditional’ forces’ (2003: 560, my emphasis).

Bauman’s argument against particularising the Holocaust stressed its continuity with routine features of modern societies. Eisenstadt’s, by contrast, placed the Holocaust in a comparative-historical frame. It was the central event in a lineage, including the Jacobin terror, the atrocities of European colonial-imperialism and the Armenian genocide and, in the post-Holocaust world, in the exterminatory campaign of the Khmer Rouge and the genocidal conflicts of the 1990s in the breakup of the Yugoslav federation and the African Great Lakes region. The Rwandan genocide of 1994 took place in the latter region, in the interim between the publication of Bauman’s *Modernity and the Holocaust* and Eisenstadt’s programmatic ‘Multiple Modernities’ essay, originally published in 2000 in *Daedalus*.

It was in Rwanda that Bauman’s thesis concerning the confluence of modernity and bureaucratically administered genocide was most significantly challenged (Marshman, 2008; Jones, 2011: 426–427; Lieberman, 2012: 6). Around 800,000 people were killed in just 100 days between April and August, largely with crude agricultural implements and small firearms. There were no isolated camps or sites of exception; killing was typically face-to-face, personalised, highly affective and occurred in communal spaces of everyday life. Bauman would, after the cataclysms of the 1990s, recognise that those genocidal events which happened after the publication of *Modernity and the Holocaust* demanded understanding.⁵ In the afterword included in the 2000 edition of *Modernity and the Holocaust*, he posited similarity (though in the process missing the fundamental asymmetry of the Rwandan genocide):

Up to six million Jews were murdered wholesale not for what any of them had done but for how they had all been classified – just as, quite recently, in another hour of ultimate triumph of all-defining, all-classifying modern bureaucracy, the armed gangs of Hutus and Tutsis of Rwanda set off their victims from the others who shared the same look, language and religion, but who were meant to kill rather than be killed, simply according to the entries in their passports.

(MH: 228)

Later, however, he made a sharp differentiation. The Nazi and Stalinist genocides adhered to a ‘societal’ logic marked by a millennial zeal for order-building, he claimed, whereas violence in Bosnia and in Rwanda were said to be examples of a ‘communal logic’ of ‘neighbourly imperialism’. Though both are ‘offshoots of the modern condition’, the latter are oriented towards community-building rather than the realisation of utopian blueprints, the violent reassertion of particularistic collective identities and *gemeinschaft* bonds in the voids created by the ‘liquid modern’ divorce of power from politics (Bauman, 2008: 78–119, 2010: 99–107).

This inconsistent engagement is not satisfactory. Genocidal violence in Rwanda was in fact made possible by an achieved level of state organisation and bureaucratic administration that extended deep into the lives of individuals. Contrary to representations of the genocide then and now, mass killing was also organised with a stratified and hierarchical division of labour and was construed instrumentally as a task, replete with concerns for efficiency, orderliness and security. More than this, genocide was committed with reference to a distinctive intellectualistic vision and was situated within a specifically experienced and interpreted trajectory of modernity which moved through the traumas of colonial-imperialism, the possibilities of decolonisation and the enclosures of ‘post’-colonialism. It thus unfolded on spatio-temporal terrain into which Bauman rarely meaningfully ventured, the basis of charges of Eurocentrism (Gilroy, 2000: 87; Rattansi, 2017). Eisenstadt too, for his part, left his allusions to the ‘traumas of modernity’ in Rwanda intriguingly hanging and African societies, though the focus of some of his earlier work on ‘post-tradition’, hardly figured as a case study of multiple modernities which tended to draw on the Axial civilisations of Eurasia (Palmer, 2020).

And yet, especially in bringing them into dialogue, I suggest, a modern genocide typically excluded from the discourse of modernity is brought into focus. The modernity of genocide, I argue, should not be understood as related to an isolated event occurring at an achieved state of institutional development that approximates that of Western state-societies. It should rather be understood as an emergent product of specific interpretations of the modern cultural and political programme and attempts to institutionalise them in entangled historical trajectories through modernity, defined as a shared global condition.⁶ If modernity is multiplicitous, formed in the fusion of the modern social imaginary with open-ended sociocultural traditions and historical experience, and if genocide is an ever-present possibility of modernity, then there must also be multiple modern genocides.

Rwanda’s trajectory to and through modernity

The colonial experience

When European explorers arrived in the late nineteenth century, Rwanda was a ‘monarchical state’ evincing a high degree of political centralisation, hierarchical organisation and cultural integration. In the kingdom – known as *Nyiginya* – existed

a court sensibility based on aesthetic and linguistic patterns of differentiation, consciously distinct from the 'commoner' culture of the periphery into which the court was expanding. This process was accompanied by the migration of settlers from the centre to the periphery and was intertwined with the development of land tenure systems and centralised tributary taxation. It is in this context of core-periphery relations and state formation that the terms 'Hutu' and 'Tutsi' originated. The latter denoted a proximity to the political elite of the court. Hutu evolved as 'a demeaning term that alluded to rural boorishness or loutish behaviour' and was applied without discrimination to all those outside of the kingdom (Vansina, 2004: 134–135). These categories were institutionalised under *mwami* (king) Rujugiri's (c. 1770–1786) rule in the eighteenth century, when the terms came to refer to the military distinction between combatants (Tutsi) and non-combatants (Hutu). In the nineteenth century, they came to denote a differentiation between *umunyankenke*, or 'chiefs of the long grass' (Tutsi) and *umunyabutaka*, agriculturalist 'chiefs of the land' (Hutu). The distinction took on an increased significance when *mwami* Rwabugiri (c. 1860–1895) introduced a *corvée* system called *uburetwa*, overseen by Tutsi land chiefs with links to the royal court. Extended outwards from the centre of the kingdom, it eroded the autonomy of 'Hutu' lineages with tenure over the land. It was accompanied by *ubuhake*, a social institution represented by the granting of cattle from a patron to a client, which supplemented increasing divide between pastoralists and agriculturalists (C. Newbury, 1988; Nkurikiyimfura, 1994; Twagiramutara, 1998). The Hutu–Tutsi distinction, then, mutated and sharpened over time, passing through multiple institutional forms. It manifested in outright localised social conflict towards the end of Rwabugiri's rule, the response of a subject group opposing the incursion of court society into under-integrated peripheral regions (Rwabukumba and Mundandagizi, 1974; Vansina, 2004: 136–139, 191–192).

The colonial situation in Rwanda thus unfolded at a fateful juncture. European explorers exacerbated a social crisis generated by *Mwami* Rwabugiri's death in 1895, which inaugurated a period of interregnum in the *Nyiginya* court as rival dynasties fought for power. This confrontation, moreover, occurred at the height of the 'racial century', between 1850 and 1950, when European racial systems of classification and normalisation were significantly advanced and influential both without and within the continent (Moses, 2002). Resultantly, the contingent circumstances of crisis in the *Nyiginya* court were interpreted by early explorers with reference to a racial theory known as the Hamitic Hypothesis. Its premise was that all signs of civilisation in Africa could be traced to semi-Caucasian descendants of Ham, son of Noah. It was first elaborated in the writings of John Hanning Speke, who had been struck at the Karegwe royal court in Northwest Tanzania by the 'fine oval faces, large eyes, and high noses' of the ruling class, 'denoting the best blood of Abyssinia' (Speke, 1864: 203). In this schema, the Hamitic Tutsi were a 'great immigrant race that appears to have come down in distant times from the north' to rule over the Bantu 'Bahutu and dwarf Batwa, who are the slave tribes or working classes' (Jack, 1914: 245; Barns, 1923: 40–41). These racial categories were suffused with moral judgements. A Belgian doctor

discussed in 1948 how the Hamitic Tutsi ‘are 1.9 metres high’, are ‘slender’ and ‘possess straight noses, high foreheads, thin lips’ and discerned in them a ‘certain refinement’ that – foreboding of the genocidal hate speech which proliferated in Rwanda in the 1990s – masked ‘a sense of treachery’ (in Chrétien, 2003: 72).

Following a period of German military occupation established in 1890, through a period of German indirect rule from 1907, the Belgian administration from 1925 became a determining factor in reinforcing *mwamiship* in the context of its crisis following Rwabugiri’s death, supporting the *Nyiginya* court’s hold over the peripheries and in incorporating previously under-integrated regions. *Ubugake* clientship and the *uburetwa* system became more coercive and far-reaching, and the complex and multilayered chief system of precolonial Rwanda were streamlined in the creation of a hierarchical system of chiefs and subchiefs, almost always Tutsi (C. Newbury, 1988: 62–64). Far from steamrolling ‘traditional’ Rwanda, the organisational form of indirect rule romanticised its precolonial social evolution, animated by a colonial–anthropological framework that fetishised and, fatefully, *racialised* tradition, freezing an evolving conflict in the manner of what Olúfèmi Taiwò terms ‘sociocryonics’ (Taiwò, 2010: 25). According to a colonial administrator in the Rwandan capital Kigali in 1938, the aim of indirect rule was to act as ‘a safeguard of traditions and a brake upon their evolution’; as ‘a melting pot in which past and present tendencies [would] coalesce’; and as ‘the means whereby a progressive and progressist, yet slow and smooth, assimilation could be achieved’ (Lemarchand, 1970: 75–76).

Decolonisation and the cultural and political programme of modernity

This experience of colonial modernity framed the interpretations which drove movements of decolonisation in Rwanda. The *Mouvement Social Muhutu*, born in southern and central Rwanda in the 1950s, expressed its demands most clearly in the publication of the *Bahutu Manifesto* of 1957. Composed by Hutu intellectuals and former seminarians, the document presented a fundamental challenge to the ‘feudal system’ of monarchical Rwanda, and called for ‘the economic and political emancipation of the Muhutu from his traditional subjugation to the Hamites’ (United Nations, 1957: 41). The movement was ‘charged with the social, economic and political liberation of the population’, the ‘democratisation of the institutions of the country’, and the ‘definitive abolition of the feudality that has handicapped the general progress of the nation’ (PARMEHUTU, 1960). In 1959, in response there emerged a political party called UNAR (*Union Nationale Rwandaise*). It was ostensibly dedicated to ‘the union of all Rwandese for the purpose of achieving true progress in all spheres’ (in Lemarchand, 1970: 158). The theme of kingship found its way into their numerous publications and pamphlets, where it was often suggested that Hutu, Tutsi and Twa people had resided for aeons in harmony with each other before successive European administrations drove a wedge between them with their racial discourses. Nevertheless, behind the rhetoric of anti-colonial national unity and the fidelity to tradition, it was possible to

detect defences of parochial, monarchical interests, which burst out into the open on occasion. In response to the *Bahutu Manifesto*, for instance, 12 ‘grand clients’ of the court wrote:

Those who demand the joint division of property are those that have between them bonds of brotherhood. But relations between us (Tutsi) and they (Hutu) were always until now based on serfdom; so there is between us and them no foundation of fraternity. Indeed what relationships exist between Tutsi, Hutu and Batwa? . . . Since our kings conquered the country, killed their petty kings and thus enslaved the Hutu, how now they can they claim to be our brothers?

(Nkundabagenzi, 1958: 35–36)

The tension between these conceptions of independence exemplify multiple interpretations of modernity in one societal setting. Indeed, Eisenstadt’s framework and the research paradigm that it inspires very rarely engages the post-war era of decolonisation on the terms that it warrants: as a fertile spatio-temporal setting for the promulgation of alternative forms of modern cultural orientation and social organisation. From at least the mid-1960s, Eisenstadt was engaged in the ‘far-reaching reformulation of the vision of modernisation’ (Eisenstadt, 1987: 6) that culminated in the early-2000s in a cultural and historical sociology of modernities in the plural. ‘Orthodox’ modernisation theory, notwithstanding its biases and the neocolonial ambitions which it served, was coterminous with the emergence of the decolonisation movements of the ‘third world’. Decolonising societies represented, for social scientists concerned with modernisation, ideal laboratories for testing the premises of their developmentalist schemas; the emergence of fledgling states was ‘a new domain of intellectual conquest’ in an era marked by ‘a heightened sense of possibility’ (Cooper, 2005: 37). As such, one can observe throughout the 1950s and 1960s efforts among social scientists to delineate the nature of the ‘traditional’ societies of Africa and their ‘receptivity to change’ (in specific reference to Rwanda, see, for example, Albert, 1960; Maquet, 1961).

Eisenstadt largely eschews decolonisation in his later work. He also avoids, however, an identification of modernity with Western institutional arrangements. Modernity does not refer to an inevitable unfolding of a universal historical law led by Europe or the West. European or Western modernity rather constitutes a specific crystallisation of a more encompassing ‘civilisation’ of modernity. Crucial to this civilisation of modernity is a twofold distinction between a ‘cultural programme’, premised on the belief in the possibility that the gap between the transcendental and mundane orders could be bridged by the exercise of conscious human agency, and a ‘political programme’ that stressed the capacity of human beings to realise this possibility in projects of institutionalisation and absorb peripheral protest symbols into the core of political institutional arrangements. Modernity is a condition in need of interpretation and institutional form. The future is posited as a space for projecting possibilities latent within the present,

interpreted against the background of past historical experiences and within the horizons of open-ended sociocultural traditions. These possibilities are realisable through conscious and reflexive political action and unfold in the dynamic interplay between peripheral protest and political centre-formation. The plurality of modernity and its multiple institutional arrangements is attributable to the creative cultural interpretation and political action of collectives, in contrast to (as Larry Ray has already pointed out in this volume) Bauman's sometimes homogenising and anthropomorphising understanding of modernity.

The modern world is thus narrated as:

a story of continual constitution and reconstitution of a multiplicity of cultural programmes. These ongoing reconstructions of multiple institutional and ideological patterns are carried forward by specific social actors in close connection with social, political, and intellectual activists, and also by social movements pursuing different programmes of modernity, holding very different views on what makes societies modern. Through the engagement of these actors with broader sectors of their respective societies, unique expressions of modernity are realized.

(Eisenstadt, 2003: 536)

The social revolution which occurred in Rwanda between the years 1959 and 1961 can thus be characterised as an expression of a particular political programme of modernity. The distinctive feature of this social revolution is that the principal vector of stratification and grievance was ethnic. It was a *Hutu* revolution that bore the cultural inscription of the impingement of indirect colonial rule and the imprint of racial categories via mechanisms of census-taking, history-writing and law-making (Mamdani, 2020: 12): a colonisation of the cultural programme of the colonised.

Postcolonial traumas of modernity

The revolution was a foundational event in the narrative constitution of the postcolonial state, and was intimately connected, in Eisenstadt's terms, to the 'ideologisation' and 'sanctification' of violence in the postcolonial period. It resulted in the systematic exclusion of Tutsi people from political life, mass killing and the expulsion of many thousands of Tutsi people into neighbouring areas (Lemarchand, 1970; Des Forges, 1999: 36; Mamdani, 2001: 103; Chrétien, 2003: 299). Tutsi people *tout court* thus became a convenient scapegoat group onto which the disappointments of the early postcolonial republic were cast. In the 1960s, internal rivalries intensified between the rival factions within PARMEHUTU grappling with the tension between revolutionary aims and the lack of resources available with which to implement them. As elsewhere in postcolonial African, the state was patrimonial and prone to elite corruption and nepotism. Yet the First Republic – led by Rwanda's first president, Grégoire Kayibanda – legitimated itself by making recourse to the social revolution and its legacy. In this schema, the Hutu had wrenched power away from the 'feudal'

Tutsi of the Nyiginya court and established a true republican and majoritarian democracy. Ever-present at this time was the prospect of an invasion by insurgent groups into Rwanda. This group of exiled Tutsi were conflated with a supposed Tutsi 'fifth column' inside Rwanda and in 1963, after an armed invasion of insurgents, there were organised killings of Tutsi overseen by burgomasters and prefects, supervised by ministers appointed by the government, and with the active participation of civilians (Lemarchand, 1970; Reyntjens, 1987; Uvin, 1998).

Despite momentary effervescent homages to the revolution, Rwanda became increasingly isolated into the 1970s, prompting a coup in 1973 led by Juvénal Habyarimana. Abolishing PARMEHUTU, he headed the single political party in control of the state, renamed the *Mouvement Révolutionnaire pour le Développement* (MRND). The keyword of the new party was 'auto-development'. Rwanda was to become autonomous, self-sufficient, 'to live within its means', on the back of the hard graft of the peasantry, the people of the soil. The *coup d'état* and the birth of the Second Republic was, in Habyarimana's words:

Above all a moral coup d'état. And what we want, and we would consider our action as failed if we do not reach this goal, what we want, is to ban once and for all, the spirit of intrigue and feudal mentality. What we want is to give back labor and individual yield its real value. Because, we say it again, the one who refuses to work is harmful to society.

(in Verwimp, 2000: 335)

Significantly reminiscent of colonial-era stereotypes about Bantu agriculturalists and the Hamitic ruling class, Tutsi did not figure in this schema due to the perception that work was a defining quality of the 'Hutu nation' (Mann, 2004: 445–446).

In the 1980s, the trend towards centralisation accelerated rapidly, and with the support of development enterprises, the state extended its presence to the most remote corners of the territory and embedded itself deeply in the life of its inhabitants. The development projected externally and utilised internally was, however, stalled by a series of external shocks, particularly the collapse in the prices of exports like coffee, tea and tin. The ensuing poverty and scarcity was exacerbated by drought and land degradation. Rwanda was forced to accept a structural adjustment programmes in order to qualify for loans. It was during this period that a group called the *akazu*, meaning 'little house', came to prominence. This was a collection of people close to president Habyarimana, headed principally by his wife Agathe Habyarimana, who were representative of elite clan lineages in the north of the country. MRND, under the influence of the *akazu*, created the *interahamwe* and *impuzamugambi* paramilitaries, drawn largely from the swathes of unemployed and immiserated youth whose opportunities for advancement had been crushed (Uvin, 1998; Des Forges, 1999; Mann, 2004).

What the case of Rwanda demonstrates so clearly is that autonomous conceptions of postcolonial modernity are curtailed by, in addition to the epistemic and cognitive patterns of 'coloniality' (Ndlovu-Gatscheni, 2013), material structures of global legislation and exchange to which postcolonial states must adapt and react.

In this sense, the case of Rwanda presents a challenge to Eisenstadt's implicit conception of 'modernities' as founded on coherent and delimited political and cultural formations. In Bauman's terms, we might say that postcolonial modernity inhered in the divorce of power from politics which occurs in starkly uneven relations of global interdependency. The condition of modernity is experienced without the capacity to institutionalise it in political programmes of autonomous modernisation. Such a condition of helplessness, thwarted agency and everyday humiliation is ripe for the activation of what Bauman termed 'explosive community'. In this sense, 'globalization', he reflected in *Liquid Modernity*, 'appears to be much more successful in adding new vigour to intercommunal enmity and strife than in promoting the peaceful coexistence of communities' (Bauman, 2000: 192). The state defers its monopoly of violence to the community:

Unlike state-administered genocide (and, most prominently, the Holocaust), the kind of genocide which is the birth-ritual of explosive communities cannot be entrusted to the experts or delegated to specialised offices and units. It matters less how many 'enemies' are killed; it matters more how numerous are the killers. It also matters that the murder is committed openly, in the daylight and in full vision, that there are witnesses to the crime who know the perpetrators by name – so that retreat and hiding from retribution ceases to be a viable option and the community born of the initiatory crime remains the only refuge for the perpetrators.

(Bauman, 2000: 197)

The Rwandan genocide is especially notable for the extent of civilian participation in killing. Scott Straus (2004), in the most reliable estimation, put the number at around 200,000. Assisting the Presidential Guard and the death squads of the *interahamwe* and *impuzamugambi* were people drawn from *collines*. Killers emerged from all sectors of Rwandan society, though individual labour was stratified according to class and status. Where poor Hutu workers were likely to man roadblocks and engage in hunts of escapees in marshlands (see the perpetrator testimonies in Hatzfield, 2003), members of the clergy, business owners, university professors and doctors arranged massacres (Longman, 2011). It is in this context that relations between 'ordinary people' – neighbours, friends, professional acquaintances – facilitated large-scale violence. As put by Rosette Sebasoni, a survivor of the genocide:

The worst thing I saw was how our parents were killed by people who knew them, by their own neighbours; people who used to come and eat home, people who were once taken to hospital by our parents, people who once lived at home were the same people who came in the attack to kill them. And killed them with a painful death, that is the thing that hurts me the most. Death is a common thing, but being killed by people he never thought would ever kill him! He was good to them and everyone used to say so, but when things changed they all came to kill him.⁷

For Eisenstadt, too, genocide is related to the construction and continual reconstruction of *primordialism*. It was precisely this point that Eisenstadt argued was missing from Bauman's analysis in his response to 'Sociology after the Holocaust':

The Holocaust was not only a victory of technological rationality that superimposed itself on all moral considerations – by the way, your analysis of moral invisibility and immunization is very good indeed. To my mind it cannot be understood, I think, without taking into account the release of demonic elements which in a way are a potential component part of modernity, especially the tendency to conflate *Wertrationalitaet* and *Zweckrationalitaet*, thus in a sense ignoring all primordial elements. In other words, there developed in modernity the strong tendency not to face frontally the problem of primordial identities, and I think this has to be taken into account in the analysis.⁸

Bauman indeed significantly underplayed local participation in genocide in *Modernity and the Holocaust*, focusing instead on the 'gardening' ambitions of regime elites.⁹ The unique aspect of primordial conceptions of collective identity is that they link differences produced by the order-building effort – between inside and outside, friend and enemy, us and them – to unchangeable and inherent structures of the world (Eisenstadt, 2003: ch. 4). Primordial identities, in this sense, are not themselves primordial nor are they located exclusively in premodernity. Rather, they are continually constructed and reconstructed in distinctive social situations, particularly in situations of crisis. Primordialism therefore accompanies modernity and its inner potential for barbarism.

Barbarism, Eisenstadt argued, is a possibility of *totalising*, or 'Jacobin' interpretations of the cultural and political programme of modernity, which assumes that history is incomplete and that human beings are capable of bringing about its completion via collective action according to an absolutist vision of order (Eisenstadt, 1999). The awareness of the ultimate arbitrariness and fragility of social order can manifest in deeply aggressive or violent responses, especially towards the excluded Other defined as beyond or astride of the boundaries of order. They become 'the foci or targets of such ambivalence', depicted 'not only as strange but also as evil' (Eisenstadt, 2003: 87), subject to 'the modern drive to suppress or eliminate everything that could not or would not be precisely defined' (Bauman, 1991: 7–8). This ambivalence is intensified because its definition and eradication are bound up with the exercise of power. Violence therefore haunts political modernity and its crisis tendencies, potentially springing forth in moments of 'the breakdown of traditional legitimation of the political order; the concomitant opening up of different possibilities of construction of such order and of contestation about the ways in which political order is to be constructed' (Eisenstadt, 2003: 564–565). Mobilised in such crisis conditions is the distinctive conceptual vocabulary of the modern cultural programme: those 'concepts of movement' (Koselleck, 2002: 5) such as crisis, revolution, progress and the secular collective categories of race, nation, class and so on. These are accompanied by a tendency towards the *ideologisation and sanctification of violence*, as the medium of social

transformation (Eisenstadt, 2003: ch. 23), as distinct from Bauman's bureaucratisation of violence.

Such is apparent in Rwanda in the 1990s. Into an environment of immiseration, insecurity and social tension came the invasion of the Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA), the armed wing of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF). The group was comprised of Tutsi exiles in Uganda, who had been displaced by expulsions at various points in post-independence history, beginning with the 1959–1961 revolution. They termed themselves *inyenzi*, translating as 'cockroach', the infamous term of the hate media which permeated Rwandan society in the 1990s. It has been commonly understood as a variant of propaganda, common to all modern genocide, connoting the sub-human, pestilent and unwanted character of a victim-group conceived as a threatening presence to the body politic. The bile in the pages of *Kangura* and in the broadcasts of *Radio Télévision Libre des Mille Collines* (RTLM), certainly operated this way. But *inyenzi* is also a specific term in Kinyarwanda with a particular historical referent. It was a name conferred by exiled Tutsi upon their insurgency that 'travelled at night' and 'refused to go away' (Nyakabwa, 2002: 84). In RTLM broadcasts, *inyenzi* evoked the subhumanity of the Tutsi as well as a nightmarish return to monarchical feudalism that would overturn the gains of the social revolution. Anti-monarchism and a totalising republican ideology – afforded less attention in the commentary on the Rwandan genocide than they warrant – were, in Eisenstadt's terms, utilised extensively in the promulgation and narratological constitution of a 'primordialist' Hutu identity synonymous with 'the people' itself. These themes were not simply machinations of elite media manipulators. They had popular appeal. Demonstrations were organised in November 1990 to protest against any attempt to reinstitute the old 'feudal' regime. Protestors carried placards bearing such slogans as "Let slavery, servitude and discord be finished forever!" 'We condemn the exploitation and servitude of the people!' and 'Long live the republic! Down with the monarchy!' (Des Forges, 1999: 64). Such ethno-republican sloganeering extended into Rwandan popular culture, such as in the lyrics of the popular singer Simon Bikindi, whose songs were played regularly on RTLM and who later stood trial in the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda. His song, *Twazereye*, contains the lyrics: 'we have put the monarchy behind us, the feudal and colonial yokes have departed together, so we now have democracy which suits us. Come, let us rejoice for our independence!' (ICTR, 2008).

On 7th April 1994, when rocket fire brought down a plane containing Habyarimana, the paramilitaries and the National Guard coordinated by the *akazu* set about implementing genocide. Rwanda's traditions of communal labour, which throughout the postcolonial period were utilised as developmentalist tools to end illiteracy and to vaccinate children against diseases, were deployed to coordinate massacres. Killing was referred to as *akazi*, meaning 'work', another Kinyarwanda word with special connotations that referred to the 'incomplete work' of the revolution. The 'seemingly traditional forces' of racialised identity fused in a deadly dialogue with violent 'modern reconstruction', generating a collective, 'nativist' project involving the mobilisation of a sizeable proportion of the civilian

population according to a distinctive historical vision (Reyntjens, 1987; Lemarchand, 1995; Des Forges, 1999; Mamdani, 2001).

Plurality and dialogue

Eisenstadt's late-career conceptualisation of modernities in the plural is not simply a descriptive category. Though never explicitly framed as such, it is a normative concept, a defence of human plurality against totalisation.¹⁰ Totalistic visions, as Eisenstadt writes, accompanies the modern genocides of the twentieth century in which plural forms of life are extinguished:

The tension which was the most critical from the point of view of the development of the destructive potential of modernity, both in ideological and institutional terms has been that between on the one hand absolutizing totalizing and on the other more pluralistic multifaceted visions and practices – between the view which accepts the existence of different values, commitments and rationalities as against the view which conflates such different values and rationalities in a totalistic way, with strong tendencies to their absolutisation.

(Eisenstadt, 2003: 566)

The very concept of genocide, as developed by another Poland-born Jewish exile of a different generation, Raphael Lemkin, is itself a product of the ambivalent and tensional constitution of modernity, a legal mechanism designed – though not without significant problems (Moses, 2021) – to conserve a plurality of ways of being in the world. In an address in Warsaw, the city of his birth, and where he was accepting an honorary doctorate at the same University from which Bauman had been expelled in 1968, Eisenstadt said that a major task of sociology is to look at the most challenging moments in human history, 'when states, empires, political regimes and frameworks are constructed in a way in which the primordial component of collective identity is reconstituted', and to look at the conditions and situations in which pluralistic and totalistic reconstructions occur: 'the mode of this reconstruction is something of crucial importance basically for the whole future of multiple modernities' (Eisenstadt, 2005: 327).

A tension between plurality and totality also animates Bauman's theorisation of modernity. Plurality – like the genocide which destroys it – is also a possibility of modernity which, precisely because it is a possibility, is vulnerable. As Bauman wrote in *Modernity and the Holocaust*:

Any impoverishment of grass-root ability to articulate interests and self-govern, every assault on social and cultural pluralism and the opportunities of its political expression, every attempt to fence off the untrammelled freedom of the state by a wall of political secrecy, each step towards the weakening of the social foundations of political democracy make a social disaster on a Holocaust scale just a little bit more feasible. Criminal designs need social

vehicles to be effective. But so does the vigilance of those who want to prevent their implementation.

(MH: 115)

The incorrigibly *plural* character of the human world is the very force against which totalising, potentially genocidal, interpretations of modernity operate:

[T]he ambiguity that modern mentality finds difficult to tolerate, and modern institutions set out to annihilate (both of them drawing from this intention their awesome creative energy), reappears as the only force able to contain and defuse modernity's destructive, genocidal potential.

The modern tendency oscillates between 'freedom and genocide, constantly able to stretch in either direction, spawning at the same time the most horrifying of contemporary dangers and the most effective means of preventing them – the poison and the antidote' (Bauman, 1991: 51–52). Later, in dialogue with Stanislaw Obirek, at a time when the primordialist reconstruction of collective identity seemed (and seems) in the ascendancy, Bauman wrote that 'the preliminary condition of peace, solidarity and benevolent cooperation among humans is consent to the multiplicity of ways of being human and willingness to accept the model of co-existence that such multiplicity requires' (Bauman and Obirek, 2015: 112).

But it must be recognised, with Eisenstadt, that among the multiplicity of ways of being human are totalistic programmes of genocidal order-building. Indeed, to speak of the multiplicity of modernity encapsulates not only the plurality of human identities or the entangled historical trajectories which constitute it. Multiplicity also means the tensional, ambivalent and aporetic constitution of modernity itself. Genocide and genocide prevention, colonialism and decoloniality, totality and plurality, each and their dynamic entanglements are possibilities of modernity. Vigilance in the face of the possibility for inner barbarism within the condition of modernity is itself an expression of modernity (Sznajder, 1999).¹¹ As Bauman wrote in another letter, this time to the late George Steiner, 'worry about the plight of civilisation is itself one of the most powerful (and few remaining) civilising forces'.¹²

Notes

- 1 Bauman was invited to take part in an International Conference on Comparative Political Sociology organised by UNESCO at the School of Social Science, Tampere, Finland, during 26th–31st August 1963, which Eisenstadt also attended (letter from Kalervo Siilaka to Zygmunt Bauman, 23rd April 1963. In Janina and Zygmunt Bauman papers, MS 2067/B/5/1)
- 2 Letter from Zygmunt Bauman to SN Eisenstadt, 18th January 1988. In Janina and Zygmunt Bauman papers, MS 2067/B/5/2
- 3 Letter from SN Eisenstadt to Zygmunt Bauman, 11th January 1989. In Janina and Zygmunt Bauman papers, MS 2067/B/5/2

- 4 These writings typically took the form of essays, published in a wide variety of places and repeating chunks of text. In this chapter, I refer to the 2003 two-volume edition, *Comparative Civilisations and Multiple Modernities*, which gathers together these essays in their entirety.
- 5 Not least because of the long dialogue with Arne Johan Vetlesen which developed after the translation of *Modernity and the Holocaust* into Norwegian. See Chapter 6 of this volume.
- 6 This is subtly, though consequentially, different to conceiving of discrete ‘modernities’ (see Palmer, 2018:ch. 2 ‘Theorising the Multiplicity of Modernity’).
- 7 From Genocide Archive Rwanda www.genocidearchiverwanda.org/rw/index.php?title=Kmc00008/kmc0008vid_1
- 8 Letter from SN Eisenstadt to Zygmunt Bauman, 9th August 1988. In Janina and Zygmunt Bauman papers, MS 2067/B/5/2
- 9 See especially Chapter 2 of this volume.
- 10 In this sense, Eisenstadt echoes Hannah Arendt’s definition of totalitarian terror as the extinguishing of the human being in its plurality (see Chapter 10 of this volume).
- 11 This point is made by Natan Sznaider in a different take on the relationship between ‘multiple modernities’ and the Holocaust, available at: <https://chgs-blog.org/2016/08/15/multiple-modernities-and-the-nazi-genocide-a-critique-of-zygmunt-baumans-modernity-and-the-holocaust/>. I thank him for his comments on this chapter and for pointing me towards his discussions.
- 12 Letter from Zygmunt Bauman to George Steiner, 16th November 1987. In Janina and Zygmunt Bauman papers, MS 2067/B/5/2.

Bibliography

- Albert, E. 1960. Socio-Political Organization and Receptivity to Change: Some Differences between Ruanda and Urundi. *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology*, 16 (1), 46–74.
- Barns, T. A. 1923. *The Wonderland of Eastern Congo: The Region of the Snow-Crowned Volcanoes, the Pygmies, the Giant Gorilla, and the Okapi*. London: G. P. Putnam’s Sons.
- Bauman, Z. 1976. *Towards a Critical Sociology: An Essay on Commonsense and Emancipation*. London: Routledge.
- Bauman, Z. 1988. Sociology after the Holocaust. *British Journal of Sociology*, 39 (4), 469–497.
- Bauman, Z. 1991. *Modernity and Ambivalence*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Bauman, Z. 1992. *Intimations of Postmodernity*. London: Routledge.
- Bauman, Z. 2000. *Liquid Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Bauman, Z. 2001. Book Review: Fundamentalism, Sectarianism, and Revolution: The Jacobin Dimension of Modernity. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 7 (1), 164–164.
- Bauman, Z. 2008. *Does Ethics Have a Chance in a World of Consumers?* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Bauman, Z. 2010. *Living on Borrowed Time: Conversations with Citlali Rovirosa-Madrado*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Bauman, Z., and Obirek, S. 2015. *Of God and Man*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Bauman, Z., and Weil, S. 2011. In the Limelight: An Interview with Prof. Zygmunt Bauman. *European Sociologist: Newsletter of the European Sociological Association*, 31, 12–13.
- Chrétien, J. P. 2003. *The Great Lakes of Africa: Two Thousand Years of History*, trans. S. Straus. New York: Zone Books.

- Collins, R. 1998. *Sociology of Philosophies: A Global History of Intellectual Change*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Cooper, F. 2005. *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History*. Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press.
- Des Forges, A. 1999. *Leave None to Tell the Story: Genocide in Rwanda*. New York, NY: Human Rights Watch.
- Eisenstadt, S. N. 1987. *European Civilization in a Comparative Perspective: A Study in the Relations between Culture and Social Structure*. London: Norwegian University Press.
- Eisenstadt, S. N. 1993. Globalization, Civilizational Traditions and Multiple Modernities. In K. Ahuja, H. Coppens, and H. van der Wusten (eds.) *Regime Transformations and Global Realignments: Indo-European Dialogues on the Post-Cold War World*. London: SAGE, 401–410.
- Eisenstadt, S. N. 1999. *Fundamentalism, Sectarianism, and Revolution: The Jacobin Dimension of Modernity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Eisenstadt, S. N. 2003. *Comparative Civilizations and Multiple Modernities*, 2 vols. Leiden: Brill.
- Eisenstadt, S. N. 2005. The Honoree Speech. *Polish Sociological Review*, 152, 323–327.
- Eisenstadt, S. N., and Roniger, L. 1981. Clientelism in Communist Systems: A Comparative Perspective. *Studies in Comparative Communism*, 14 (2–3), 233–245.
- Gahama, J. 2001. *Le Burundi sous administration belge: Le période du mandate 1919–1939*. Paris: Karthala.
- Gilroy, P. 2000. *Between Camps: Nations, Culture and the Allure of Race*. London: Penguin.
- Hatzfeld, Jean. 2003. *Machete Season: The Killers in Rwanda Speak*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- ICTR (International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda). 2008, December 2. THE PROSECUTOR v. Simon BIKINDI Case No. ICTR-01-72-T.
- Jack, E. M. 1914. *On the Congo Frontier: Exploration and Sport*. London: T. Fisher Unwin.
- Jones, A. 2011. *Genocide: A Comprehensive Introduction*, 2nd ed. London: Routledge.
- Koselleck, R. 2002. *The Practice of Conceptual History: Timing History, Spacing Concepts*, trans. T. S. Presner, et al. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Lemarchand, R. 1970. *Rwanda and Burundi*. Westport: Praeger.
- Lemarchand, R. 1995. Rwanda: The Rationality of Genocide. *Issue: A Journal of Opinion*, 23 (2), 8–11.
- Lieberman, B. 2012. From Definition to Process: The Effects and Roots of Genocide. In A. Jones (ed.) *New Directions in Genocide Research*. New York: Routledge, 3–17.
- Longman, Timothy. 2011. *Christianity and Genocide in Rwanda*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Mamdani, M. 2001. *When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism, and the Genocide in Rwanda*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Mamdani, M. 2020. *Neither Settler nor Native: The Making and Unmaking of Permanent Minorities*. Cambridge: Belknap/Harvard University Press.
- Mann, M. 2004. *The Dark Side of Democracy: Explaining Ethnic Cleansing*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Maquet, J. 1961. *The Premise of Inequality in Ruanda: A Study of Political Relations in a Central African Kingdom*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Marshman, S. 2008. Bauman on Genocide – Modernity and Mass Murder: From Classification to Annihilation? In M. H. Jacobsen and P. Poder (eds.) *The Sociology of Zygmunt Bauman: Challenges and Critique*. Oxon: Routledge, 75–94.

- Moses, A. D. 2002. Conceptual Blockages and Definitional Dilemmas in the 'Racial Century': Genocides of Indigenous Peoples and the Holocaust. *Patterns of Prejudice*, 36 (4), 7–36.
- Moses, A. D. 2021. *The Problems of Genocide: Permanent Security and the Language of Transgression*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ndlovu-Gatsheni, S. J. 2013. *Coloniality of Power in Postcolonial Africa: Myths of Decolonization*. Dakar: CODESRIA.
- Newbury, C. 1988. *The Cohesion of Oppression: Clientship and Ethnicity in Rwanda, 1860–1960*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Nkundabagenzi, F. 1958. Voici le détail historique du règne des Banyiginya au Rwanda. *Rwanda politique*, 35–36.
- Nkurikiyimfura, J. N. 1994. *Le gros bétail et la société rwandaise: Évolution historique des XIIIe–XIVe siècles à 1958*. Paris: Harmattan.
- Nyakabwa, R. K. 2002. *Statelessness and the Batutsi Refugees' Invasion of Rwanda 1990–1994* [Unpublished PhD Thesis]. University of London.
- Palmer, J. 2018. *Entanglements of Modernity, Colonialism and Genocide: Burundi and Rwanda in Historical-Sociological Perspective*. Oxon: Routledge.
- Palmer, J. 2020. S.N. Eisenstadt and African Modernities: Dialogue, Extension, Retrieval. *European Journal of Social Theory*, 23 (2), 219–237.
- PARMEHUTU. 1960, September 5. *Communique Le M.D.R PARMEHUTU – Ruanda*. Gitarama: Mouvement Democratique Republicain-PARMEHUTU.
- Rattansi, A. 2017. *Bauman and Contemporary Sociology: A Critical Analysis*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Reyntjens, F. 1987. Chiefs and Burgomasters in Rwanda: The Unfinished Quest for a Bureaucracy. *The Journal of Legal Pluralism and Unofficial Law*, 19 (25–26), 71–97.
- Rwabukumba, J., and Mundandagizi, V. 1974. Les formes historiques de la dépendance personnelle dans l'État rwandais. *Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines*, 14 (53), 6–25.
- Speke, J. H. 1864. *Journal of the Discovery of the Source of the Nile*, 2nd edition. London: William Blackwood and Sons.
- Straus, Scott. 2004. How Many Perpetrators Were There in the Rwandan Genocide? An Estimate. *Journal of Genocide Research*, 6 (1), 85–98.
- Sznaider, N. 1999. Compassion and Cruelty in Modern Society: The Case of the Holocaust. *Amsterdams Sociologisch Tijdschrift*, 26 (4), 587–506.
- Taiwò, O. 2010. *How Colonialism Preempted Modernity in Africa*. Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Twagiramutara, P. 1998. Ethnicity and Genocide in Rwanda. In O. Nnoli (ed.) *Ethnic Conflicts in Africa*. Dakar: CODESRIA, 105–130.
- United Nations. 1957. *United Nations Visiting Mission to Trust Territories in East Africa, 1957: Report on Ruanda-Urundi Together with the Relevant Resolution of the Security Council*. New York: United Nations.
- Uvin, P. 1998. *Aiding Violence: The Development Enterprise in Rwanda*. West Hartford, CT: Kumarian Press.
- Vansina, J. 2004. *Antecedents to Modern Rwanda: The Nyiginya Kingdom*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Verwimp, P. 2000. Development Ideology, the Peasantry and Genocide: Rwanda Represented in Habyarimana's Speeches. *Journal of Genocide Research*, 2 (3), 325–361.



Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

Part 4

**‘That world that was not
his’ – on Janina Bauman**



Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

8 Janina Bauman

To remain human in inhuman conditions

Lydia Bauman

One of the most powerful images from our family archives is this photograph, which has always fascinated me (Figure 8.1). Its emotional impact takes it some way from the realm of an ordinary family snap.

I remember the occasion very well – my mother, her green sweater matching her green eyes, a familiar fragrance of Chanel No. 5. Myself and my twin sister Irena on either side of her, readying ourselves for the click of the camera shutter. And then, inexplicably to my 12-year-old mind, my mother visibly recomposed her features – pulled her shoulders back, thrust her chin out and ever so slightly



Figure 8.1 Picture of Janina Bauman with her daughters, Irena and Lydia Bauman, 1968.

raised her left eyebrow – and to my surprise and slight irritation transformed herself into an unfamiliar figure.

As an art historian accustomed to looking at portraits and reading personalities, emotions, lives etched into every feature, I find this portrait a fascinating document of my mother's state of mind at that moment. What led her here and what is the meaning of her expression?

The moment was June 1968 in Warsaw and the photo was being taken for an official one-way travel permit for us, a family of 5, to leave Poland forever.

Only a few months earlier, on New Year's Eve 1967/8, we had gathered around the TV screen to enjoy a favourite satirical programme, but instead of the usual humorous seasonal offerings, were greeted with a hideous puppet animation of a Jew, his clawed hands greedily clasped around the globe.

This was the first, unexpected and shocking intimation of antisemitism in my young life.

I wasn't really aware of being Jewish, let alone understand the meaning of being a Jew. I do remember some years earlier, as a child of 5 or 6 walking with my mother in the woods near Warsaw and coming across a rosary someone had dropped onto the dirt track. My mother explained that it was used by Christians when praying in the church. When I asked why do we not have them, I clearly remember that despite us being quite alone, she lowered her voice to nearly a whisper to say that this is because we are Jewish. She never explained, but she left me with an intuitive, fearful sense that there was something deeply problematic about being Jewish.

On another occasion, maybe a couple of years later, I remember sitting in a doctor's waiting room, and to while away the time, my mother entertained me with tales of her happy childhood – an enchanted sounding story of a close family, father a successful surgeon, a doting mother, younger sister, summers spent in grandparents villa in a fashionable suburb of Warsaw, amidst art, music, literature, governesses, cooks, gardeners . . .

As she later wrote in *Winter in the Morning*: 'we were all Polish, born on Polish soil, brought up in the Polish tradition, permeated with the spirit of Polish history and literature. Yet, Jewish at the same time, conscious of being Jewish every minute of our lives' (J. Bauman, 1986: 2)

Having painted this idyllic picture of her early life in Poland, my mother ominously added – '*and then the war broke out and everything ended*', just as the doctor's door opened and we were called in, a new sense of dread and apprehension left hanging in the air.

I never got to hear the rest of the story until I was able to read it, along with thousands of others around the world, in the book – *Winter in the Morning* – which my mother finally wrote and published in 1986, basing her account on the diaries she had kept during the war. About 700 closely written pages are to this day incarcerated in Warsaw, in the euphemistically called Institute of National Memory (read: Secret Service archives, where both my parents had bulging files kept by Poland's communist Government), confiscated along with other personal

documents on our departure from Poland in 1968 and reconstructed from memory when my mother felt ready to tell her story in her late 50s.

The diaries are a compilation of witness accounts, descriptions of daily events, fictional writings and poems, an extraordinarily rich mosaic of events, a motley of characters (mostly women) and situations which under normal circumstances would be regarded as fiction. Despair, hope, resolve, bravery, even young love, all find their way onto those pages, written in a style and maturity well beyond the writer's age: incarceration in and eventual escape from the Warsaw ghetto, the death of her beloved father (killed in the Katyn massacre, a fact the 14-year-old Janina learned from a list in a newspaper over which she was peeling potatoes in the home of a peasant woman who gave her, her mother and sister shelter), years of hiding with people whose motives ranged from compassionate to mercenary, eventual return to Warsaw at the end of the war.

In the book my mother writes:

During the war I learned the truth we usually choose to leave unsaid: that the cruellest thing about cruelty is that it dehumanises its victims before it destroys them. And that the hardest of struggles is to remain human in inhuman conditions.

(J. Bauman, 1986: ii)

So what does it take to become dehumanised? In my mother's rich and nuanced account of her experiences, it is possible to identify three stages of that process which most of us will never have to undergo:

The first is a forced separation from the normal parameters of one's familiar life – its comfort zones and certainties. Imagine your routine walk to the baker's to get your morning pastries and compare it to my mother's in the ghetto where she is risking her life to reach the one functioning bakery in the neighbourhood:

My way to the baker's led through a labyrinth of cellars and underground corridors. . . . I felt my flesh creep as we descended into the dense shadows of this underground world. Moving very slowly, often on our hands and knees we often came across strange objects blocking our way. Once I bumped into something soft and wet, which could have been just a pile of rotten straw. Once I stepped onto a dead cat. Sometimes we had to climb over a barricade of old cases or furniture barring the way. A weird rustle nearby would make me shiver. There were rats scurrying in the darkness.

(J. Bauman, 1986: 83)

The second stage in the dehumanising process is getting used to those inhuman conditions:

I remember my second winter in the ghetto as a time of weird 'stability'. I somehow learned to live with evil claiming its victims all around, with the

tide of misery lapping my doorstep. I took it for granted like summer heat or winter frost. I was not the only one to live like that – but if I blame others, I should first of all blame myself.

(J. Bauman, 1986: 51)

The third and final stage would be the loss of one's own moral and ethical compass, when in one's desperation to survive, one takes on the values and beliefs of the oppressor. Here my mother describes a dangerous march through the now much reduced ghetto, where only Jews useful to the Nazi's (factory workers, Jewish police, members of the Jewish Council) are given permits to be worn visibly around the neck – the illegal, so called 'wild' ghetto dwellers without permits, risking deportation or death on sight. That was the case with my mother – between the three of them, they only had one permit . . .

My mother describes this chilling moment:

'Look, there are two wild girls among us!' – a sharp hysterical voice suddenly rang out behind me. I turned around, frightened. A well dressed, intelligent looking woman in her forties was staring at me with indignation from the line behind. 'They have no right' she said to mother. 'Innocent people may die instead of them!'

(J. Bauman, 1986: 78–79)

So, a woman not unlike her own mother, in this inhuman, life-or-death lottery situation, sees her as the enemy about to be responsible for the death of 'innocent' people: those approved of by the Nazis.

So what were the strategies adopted by my mother to remain human in inhuman conditions?

As the book makes clear repeatedly, it was her dogged determination to retain and maintain the values she carried from her early life: personal dignity (she never once used the bucket which was doing the rounds as makeshift toilet in cramped hiding places, being one example), personal appearance (bizarrely and incongruously she cared about her looks and dress sense even in those inhuman conditions) and above all a determination to read as many books as possible. A handwritten reading list found among her diaries reveals a rollcall of world-class authors – Thomas Mann, Joseph Roth, James Joyce, Hermann Hesse, Hemingway, Zweig – books found in abandoned apartments or passed on by other people. Books which gave this young girl wide horizons at a time of confinement, helped her to forge her own identity, find her spirituality, deepen her self-knowledge, fine-tune her moral compass, against all odds (Figure 8.2).

And with the reading came writing. Her first impulse to put pen to paper came after she heard a witness account of an event which had taken place during one of the round-ups in the ghetto, involving a young boy with a violin. Caught up in the round-up, he was made to play by the ruthless Nazi commandant in charge. The beauty of his performance seemed to promise to save him from deportation,

IPN BU D 2047/8
44680/II

Chaucer - Karodziejka giran
 Uudet - Wiosna
 Raki - Zippor i jego sziacc
 „ - Uiscuka bee drcen
 „ - Klob
 Joyce - Portret artysty
 Side - Fał neme
 Chatterland - komicz arcy
 Bernanos - Godzina u nasana
 Chomard - dialog arcy
 „ - Dziejus Budda
 Giraudoux - Belle
 Apollinaire - Klatka, Krol i kosc
 Geline - Przemysle i jego pilsing Helleg
 Melingway - Przemysle - bronij
 De Syne - Opowiesci bee nauzy
 Hesse - Wille Hefen
 „ - Marysi Morowcy
 Nabokow - Borgia: Zapiski
 Zweig - Anna - Spot oicowala Siny
 Marlowits - Sztoryjeli garuizen
 Fraule - Poch: piatra
 Dove - Wili fruzanide.

23

Figure 8.2 List of books read by Janina Bauman in the Warsaw ghetto, from personal diaries.

but moved as the Nazi was, he soon proclaimed that the boy ‘will play at the same time tomorrow – in Treblinka . . . a pity’

It is worth pointing out that there is a raw power in the telling of events as they happened, a power difficult to quite match years later when re-creating the story from memory in the comfort of a very different life (my mother’s writing routine in Leeds in the 1980s was confined to the hours between breakfast and pre-lunch drinks . . .)

Compare these fragments of the story as written at the time, to the same parts of the story which appeared in *Winter in the Morning*.

In her original story my mother sets the scene in these words (translated from Polish):

The courtyard was a seething, writhing mass.

Howls of despair, shrill whistles, sounds of blows and flogging, lament and hysteria, wailing, sobbing . . .

. . . darting, crazed eyes and then those mouths, screaming, screaming, until they could scream no more.

(The crowd was) . . . a grey, living substance, trembling in the paroxysms of an animal death-fear.

Forty years later, the same scene is reduced to this English description in the book:

In the Platz, swollen with human misery, resounding with cries, shots and hoots of the train leaving for the gas chambers of Treblinka . . .

(J. Bauman, 1986: 122)

And written at the time, a description of the effect of the boy’s playing:

Violin notes rose melodiously high above the place of execution, high above the butchers and their victims and flowed, cascading in a stream of tremulous tones of a mighty song.

It was a supplication for life itself and a prayer for those dying in agony and a curse on their persecutors.

This in the book becomes as follows:

It was as subtle, inspired music which sounded like a prayer, like an almighty call for help to God himself . . . he finished with rich powerful chords of thanksgiving.

(J. Bauman, 1986: 123)

Her poems, 40 of them, remain untranslated and unseen by anyone outside the family circle. Discovered on the pages of her diaries, they attest to her familiarity with the craft of classical Polish poetry and offer a telling insight into the circumstances in which they were written. Rarely descriptions of actual events,

they are instead sensitive responses to nature and the seasons, through which she expresses her own moods of sadness, longing, confinement, anxiety, anger, hopelessness, waiting, as well as moments of hope, euphoria, excitement and – as she grows up – erotic and romantic stirrings. The fact that the imagery of nature is often quite literally framed as a view out of the window behind which she was so often confined gives her poems a painterly quality, as the window panes take on the form of a canvas.

The particularity and complexity of the Polish language makes it difficult to do justice to the nuances of her poetry when attempting to mould their language into the shape and syntax of English. Here are two attempts at translation of one of them, Autumn Song (Figure 8.3):

AUTUMN SONG

*Autumn rain pouring
Now sighing, now roaring
Now dancing along with the wind.
Forbidding and dreary
This elements' fury
And the sky staining dark with night's ink.*

*Something rumbles, something wails
Rain beats against the window panes
Dusk thickens slowly outside
Creeping deep into soul's recesses
While the song of the storm represses
A small voice of sadness, softly stirring within*

*The Autumn rain pouring
Now sighing, now roaring
Wind chases and pushes the rain.
Forbidding, abhorrent,
Rain dances with torrent
Clouds colour the sky with gray paint*

*Now wailing, now calling,
Hits window while falling,
With thickening darkness day goes.
As heart sinks, dusk pushes,
Wind deafens and hushes
Melancholy's soft budding woes*

At the end of the war, my mother returned to Warsaw, which lay in ruins. Years of enforced confinement, isolation and idleness in hiding left her with an irrepressible longing to find a purpose and to belong.

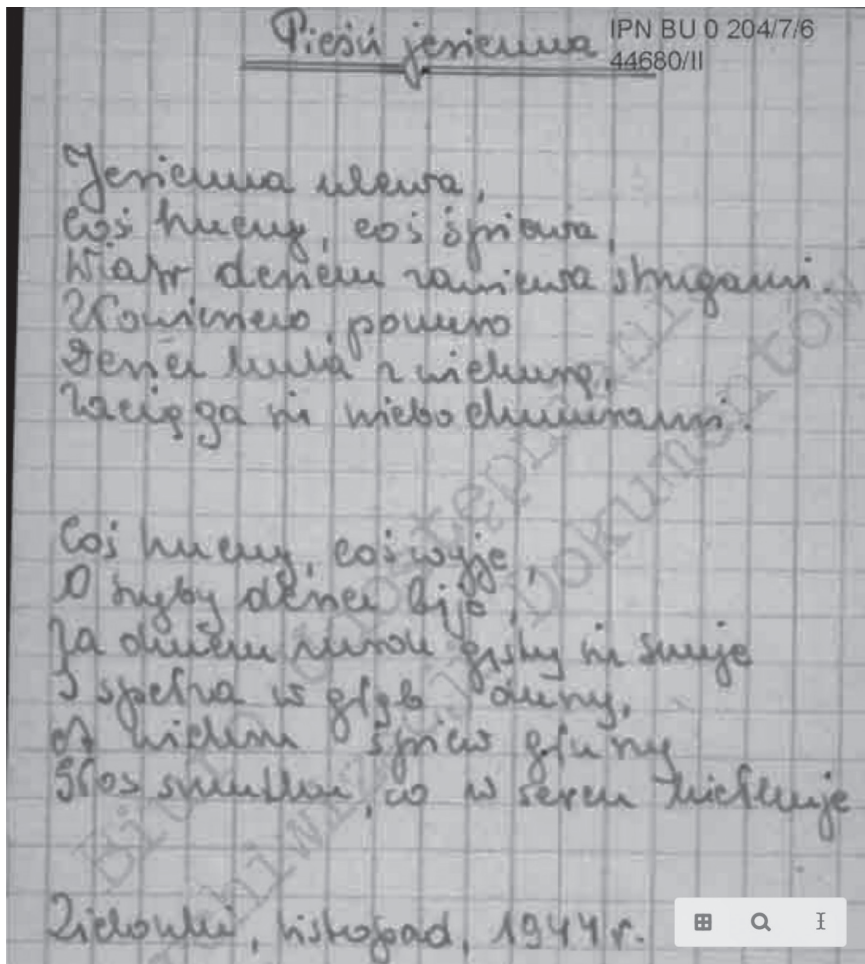


Figure 8.3 Handwritten Polish original of ‘Autumn Song’, in personal diaries, 1944.

A Dream of Belonging, her second book (1988), records her brief fascination with the Zionist ideal of building a nation for the Jews in Palestine, before meeting the man who would become her life’s companion of 62 years. My father, Zygmunt Bauman, was a young army officer who had distinguished himself during the war serving with the Polish division of the Soviet army, like her fired up with the idea of rebuilding a better future for Poland, based on the then promising communist ideals of equality for all (Figure 8.4).

They met at Warsaw University, attending one of the courses offered freely to all after the war and she accepted his proposal of marriage nine days later. An intense period followed, both of them overcoming hardships and shortages of



Figure 8.4 Zygmunt and Janina Bauman in Warsaw, 1950s.

post-war life to forge their respective careers, build a vibrant social life and soon raise their three daughters. While my father immersed himself in the world of academia and the project of social change, my mother, a lover of languages and the arts, began a career in the then burgeoning Polish film industry, making a rapid ascent up the career ladder in Warsaw's Central Management of Film Studios, where she was eventually promoted to the role of a script editor, with scripts by such iconic directors as Andrzej Wajda (*Man of Marble*, *Ashes and Diamonds*, *Canal*) and Roman Polansky (*Knife in the Water*) passing through her hands for assessment as to their quality and suitability for public viewing.

Her enthusiasm for her role, stoked up by the desire to be useful and to excel and by regular promotions and tokens of appreciation by her superiors (a book dedicated to comrade Janina Bauman for her exemplary social and professional work, a lapel pin proclaiming her to be a 'work leader'), soon gave way to a realisation that, like everyone else, she was under careful scrutiny of Party apparatchiks, who manipulated her youthful ambition for their own ends. The script editing became censorship (Wajda's *Man of Marble* was shelved for a number of years for offering a bleak vision of life in post-war Poland), while her special role as 'party agitator' – tasked with disseminating communist propaganda among her fellow workers and noting personal conversations – ended with her inadvertently 'betraying' a colleague by relaying a conversation in which the woman complained about the scarcity of nylon stockings in Polish shops, for which she was accused of harbouring capitalist Western values and sacked, to my mother's shock and everlasting remorse.

The emerging truth about the nature of Stalin's repressive regime, following his death in 1956, Poland's economic stagnation and palpable stirrings of

antisemitism which began to stymie both my parents' careers, made life increasingly intolerable. By 1968, the six-day war in the Middle East between Israel and its Arab neighbours in June the previous year became an excuse for the then First Secretary of the Polish United Workers' Party, Władysław Gomułka, to skilfully conflate the notions of anti-Zionism with antisemitism, effectively giving Poles permission to victimise Jewish citizens. In a chilling televised speech aimed at the working classes on 18 March 1968, he incited:

Without a doubt, a category of Jews exists who are Polish citizens yet who feel emotional and intellectual allegiance to the state of Israel rather than to Poland. We are ready to grant emigration passports to those who consider Israel their homeland.

As my mother later recalled in *A Dream of Belonging*:

There was pandemonium in the auditorium – an outburst of applause ensued. *At once! Now! Today!* The audience roared. The assembly turned into a raging mob.

(J. Bauman, 1988: 189)

Mentioned in the speech and many times since, across the official media, was my father's name. In the wake of student protests against Party censorship, which erupted following the closure of a new theatre production of a Polish classic from the time of the Partitions (*The Forefathers*, by Adam Mickiewicz) in which a criticism of the country's then Russian oppressor was deemed to be too strongly implied, it was the academics who were accused of incitement of the students in their charge, my father among a handful of others, the majority of them Jewish.

Both my parents handed in their Party membership cards. Soon after, my father was relieved of his post at the University and my mother's dismissal followed not long after. A bleak and anxious few months followed, months of constant surveillance, antisemitic attacks, upsets at school for us, the three daughters. The dream of belonging was well and truly shattered. Time came to make the decision to leave Poland.

This brings us back to the enigmatic photograph taken for the one-way travel permit, and the expression on my mother's face.

I'd like to suggest that at that point, she could have allowed herself an expression of any number of feelings which her life up until that point made her all too familiar with: pain . . . bitterness . . . fear . . . anger . . . hate. What she opted for as she recomposed her features in that split second before the click of the camera shutter was – dignity.

That same dignity which allowed her to remain human in inhuman conditions of her wartime life (Figure 8.5).



Figure 8.5 Janina and Zygmunt Bauman in Leeds, 1990s.

At the very end of *A Dream of Belonging*, my mother describes an early morning walk with my father in the countryside around their adopted home in Leeds:

Dawn comes over the Yorkshire moors, with a mild breeze comes the promise of a fine day. Alone under the vast dome of a brightening sky, we walk through the spellbound waste. The light, the scent, the sound of early morning bring back memories of another life, another country. I left that country in the distant past abandoning all my young hopes and passions. Now I belong nowhere. But perhaps to belong means to love and be loved and this is all that truly matters.

(J. Bauman, 1988: 202)

Bibliography

- Bauman, J. 1986. *Winter in the Morning: A Young Girl's Life in the Warsaw Ghetto and Beyond*. London: Virago.
- Bauman, J. 1988. *A Dream of Belonging: My Years in Postwar Poland*. London: Virago.

9 Janina and Zygmunt Bauman

A case study of inspiring collaboration

Izabela Wagner

In 1986, Janina Bauman published *Winter in the Morning. A Young Girl's Life in the Warsaw Ghetto and Beyond 1939–1945*. In the last sentence of the acknowledgments, Janina Bauman wrote:

I thank Zygmunt, my husband, who had to put up with my ‘absence’ when, for almost two years, I dwelled in the world of my youth that was not his world.

(J. Bauman, 1986: vi)

Three years later, in the preface of his book untitled *Modernity and the Holocaust*, Zygmunt Bauman wrote:

Having read Janina’s book, I began to think just how much I did not know – or rather, did not think about properly. It dawned on me that I did not really understand what had happened in that ‘world which was not mine’. What did happen was far too complicated to be explained in that simple and intellectually comforting way I naively imagined sufficient. I realized that the Holocaust was not only sinister and horrifying, but also an event not at all easy to comprehend in habitual, ‘ordinary’ terms. This event had been written down in its own code which had to be broken first to make understanding possible.

(MH: vii–viii)

Later, in his Amalfi Prize speech of 24th May 1990, Zygmunt Bauman declared:

[T]his book would never have come to be if not for my life-long friend and companion, Janina, whose *Winter in the Morning*, a book of reminiscences from the years of human infamy, opened my eyes to what we normally refuse to look upon. The writing of *Modernity and the Holocaust* became an intellectual compulsion and moral duty, once I had read Janina’s summary of the sad wisdom she acquired in the inner circle of the man-made inferno; *‘The cruellest thing about cruelty is that it dehumanizes its victims before it destroys them. And the hardest of struggles is to remain human in inhuman*

conditions'. It is Janina's bitter wisdom that I tried to enclose in the message of my book.

(MH: 208, my emphasis)

In this text, I discuss the influence of Janina's *Winter in the Morning* on Zygmunt's *Modernity and the Holocaust*.¹ The connection between these two books is not a classic example of the circulation of ideas in the field of social sciences and humanities, where inspiration is usually visible through the sharing of concepts, borrowing of approaches and citations of significant authors. Despite Zygmunt's above-cited declarations, the reader of *Modernity and Holocaust* will not find any excerpts from, or references to *Winter in the Morning* in the text. The bridges between these two very important works in Holocaust studies are not easily visible. However, as Zygmunt declared, they exist. I will firstly show these invisible bridges, then, I will try to explain why the huge influence of Janina's work on *Modernity and Holocaust* remains hidden.

Making the bridges visible: borrowing 'her world'

The first excerpt from *Winter in the Morning* cited at the beginning of this chapter is almost a classical sentence, which we can find in many acknowledgments. The authors thank their relatives for dealing with some absence caused by immersion in the creative process. However, Janina mentioned here the most important word, which not only reflected their war experiences, but also constitutes a key term that determines their relationship to the Holocaust. She wrote that it was 'not *his* world' (my emphasis).

This division between Jews who were Holocaust *survivors* (Janina's case) and Holocaust *escapees* (Zygmunt's case) was not unique to Bauman's family. After the Second World War, it was the principal categorisation that split European Jewry. The liminal experiences of the Holocaust survivors separated them from those who escaped Nazi hell. Some survivors developed a strong sense of Jewish identity as a response to the Holocaust – this was the case of Janina. She wrote in her book (partially based on notes from her diary)²:

11/12/1944 – I belong to the Jews. Not because I was born one or because I share their faith – I never have one. I belong to the Jews because I have suffered as one of them. It's suffering that had made me Jewish. I belong to people who have been murdered or who are still struggling to escape death. If some of them do survive the war, and if I survive myself, I'll join them.

(J. Bauman, 1986: 181)

The survivor status was a fundamental element in the construction of Janina's identity. Decades later, when she started to work on her testimony, this status became central in her life. But it was not particularly her. The experience of the Shoah was a seal that marked the survivors for their entire life. This blue line divided the post-war Jewish community – the liminal Holocaust experiences

belonged to survivors. The passage of time did not impact the vitality of this categorisation.

At the end of the twentieth century, over 50 years after the Second World War, Zygmunt acknowledged this division. ‘I did not really understand what had happened’, he wrote in the introduction to *Modernity and the Holocaust*, recognising his limits. Zygmunt’s contribution to scholarship – a novel sociological approach to the Holocaust – was contingent on the borrowing of the personal experience of Janina. Thanks to her work, he gained an insight into this world that was not his. He had a privileged access to ‘second-hand’ data, which was not ‘secondary’ in a traditional way (i.e. a witness’s text), but written by the closest person in his life. Janina’s writing enabled him to approach as closely as possible the darkness of the Holocaust. However, it wasn’t an open door that was crossed. It was instead a window, as Bauman himself metaphorised. I would add to this metaphor the adjective ‘closed’ – a closed window enables sight while insulates against sounds, smells, and prevents touch.

Despite this limitation, what Bauman saw through that window was powerful

I believe that the impact of Janina’s book on Zygmunt’s analysis consists in two main factors. The first was Janina’s writing (I will develop this topic in the next section). The second (much more difficult to analyse) is related to the transmission of emotions. This problem appears not at the level of written communication (when Zygmunt read how Janina felt in these dark days), but in connection to the non-verbal dimension: how Zygmunt felt and shared in some of Janina’s feelings, due to the emotional proximity between both authors. The passage of this emotional transmission is coded in the language and requires decoding.

Winter in the Morning is Zygmunt’s wife account, not a story written by a stranger. Janina’s traumatic experiences were not neutral to Zygmunt. In other words, thanks to their close emotional connection (which I define as a fusion; see Wagner, 2020: ch. 7–15), Zygmunt felt the vibrations of his wife’s dark past. However, we do not have any clear traces of this emotional passage process in *Modernity and the Holocaust*. On the contrary, in his analysis, Bauman warns the readers:

Overwhelmed by the emotions which even a perfunctory reading of the Holocaust records cannot but arouse, some of the quoted authors are prone to exaggerate. Some of their statements sound incredible – and certainly unduly alarmist.

(MH: 87)

Here we have the example of the tension between two crucial aspects: the emotional involvement in the study of the Holocaust and a balanced scholarly account. In the late 1980s, emotional involvement was still unwelcome in the academic world and in the field of Holocaust studies.³ However, the emotional sphere

is a complex space that resists verbalisation but remains crucial for understanding traumatic and liminal phenomena. The Holocaust cannot be studied without this dimension.⁴ For Zygmunt, borrowing the experience of a close person and controlling the emotional impact of trauma seems to be the solution to this tension. However, we should raise the following question: to what extent is borrowing someone else's experience possible? Indeed, there are limits to such borrowings. Despite these restrictions, which reduce the sharing of specific emotions to survivors, the borrowing experience helped Zygmunt approach the Holocaust differently. As he explained, after reading *Winter in the Morning*, he realised how much he 'did not know – or rather, did not think about properly' (MH: vii).

As Bauman suggests, thinking properly is tantamount to thinking *sociologically* (Bauman, 1990). Thinking involves looking at something that everybody is looking at and finding a new way of understanding it. In his fundamental texts that concern the process of scientific thinking, Ludwik Fleck created the basis for understanding this cognitive phenomenon (Fleck, 1979 [1935]). According to Fleck, each researcher is a primary tool in his work, and personal experiences play an essential role in her or his way of thinking. The paradigm shift (which is Kuhn's prolongation of Fleck's approach [Kuhn, 1962]) could be illustrated with *Modernity and the Holocaust*. There Bauman is redefining Holocaust as the product of modernity – not an accident, neither pathology, but its output, which was achieved, thanks to technical progress, modern organisation and bureaucracy and a scientific outlook. 'Thinking properly' means a new interpretation of the Holocaust – a sociological interpretation. The impulse to this new vision was Janina's Bauman writing. She helped her husband to open his eyes.

Opening the eyes – the power of ethnography

Janina's writing quality had a strong influence on *Modernity and the Holocaust*. Her first book, written in the 1980s, was partially based on recovered notes written during the war. *Winter in the Morning* may be read as an auto-ethnographic piece, a Geertzian 'thick description' of the events that she lived through (Geertz, 1973). Notes on feelings, self-criticism, a high level of reflexivity, analysis of social processes: all these elements together constitute a rare and precious account of everyday life in the Warsaw ghetto and of hiding in Poland. The additional strength of this narrative arises out of the teenager's perspective and what contemporary historians call the 'intimate' aspects of the ghetto and ensuing hiding places (Friedman, 2001; Aleksiu, 2017). From *Winter in the Morning* – an emotional narrative of life in an inhuman world – readers gain an important and rare insight into the Holocaust. Certainly, Janina's personal account helped to recalibrate the knowledge about the Shoah that was accumulated based on academic historiography. If her story deeply moved the anonymous readers,⁵ Janina's husband – an active intellectual – could not stay passive; he needed to react. Zygmunt had to confront this emotional and intellectual impact of Janina's testimony and do something. As he said: 'The writing of *Modernity and the Holocaust* became an intellectual

compulsion and moral duty, once I had read Janina's summary of the sad wisdom she acquired in the inner circle of the man-made inferno' (MH: vii).

Zygmunt was an academic and a sociologist – what he knew best was writing books. The moral duty was for him to participate in the intellectual discussion and to bring out new propositions for Holocaust interpretation. I will not discuss here the originality of Zygmunt's contribution, while the most of the papers included in this volume are aimed at such analysis (see also Fine and Turner, 2000). Searching for the tangible traces of *Winter in the Morning* in *Modernity and the Holocaust*, I focus rather on the points of intersection between these two works.

Same concepts – different applications

Due to the absence of direct citations, a careful reader must find other connections. One of the approaches is looking for the same keywords or phenomena present in both works. I will show how both authors employed similar concepts/approaches. The first example is the use of a classical sociological concept: the division of labour. In *Modernity and the Holocaust*, Zygmunt – as a theoretical sociologist – clearly explains:

All division of labour (also such division as results from the mere hierarchy of command) creates a distance between most of the contributors to the final outcome of collective activity, and the outcome itself. Before the last links in the bureaucratic chain of power (the direct executors) confront their task, most of the preparatory operations which brought about that confrontation have been already performed by persons who had no personal experience, and sometimes not the knowledge either, of the task in question.

(MH: 98–9)

The description concerns the bureaucratic machine – the 'system'; this is a scholarly analysis of the organisation of work, which was the basic matrix of the Holocaust.

From the following excerpt of *Winter in the Morning*, we can learn about one particular element of the division of labour (even if Janina does not employ the term), at a small scale and in a specific place – the Ghetto:

The flat had already been cleaned of its contents and stood empty, ready for new lodgers to move in. In one of the front rooms, however, I came across the vast quantity of china and cut glass, apparently brought in from other flats and ready to be taken away to Germany. Scrubbing floors and cleaning windows was not my favorite task. I was slow and awkward at the job and didn't like it at all. Besides, I thought with disgust about those for whom I was slaving: Germans perhaps or that mean sort of Pole who would like to take over the flats of murdered Jews.

(J. Bauman, 1986: 87)

Both excerpts concern the division of labour in the Holocaust organisation machine; however, they are different from each other – the image resolution is not the same. Zygmunt is speaking about the whole matrix in general – while Janina’s account concerns only one part of it; she is talking about the intersection between the executioner and the victim. Her description could be seen as a prolongation of Zygmunt’s analysis, at a micro-level rather than the macro-level at which Zygmunt tended to operate. Both are completing each other’s pictures of the same horrible story. Her view is from the bottom, while his from the top. Zygmunt’s writing is abstract and professional – a scholarly and cold vision. He is not speaking openly about emotions. Janina’s writing completes his distanced analysis with her thick description, framed by a personal comment:

I thought with disgust about those for whom I was slaving: Germans perhaps or that mean sort of Pole who would like to take over the flats of murdered Jews.

(J. Bauman, 1986: 87)

Janina’s account goes deeper than analysis. It broaches *pain* and her narrative is compelling. This is what Zygmunt’s abstract study was missing.

The second term analysed in both books was ‘dehumanization’. Here, even more clearly than in the previous example, we can perceive the divergences in applying the same concept. In a subchapter, Zygmunt Bauman analyses ‘dehumanization of bureaucratic objects’:

Dehumanization starts at the point when, thanks to the distantiation, the objects at which the bureaucratic operation is aimed can, and are, reduced to a set of quantitative measures. . . . For most bureaucrats, even such a category as cargo would mean too strict a quality-bound restriction. They deal only with the financial effects of their actions. Their object is money. Money is the sole object that appears on both input and output ends, and *pecunia*, as the ancients shrewdly observed, definitely *non olet*. . . . As we remember, the whole operation of the Holocaust was managed by the Economic Administration Section of the *Reichsicherheitshauptamt*. We know that this one assignment, exceptionally, was not intended as a strategem or a camouflage. Reduced, like all other objects of bureaucratic management, to pure, quality-free measurements, human objects lose their distinctiveness. They are already dehumanized – in the sense that the language in which things that happen to them (or are done to them) are narrated, safeguards its referents from ethical evaluation. In fact, this language is unfit for normative-moral statements. It is only humans that may be objects of ethical propositions. . . . Humans lose this capacity once they are reduced to ciphers. Dehumanization is inextricably related to the most essential, rationalizing tendency of modern bureaucracy.

(MH: 102–3)

This is another macro-analysis performed by Zygmunt Bauman. He mobilised the verb ‘dehumanization’ for understanding the significant process of dehumanisation as a rationalising tendency of modern bureaucracy. The following is a very different example of ‘dehumanization’ presented in Janina Bauman’s book:

20 August 1941

I am the beast. A callous hypocrite. Yesterday I had an argument with Mother. The matter was trivial: I’ve grown out of my summer dresses, they are all too short and tight for me. No wonder: they were made for a thirteen-year-old child with no breasts. . . . Something else happened this morning. Regina, the girl who works with me in the field was singing all the time we were weeding. She has a nice voice and knows many of the prewar hits. I was really quite enjoying it until she started on ‘Bel Ami’. Suddenly I became hysterical and yelled at her to shut up. The reason is that I’ve been forced to listen to this stupid song day in day out in the early evenings. A beggar woman sings it endlessly down in the street, just under my open window where I sit trying in vain to concentrate on my reading. And how she sings it, my goodness! With a harsh, broken voice, Polish, Yiddish, French words all mixed up together. Her face is swollen so I can’t tell her age. She has two children with her, one in her arms, the other clinging to her filthy clothes. Their feet are bare. When I drop down a coin or a bit of bread for them, or if someone else does so, she stops for a second, then carries on with her ‘Bel Ami’ even louder and harsher. I really hate her, I hate all of them That’s why I say I’m a callous hypocrite. I really am.

(J. Bauman, 1986: 50/51)

Both cited excerpts are the example of different approaches to ‘dehumanization’. The first is a macro-view, the second is a micro-view. More than this, Janina’s is an autoethnographic account containing reflexivity and emotions. The exceptionality of Janina’s narrative appears here in the juxtaposition of a typical teenager’s girl ordinary request for a new dress, with omnipresent death. It is a compelling description of rarely acknowledged dimensions of the Holocaust. We learn how these inhuman circumstances impacted the life of ‘simple individuals’, here, a young girl trapped in the atrocities of the Ghetto.

What becomes evident in the comparison of both of the aforementioned examples is the author’s different perspectives, which are shaped mainly by two factors. Firstly, the influence of typical gender representations in Western cultures: Zygmunt’s work reflects standard ‘masculine approach’ (abstract, general and macro, distanced and not engaged, which is perceived as objective), while Janina Bauman’s work could be considered as a model of a ‘feminine writing’ (particular/personal, specific and micro, engaged, which is perceived as subjective).

Secondly, in my opinion, a much stronger influence than the gender matrix is the difference in actual life experience: Janina was a Holocaust survivor – a participant observer, we could say using sociological vocabulary – while Zygmunt

was an outsider. We cannot blame Zygmunt for not adopting the insider's point of view; however, it is regrettable that he largely omitted the voices of critical insiders in his analysis, and never cited Janina.

The population condemned to death existed in the shadow of the bureaucracy of murder. The reader of *Modernity and the Holocaust* does not learn of the personal reactions to this killing machine, only the organisational adaptations (especially with the analysis of the activity of *Judenräte* in chapter 5). Still rare are descriptions of the individual adjustments (we can learn about the chiefs of *Judenräte*, but nothing about ordinary people). We cannot learn from Zygmunt how simple individuals – civilians – resisted dehumanisation. To learn about this, we need to read *Winter in the Morning*:

In the room where the china was kept I decided to have a break. I sat down on the floor to take a close look at the collection. There were exquisite dinner and coffee sets made of the finest china and lavishly hand-decorated; sets of fragile crystal glasses; priceless vases and figurines, some very old, some of very rare beauty. I had always been fond of beautiful things and found pleasure in handling them. Now I can indulge myself in picking up these precious objects and stroking them gently. At the same time I thought of those who had once owned and enjoyed these cups and vases and who were now dead. Soon new owners, Nazi officers and their families most likely, would spread their own tables with these valuable objects, devour food stolen from all Europe from these fragile plates, quaff superb French wine from these shapely glasses. . . . Feeling almost physical pain, I began to destroy, as quietly as I could, the most precious cups, plates and figurines by knocking them hard against another. It was my first act of resistance. And my last.

(J. Bauman, 1986: 88)

Here, from Janina's account, we read of individual acts of resistance to the horror of life in the Ghetto during the first stage of liquidation. Thanks to her book, we learn about feelings and strategies that help people facing dehumanising treatment to keep their humanity.

Remaining human in inhuman conditions

'2 November, 1942: They say "Fight". Yes, of course, it's the only way, though there won't be much chance of survival if we do. But what else can we do? There is something called "dignity", much forgotten these days' (J. Bauman, 1986: 84).

This short excerpt helps us to understand that staying human in inhuman conditions was a permanent fight. There were not such fixed categories as some 'pure' and 'human' people and others 'weak' or 'passive'. The choice was not between being a hero or an ordinary person. Janina showed her daily struggle to survive based on a permanent choice between basic life (*życie*) and dignity.

Dignity is the keyword in *Winter in the Morning*, and also beyond, as Bryan Cheyette has argued: Janina's 'memoirs, in general, are structured by the idea of

'dignity' in its many incarnations' (Cheyette, 2011: 2). This is undoubtedly a core moral value that was exceptionally difficult to respect during the war. In this inhuman world, an oft-repeated life-saving strategy was 'you must leave your self-respect at home when your life is at stake' (J. Bauman, 1986: 151). From *Winter in the Morning*, we learned how Janina struggled to remain human in inhuman conditions. Day by day, adjusting to each new dramatic situation, she constantly fought for keeping her dignity.

The bitter lesson, which her husband learned from Janina, has a mighty climax. And this story, as well as the way it is told, is exceptional in Holocaust literature:

For us the war came to an abrupt end at 8 a. m. on Friday, 19 January 1945. After a sleepless night echoing with cannon-fire, heavy with great expectations, we saw in the faint light of the wintry dawn the weird, grey hunched outlines of the first Russian soldiers. Stealthily, they scuttled, one by one past our window, their guns at the ready. By noon the sounds of heavy battle subsided and were replaced by a steady rumble of heavy vehicles coming from afar. Just before dusk I went out to fetch some wood. In the semidark shed, crammed with logs and tools, something stirred. I sensed a human presence. I pushed the door wide open to let in more light. Only then did I notice a flap of field-grey military coat sticking out from between two logs. Calmly, I locked the shed and ran back to the cottage. In the kitchen Mrs Pietrzyk, tired and worn after the restless night, was busy cooking. Gasping for breath, I told her what I had seen. But she was not surprised: she already knew. Staring full in my face with her ancient, all-knowing eyes, she said, as if quoting from a holy book, 'Whoever comes under my roof seeking shelter, no matter who he is, no matter what he believes in, he will be safe with me'. In a flash I understood. Shocked, I watched her fill a tin bowl with hot dumplings and pour pork fat over it. 'Hold it, child,' she screeched in her usual way. 'Take it to him.' As if mesmerized, I blindly obeyed and went back to the shed. It seemed as deserted as before, even the field-grey flap had disappeared. I stood benumbed, the hot dish burning my fingers and filling the air with a strong smell of food. There was a brief commotion behind the pile of logs and an unkempt head suddenly popped out. I saw the pale face of the German, a boy rather than a man, staring at me in terror. He grabbed the steaming bowl from my hands and fell on the food with unspeakable greed. He was still trembling from hunger and fear. For a long while I watched him blankly. I felt no pity, no hatred, no joy.

The war ended.
(J. Bauman, 1986: 190)

This fragment – the final passage of *Winter in the Morning* – contains a *lesson*, rarely included in Holocaust Survivor testimonies: *wisdom*, which Janina learned from Ms. Pietrzyk, an elderly peasant woman who saved Janina, her mother's, and sister's lives. At the end of the war, Ms. Pietrzyk also saved the life of a young German soldier. She would save everyone who asked for her help.

Following the example of Ms. Pietrzyk, despite the war atrocities, despite being his prey, Janina – a Holocaust survivor – gave soup to an escaping Nazi soldier and helped to hide him.

The invisibility of connections

The context of collaboration and the ‘Jewish turn’

Why didn’t Zygmunt openly reference his wife’s exceptional book? Why didn’t he cite his wife’s remarkable testimonies? Why do we – the readers – need to build all these bridges by ourselves? Each question generates more questions than responses.

First of all, we need to think that the connections between these two important works were part of the more extensive process, which concerned two intellectual curricula – different, however strongly intertwined. The immediate context in which both books were written needs to be sketched here.

In the 1980s, the Bauman’s lived in Leeds, and their open house was the place of intense intellectual life. Their friends, who visited Janina and Zygmunt at that time, remember well the climate of the work and intellectual enthusiasm that was as visible as the omnipresent smoke of cigarettes. The definitive impulse for writing *Winter in the Morning* was Alina Lewinson’s (Janina’s mother) death. At that moment, Janina realised that what happened to them (Janina, her mother and sister) was unknown to the world and if she kept it to herself, their atrocious experiences would not be transmitted – she would fail in the Jewish duty: *Zahor* – Remember. It is crucial to know that Janina didn’t speak about her war experiences with her family or friends before the book was written. As her daughter Lydia Bauman wrote, Janina’s survivor past was surrounded by silence (L. Bauman, 1986). Janina worked on *Winter in the Morning*, writing it in English – the language she learned in her adult life and mastered after the Baumans moved to Leeds in 1971. She spent over two years writing it. Her friends accompanied Janina in this task and she acknowledged them for their support. Firstly, Janina mentioned Maria Hirszowicz, Hugh Hirszowicz, Molly Gaunt, Margaret Gothelf, Dorothy and Allan Griffiths, Łukasz Hirszowicz, Griselda Pollock and Janet Wolff, who was the first reader of the first chapters (Wolff, 2011). When Janina finished her book, Zygmunt read it and was deeply impacted by her account. Their friend, Bryan Cheyette, summed up this influence:

The catalyst for his intellectual rebirth was Janina’s memoir *Winter in the Morning*. It precipitated a sustained and profound engagement with his and other forms of Jewishness, which included his continued engagement with Polish history and culture, the history of ‘allosemitism’ and the Holocaust, Central Europe, and the failure of European nation-states to assimilate the Jewish stranger. Jewish jokes, the Hebrew Bible, and the textual homelands of many and varied Jewish intellectuals were also part of the mix. Zygmunt Bauman’s largely forgotten articles of this period, in stark contrast to his

books, viewed this project unashamedly through the many-faced prism of Jewish history, creativity, assimilation, estrangement and exile.

(Cheyette, 2020: 74)

In addition to playing the role of the catalyst for writing *Modernity and the Holocaust*, Janina Bauman's book triggered a radical change in Zygmunt's intellectual curricula. According to Cheyette (not only Bauman's neighbour but also an expert in European antisemitism and privileged companion in the discussions on 'Jewish matters,') in that period – the second half of the 1980s – 'Zygmunt Bauman's largely ignored Jewish turn' occurred (Cheyette, 2020).⁶ By consequence, that shift of the intellectual interest resulted in more than one crucial book. According to Cheyette:

[B]etween 1986 and 1996, Zygmunt Bauman wrote his 'modern trilogy' *Legislators and Interpreters*, *Modernity and the Holocaust*, and *Modernity and Ambivalence*. These works constructed a 'solid' modernity with 'the Jew' as its prototypical stranger (partially ingested by the nation-state) and the exemplar of human waste (those vomited out by civilized society) that Bauman has been exploring ever since.

(Cheyette, 2020: 74)

In the light of these words, it is clear that the impact of Janina Bauman's writing was crucial in this new intellectual development.

Distanced intellectual fields – different epistemological cultures

Both books belong to different spaces of the intellectual field and were created by different categories of intellectuals. *Winter in the Morning* is a Holocaust survivor testimony, one of the first in the wave of 'Jewish Life and War Stories'. This subjective, individual account – a witness narrative – belongs to the category of literature. The story of one person – a 'fiction' as it is classified commonly – except that the story was true. In the late 1980s, such a book was not considered by academics as hard data – a source for their analysis (the systematic use of such publications by historians as a source, not an illustration or a complement of the analysis started after). We need to keep in mind that Janina's book was defined at that time as definitely non-academic.

Zygmunt Bauman, in 1989, was a professional academic who primarily discussed his ideas with scholars. *Modernity and the Holocaust* is written in a language in which Weberian distance is visible, with little room for emotions. Again, we can ask why?

Is this the results of academic training and a specific style of writing elaborated during his years as a professional sociologist? Perhaps using Janina's testimonies would drastically change his goal: in my opinion *Modernity and the Holocaust* was written in what Fleck called a 'thought collective' (Fleck, 1979 [1935]). In the 1980s, the European Union was in a construction and the Second World War

was posited as a difficult past to be overcome in the project of integration. At that time, the ‘Spanish model’ dominated, according to which the strategy ‘to forget’ seemed to be a best decision regarding the stalemate, that is the consequence of civil war.⁷ Even if this approach was not consciously explicit in Bauman’s writing, the ‘thought collective’ played an important role. By consequence, perhaps Zygmunt, in not citing witnesses voices, did not want to reopen painful wounds.

Or did this distance help Zygmunt keep his own emotions, awakened after reading *Winter in the Morning*, under control? After all, the Holocaust was his wife’s tragic past – writing about her pain would also be painful for him. Or did the idea of using some passages from Janina’s book seem too radical an intervention? Perhaps he considered that his audience would read Janina’s book in parallel (or just after *Modernity and the Holocaust*). Maybe Zygmunt thought it was impossible to cut into Janina’s narrative, and he was not able – or refused for some reasons – to choose only some extracts? Or, perhaps, the obstacle to citing excerpts from Janina’s book was his professional specialism? His way of conducting analysis, his way of thinking and the language he used respected the conventions of the theoretical sociology field.⁸ Using Knorr-Cetina’s concept, we can say that his language fits in the ‘epistemic culture, specific for theoretical sociology’ (Knorr-Cetina, 1999).

We can suppose that if Zygmunt was an ethnographer, it would be easier for him to borrow Janina’s life experience. This is what ethnographers usually do when they are citing research participants in their studies. Even if ethnographers deal with groups more often than with a single person,⁹ the individual perspective is always considered in their studies. In this sub-discipline of sociology (Kusenbach, 2005) the use of participant’s voices for sharing subjective thoughts constitutes the basic material of sociological and anthropological analysis. However, this was not the academic approach employed in theoretical sociology in the late 1980s. The subjectivity was perceived as a domain of ‘feminist studies’ and Zygmunt was not sensitive to this new current (Pollock, 2020). Another essential point which appears, thanks to the feminist approach that provides the space for responding to the question asked previously, is the subaltern position of the author of *Winter in the Morning*.

Subaltern status of Janina Lewinson

We owe systematic attention to the ‘situatedness’ of a given writer, their works and its reception to feminist and postcolonial studies, but also to H.S. Hughes and his sensitivity to auxiliary characteristics (Hughes, 1971). Janina Lewinson (Janina’s maiden name) was a young woman during the War, and *Winter in the Morning* is a young girl’s story. Not married, a student, trying to survive in the hell of Warsaw’s Ghetto, her account concerns an ‘ordinary life’ (if the Ghetto conditions could be qualified by the word ‘ordinary’). She was not a soldier of Jewish underground organisations. From the perspective of leading historiography – she was not a hero. She was a civilian, a specific – subaltern – status during the War, as Irena Grudzińska-Gross noted in her book *Milosz and the Long Shadow of the*

War (2020), in which she analyses the position of Czesław Miłosz. (Miłosz was the 1980 Literature Nobel Prize winner, who during the Second World War refused to be engaged in a military unit, believing that his duty as a Polish poet was to survive the War.) Grudzińska-Gross deconstructs ‘(. . .) an almost automatic network of positive associations with War: solidarity, brotherhood, chastity, sacrifice, pride, deed’. She added: “I would like to free these concepts from their romantic or chivalrous lineage, to transfer them to a civilian’ (Grudzińska-Gross, 2020: 14). Civility is associated with a ‘feminine point of view’ (Grudzińska-Gross, 2020: 24).

The notion of the ‘civilian’ during the War was definitively not a ‘noble category’. Janina certainly belonged to this category – a teenage girl trying to survive with her mother and sister, she was not the part of the underground military units. To tell the war story of civilians requires the employment of a new language, claims Grudzińska-Gross. This is precisely the point mentioned by Zygmunt in the introduction – creating a new language. The language for writing about the Holocaust, about the civilian war, requires borrowing the subaltern voices.

By combining all these ‘auxiliary characteristics’ – age, gender, profession and war status (civilian) – Janina accumulated many features that constituted her ‘subaltern category’. Her account is a voice of subaltern people – the cry of a young Jewish woman – civilian Survivor. The voices of subaltern populations are muted – this is why they are invisible. This is perhaps also why her voice is not cited in *Modernity and the Holocaust*. At least Janina could not be quoted in the not-subaltern spaces of academic production, where sociological theory resided.¹⁰ At this moment of his life, Zygmunt followed the academic world conventions (Becker, 1982). His work was similar to conventional historians who have failed in presenting the victim’s history.

In collaboration

Despite visible differences between the works of Janina and Zygmunt, we certainly see the common background, which also requires some elucidation: the importance of fundamental cultural values transmitted by Lewinson and Bauman families and which are intrinsic values of Jewish culture. In the last years, Janina spent sharing with various groups (she loved discussing with young people) in different places in Europe (Germany included) about her war experiences. As the ambassador of Anne Frank House in Amsterdam, she was a very active survivor who took part in numerous educational projects. Through the meetings with the author and the discussions on *Winter in the Morning* and when she wrote and spoke about Porajmos (Romani and Sinti Genocide), she followed the principal rule, one of the most important in Judaism: *Zachor* – Remember (Yerushalmi, 1996).

Another fundamental principle of Judaism is *Tikkun Olam* – Repair the world (Gottlieb, 2010). This concept refers to social justice. In other terms, the action to ‘fix this world’ and make it a better place for humans. Zygmunt also adhered to this. Both – Janina and Zygmunt – through their fundamental books *Winter in the Morning* and *Modernity and the Holocaust* reunified their

forces in the pursuit of *Never Again* motto. This is how we need to read both books, as *complementary*. Only both pieces – in a parallel or sequential reading – will bring a better understanding of the Holocaust. Humans and societies' dark side is always present and needs to be under permanent control. How to do it? Zygmunt emphasised several times that maintaining diversity is the best guarantee for keeping democracy, which prevents conflict (see MH but also *Strangers at Our Door*, 2016; *Liquid Love*, 2003). However, in *Modernity and the Holocaust*, he demonstrated an elaborate analysis of the matrix of the Holocaust, which also includes other genocides and massacres, including the examples of the Soviet Union under Stalin and the system of gulags, as well as colonial-imperialism. He indicated the vigilance and pluralism of independent social movements as a necessary component of a democratic society, which will control governments and prevent genocide.

The anatomy of the Holocaust is not complete without *Winter in the Morning*, however. We must read the two books in parallel. Janina's emotional and personal account, a subaltern voice expresses precious wisdom – the message: 'Żyć! Zwyciężą ci do przeżyją!' [Live! The Survivors will be the Winners!] (see Janina Bauman's poem at the end of the chapter).

Thirty years later

During his whole life, Zygmunt was attentive to the novelty in the area of sociology and other disciplines. He followed with interest developments in Jewish studies, Holocaust history and memory studies (Cheyette, 2020), which, especially in Poland, was prolific. The paradigm shift occurred with the groundbreaking publication *Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne* (2001). This book by Jan T. Gross modified the way of studying the Holocaust also because it definitively shifted the status of survivors' testimonies.¹¹ In his autobiographical book, Gross gives some methodological insight into his fundamental work background. The first remark concerns the quality of institutional documents: In 2018, Jan T. Gross said:

The periods of rapid changes in social life, which are wars and revolutions, are never well captured in the official documentation. Simply put, the current of events overflows the institutional framework, it is impossible to plan or put it into bureaucratic columns, and to understand what happened or even in order to find out what happened one has to refer to personal accounts of witnesses to the events.

No doubt here that testimonies are significant in the studies of the Holocaust. However, the use of such material is tough, even for a historian, as Gross continues:

When I read Szmul Wasersztajn's account for the first time, it seemed so shocking to me it stayed with me for a long time as the story of a man who had experienced something terrible and, to put it bluntly, gone crazy. As a

reader, I was aware that the author of the text experienced something terrible, but not what he describes there. For a couple of years, I was convinced that Wasersztajn got something wrong. Yes, there was a barn, someone was burned in it, for sure, but so many people? I read this report by Wasersztajn even before the release of *The Phantom Decade*. It's hard to believe that an ordinary town murdered all of its Jewish neighbors, most of them by burning in the barn!!! 1.5 thousand people?

(Gross and Pawlicka, 2018: 137–138)

If the survivors' testimonies were difficult to accept as truth-data material by historians (Aleksiun, 2016), we could understand Zygmunt's reservation. Bauman wrote *Modernity and the Holocaust* for an academic audience – his references are mainly to historians' work. Again, we need to remember that it was too early for Zygmunt in the late 1980s to include the survivor's voice. In the sources that the author of *Modernity and the Holocaust* are citing and discussing, there is no place for such voices.¹² Gross's revolutionary book provoke an earthquake in Poland and abroad. *Neighbors* started a stormy discussion beyond the academic world. The consequence of these intellectual exchanges was the birth and the productive activity of today's New Polish School of Holocaust Scholarship.¹³ In this academic environment (and in general among Shoah specialists), the survivors recovered their voice (Aleksiun, 2014).

It was a long process in which Holocaust historian Christopher Browning played an important role.¹⁴ *Remembering Survival: Inside a Nazi Slave-Labor Camp* (2010), his pioneering study of labour camps relied almost entirely on interviews with survivors. He recognised that using the memories of Survivors recorded several years after the war as a substantial material was a challenge, which many Holocaust scholars were reluctant to undertake. After several years of study, Browning gained a fundamental methodological reflection about survivor testimonies. He concluded that using traumatised memories is complicated, but all historical documents are difficult to employ – there is no easy evidence: 'The issue here is not do we use it [testimonies] or not but how do we use it. . . . Because to not use this memories [today and use them as main source of data] is to lose a whole area of Holocaust that we don't have any evidence for' (Browning, 2018).¹⁵

The change of the status of survivor's voice also modified the status of the testimonies books. *Winter in the Morning* has become a precious source for many scholars studying the civilian life in the Ghetto and hidden places, the daily life and intimacy of survivors as well as the women's and children's Holocaust experiences (Michlic, 2017). As Natalia Aleksiun remarks: '[i]t is a record of an individual experience, and at the same time the experience of trauma, which is a chronicle of intimate events and emotion' (Aleksiun, 2020: 8) Moreover, 'reading Jewish fates through the prism of women's texts – testimonies, documents, biographical literary records – makes it possible to go beyond the normative vision of Jewish history'¹⁶ (Aleksiun, 2020: 9–10). This very dynamic area of academic investigation brought two different spaces of literary production together: academic

writing and literary 'fiction'. Finally, memories and testimonies – individual ordinary people stories – have an important place in scholarly analysis.¹⁷

Today, the bridges between survivor's accounts and academic analysis are more than inspirations, more than some invisible relations that need to be sketched out. There are a lot of massive bridges – iron-strong and visible. The precious wisdom learned about the atrocity of war by subaltern civilians is not only an inspiration but constitutes important data, which is the basis for exhaustive analysis. Emotions are studied. The new language, which was promised by Zygmunt (and in my opinion, he failed to deliver), is progressively elaborated in the accounts of numerous scholars. This is collective work and a process that will take many years to complete. The interdisciplinary approach is beneficial for this challenge. The mixing of anthropology, history, sociology, ethnology, literary criticism, feminist studies, psychoanalysis, cultural studies, art history and sociolinguistics helped create a new space for communication about the Holocaust.¹⁸ Significant in this process is the contribution of scholars who are working on the intersection of arts and history (literary scholars and art historians). The proximity with arts (literature, painting, music) helps to elaborate this new language necessary in progress in the Holocaust studies.

The window which Bauman looked through is open now. We know better how to discuss emotions. We can listen to subaltern voices. Can we feel now? Where is the limit of sharing such liminal emotions born in the hell of the Holocaust? The door that would give a complete comprehension of this horrible phenomenon is not open yet – and probably will never be open to the point that we can really understand the Holocaust. As Jankiel Wiernik wrote in his *A Year in Treblinka*, composed after his escape from the death camp in August 1943, 'no imagination, no matter how daring, could possibly conceive of anything like that which I have seen and lived through' (Wiernik, 2003: 47). However, the door is sometimes ajar, and we can feel some undefined emotions. Artists open that door.¹⁹ They make us feel what they have experienced. Janina opens the door slightly with her poetry²⁰:

Śmierć nad głowami

Zaszumiała nam śmierć nad głowami,
Wświdrowała się w mózgi warkotem,
I zatrzęsała się ziemia pod nami
I zachwiała się głuchym łoskotem.

Coś zważyło się, pękło, jęknęło,
Tynk posypał się bielą z sufitu,
I skłębilo się coś i brzęknęło,
I pył szary się podniósł z niebytu.

Potem cisza, lecz zaraz na nowo,
Świst i łomot i warkot, tak nisko
I znów śmierć zaszumiała nad głową,
Aż gruchnęło! . . . Nie w nas . . . gdzieś tam, blisko.

Strach się zimną obręczą zacisnął
Wkoło skroni, a serca nie biją,
W mózgu jedno pragnienie zabłysło:
Żyć! Zwycięzą ci co przeżyją!

Były potem gruzy i pożary,
Była rozpacz i tęsknota była,
Była nędza i głód i koszmary
Snów. Śmierć każda chwila w sobie kryła.

I przez dni jak przez ostre kamienie
Ciągnęliśmy jak tobół swe życie
Bo wierzyliśmy jednak w zbawienie,
Bo wierzyliśmy cicho i skrycie.

A Zagłada szła dalej Warszawą
Nad domami szła, nad ulicami,
Nocą luna zaświtała krwawa
I szumiała nam śmierć nad głowami.

1944

Death Overhead

Death came whirring overhead
Boring down, deep into our souls
And the earth trembled beneath us
Swayed, rumbled, groaned and caved-in.

Something toppled, splintered and moaned
White dust drifted down from above
Something reeled and came crashing down
And grey dust rose up from the void.

And then silence. But soon, once more
The wheeze, rumble and drone, so low
Death came circling above once again
And thud! Not us . . . somewhere, not far.

Fear tightened its cold grip around temples
And hearts stopped beating a while
One wish still kindled brightly
To live! Those who survive will win!

And then there were ruins and fires
There was despair, there was longing,
Poverty, hunger and nightmares . . .
Death stalked each day and each moment.

And we dragged our lives like heavy bundles
Over bumpy terrain of days
Believing still in salvation
Believing still . . . hope against hope

And carnage marched on over Warsaw
Above roof-tops and above streets
Flaring dawn-like, blood-red in the night
Death came whirring, once more, overhead.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to Lydia Bauman for the translation of Janina Bauman's poem, to Jan T. Gross for his careful lecture and support, Agata Czanacka for discussion about power–gender relationships, Elżbieta Janicka for the citation of Jankiel Wiernik and Jack Palmer for his time spent on polishing my English as well as Dariusz Brzeziński and Jack Palmer for their comments.

Notes

- 1 In this chapter, I will frequently use the first names of both authors – Janina and Zygmunt. This is unusual in scholarly texts, where the most often surnames are employed.
- 2 The book is partially reconstructed from Janina's diary, kept during the war. This precious work (several notebooks) survived and was in her possession until 1968, when the authorities, checking all belonging which Bauman family packed and wished to send to Israel upon exile, decided to requisition it. After becoming a British citizen, Zygmunt tried to recover the missing manuscripts, but his requests remained without responses. In 2014, I found the missing documents, among them the diary. The family received, after a lengthy procedure, a copy of the documents two years later. I hope that the original diary will be back with the family shortly. On the diary, see Wagner, 2020; about *Winter in the Morning* and its partial reconstruction from a diary: Lydia Bauman, 1986, J. Wolff, 2011.
- 3 The publication of Arlie Hochschild *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling* (1983) is considered a shift in the perception and use of emotions as a sociological category of analysis.
- 4 The impact of studying the Holocaust on researchers (mentioned in prefaces to numerous studies) evokes a high emotional cost.
- 5 My statement is based on the numerous accounts from numerous meetings, which Janina Bauman took part in years that followed the publication of her book. The documentations about her activity as the author but also as a Holocaust survivor and the Ambassador of Anna Frank House in Amsterdam can be found in the Janina and Zygmunt Bauman papers in the Special Collections of the Brotherton Library, University of Leeds.
- 6 Very important role in these Jewish turn played documentary films: Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah* (1985), and most certainly Polish films by Paweł Łoziński's *Miejsce urodzenia* (1992) and Marian Marzyński's *Shtetl* (1996).
- 7 About the failure of this approach and the consequences in the construction of social memory in Spain, see excellent article by J-F. Daguzan "Mémoire de la Guerre Civile Espagnole: reconquête d'une mémoire amputée par la moitié" in *Confluences Méditerranée*, 2014/1 N. 88, pp. 171–184. The influence of the policy of forgetting on Zygmunt's work regarding the Holocaust merits a deeper reflection.

- 8 Zygmunt has a very specific style of writing (his use of metaphors) and the way of conducting analysis. However, his texts at that time didn't break the scholarly conventions.
- 9 We know from the history of sociology the examples when the single life experience was the basis for the book – the first known was Shaw, 2013 [1966].
- 10 As Joanna Michlic recalls, Lawrence Langer – historian of literature and specialist of the Holocaust Survivors testimonies – noticed that the Holocaust's historiography was divided into the story of the perpetrators and the story of the victims. The perpetrators were privileged only because the Nazi regime created official archival documents from which information was obtained on the institutional dimension of the Holocaust and its mechanisms (Michlic, 2017). Moreover, according to Michlic, new currents in historical sciences (oral history, history of ordinary life, history of emotions, women and children) that occurred between 1970 and 1990 progressively changed the study of the Holocaust. We shouldn't forget that there was also an opening for speaking about trauma, which came from psychoanalysis and feminist studies. Still, as Griselda Pollock showed – Zygmunt Bauman was not interested in these new currents (Pollock, 2020).
- 11 See substantial article by Aleksium, 2014. I am not developing here the key issue, which is the 'narrative shock' (Zubrzycki, 2006), which was in fact – according to Ewa Janicka – 'identity shock', that provoked redefinition of the categories of Holocaust descriptions and new reconstruction of sociocultural legitimacy of antisemitism (Janicka, 2018).
- 12 It is significant that Bauman in his hermeneutical method (see Davis 2020) did not refer either to the content of in-depth interviews or to personal memories. He has worked on other sources. Personal memories were, at best, a source of inspiration for him. I would like to thank Dariusz Brzeziński for this remark.
- 13 The 'New Polish School of Holocaust Scholarship' was a conference organised in Paris (EHSS), intended to be a celebration of all the research done over the past 15 years on the role that non-Jewish Poles played in the Shoah. More on the New School – Public Seminar website: <https://publicseminar.org/2019/04/the-subtext-of-a-recent-international-scandal-part-one-2/>
- 14 I am grateful to Adam Puławski for his advice concerning work of Christopher Browning.
- 15 Browning collected 292 testimonies of Survivors (conducted in twenty-first century) and based on this corpus of data, he developed rich methodological reflexion about how to conduct the interviews as well as how to classify memories (there are four layers: repressed/lost, secret, communal, public); then there is an interesting phenomenon of collective and incorporated memory. See more on <https://sfi.usc.edu/news/2018/05/21951-christopher-r-browning-lecture-summary>. Accessed: 6.5.2021 (quoted talk started from min. 1h 06). In the light of this categorisation, Janina's testimony was 'public memory'.
- 16 Aleksium mentions the following historians: 'Paula Hyman, Marion Kaplan, Gershon Bacon i Moshe Rosman' (Aleksium, 2020: 10, note 5). We can add to this list Shulamit Reinharz and Paula Ellen Hyman.
- 17 As I mentioned previously, it was always the case for ethnography, but in this chapter I am focusing on theoretical sociology and history.
- 18 Among important scholars, who use the multidisciplinary approach, are: Griselda Pollock – historian of art, cultural sociologist and feminist studies expert; Joanna Tokarska-Bakir – anthropologist and historian; Jan T. Gross - sociologist and historian; Elzbieta Janicka - literary scholar; Irena Grudzińska-Gross – historian; and Jacek Leociak – literary scholar.
- 19 Janina and Zygmunt Bauman followed also the artistic works related to the Holocaust, which after the 1990s became in Poland a dynamic field, with among others the works of Arthur Żmijewski, Wilhelm Sasnal, Yael Bartana, Elzbieta Janicka, Mirosław Bałka.
- 20 This poem is one of the numerous which were created by Janina Bauman during the Second World War and in the years after. They were never published. I am grateful to Lydia Bauman for translation into English and Bauman Family for permission of using this poem in this chapter.

Bibliography

- Aleksiu, N. 2014. Survivor Testimonies and Historical Objectivity: Polish Historiography since Neighbors. *Holocaust Studies*, 20 (1–2), 157–178.
- Aleksiu, N. 2016. Neighbours in Borysław. Jewish Perceptions of Collaboration and Rescue in Eastern Galicia. In F. Bajohr, A. Löw (eds). *The Holocaust and European Societies. The Holocaust and Its Contexts*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 243–266.
- Aleksiu, N. 2017. Intimate Violence: Jewish Testimonies on Victims and Perpetrators in Eastern Galicia. *Holocaust Studies*, 23 (1–2), 17–33.
- Aleksiu, N. 2020. (Od) czytanie losów żydowskich. *Autobiografia*, 14 (1), 7–14.
- Bauman, J. 1986. *Winter in the Morning*. London: Virago Books.
- Bauman, L. 1986. . . . Remaining Human in Inhuman Conditions. *The Jewish Quarterly*, 33 (4), 59–61.
- Bauman, Z. 1990. *Thinking Sociologically*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Bauman, Z. 2003. *Liquid Love*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Bauman, Z. 2016. *Strangers at our Door*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Becker, H. 1982. *Art Worlds*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Browning, C. R. 2010. *Remembering Survival: Inside a Nazi Slave-labor Camp*. London: W. W. Norton & Company.
- Browning, C. R. 2018. *Holocaust History and Survivor Testimony: The Case of the Starachowice Factory Slave Labor Camp*. An Annual Shapiro Scholar Public Lecture Delivered at the 29th of March. Available at: <https://sfi.usc.edu/news/2018/05/21951-christopher-r-browning-lecture-summary>
- Cheyette, B. 2011. The Dignity of Janina Bauman: A Personal Reflection. *Thesis Eleven*, 107 (1), 94–100.
- Cheyette, B. 2020. Zygmunt Bauman's Window: From Jews to Strangers and Back Again. *Thesis Eleven*, 156 (1), 67–85.
- Davis, M. 2020. Hermeneutics *Contra* Fundamentalism: Zygmunt Bauman's Method for Thinking in Dark Times. *Thesis Eleven*, 156 (1), 27–44.
- Fine, R., and Turner, C. (eds.). 2000. *Social Theory after the Holocaust*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press.
- Fleck, L. 1979 [1935]. *Genesis and Development of a Scientific Fact*, trans. F. Bradley and Th. J. Trenn, ed. Thaddeus J. Trenn and R. K. Merton, foreword by T. S. Kuhn. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.
- Friedman, J. 2001. Togetherness and Isolation: Holocaust Survivor Memories of Intimacy and Sexuality in the Ghettos. *The Oral History Review*, 28 (1), 1–6.
- Geertz, C. 1973. *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*. New York: Basic Books.
- Gottlieb, D. 2010. *Tikkun Olam: Jewish Sacred Repair, Secular Action or Both?* Available on website of The University of Chicago, Divinity School at: <https://divinity.uchicago.edu/sightings/articles/november-4-2010-tikkun-olam-jewish-sacred-repair-secular-action-or-both>, access: 30.07.2021.
- Gross, J. 2012. *Neighbors*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Gross, J., and Pawlicka, A. 2018, . . . *bardzo dawno temu, mniej więcej w zeszły piątek . . .* Warszawa: W.A.B.
- Grudzińska-Gross, I. 2020, *Miłosz i długi cień wojny*. Sejny: Pogranicze.
- Hochschild, A. R. 2012 [1983]. *The Managed Heart*. Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Hughes, E. C. 1971. *The Sociological Eye: Selected Papers*. Chicago: Aldine – Aldheron.

- Janicka, E. 2018. *Corpus Christi, corpus delicti* – nowy kontrakt narracyjny: Pokłosie (2012) Władysława Pasikowskiego wobec kompromitacji kategorii polskiego świadka Zagłady. *Studia Litteraria et Historica*, 7, 1–93. <https://doi.org/10.11649/slh.1714>
- Knorr-Cetina, K. 1999. *Epistemic Cultures: How the Sciences Make Knowledge*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Kuhn, T. S. 1962. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Kusenbach, M. 2005. Across the Atlantic: Current Issues and Debates in US Ethnography. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 6 (3), 1–29.
- Michlic, J. B. 2017. Długi cień Zagłady: historie ocalałych dzieci. "Znak", Kraków, 6, 40–47. Available at: www miesiecznik.znak.com.pl/dlugi-cien-zaglady-historie-ocalalych-dzieci/, access 08.05.2021.
- Michlic, J. B. 2020. *Piętno Zagłady. Wojenna i powojenna historia oraz pamięć żydowskich dzieci ocalałych w Polsce*, trans. Adam Musiał. Warszawa: ŻIH.
- Pollock, G. 2020. Liquid Culture, the Art of Life and Dancing with Tracey Emin: A Feminist Art Historian/Cultural Analyst's Perspective on Bauman's Missing Cultural Hermeneutics. *Thesis Eleven*, 156 (1), 10–26.
- Shaw, C. R. 2013. *The Jack-Roller: A Delinquent Boy's Own Story*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Wagner, I. 2020. *Bauman: A Biography*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Wiernik, J. 2003. *Rok w Treblince / A year in Treblinka*. Warszawa: Rada Ochrony Pamięci Walk i Męczeństwa.
- Wolff, J. 2011. A 'Small, Limited World': Janina Bauman's Personal and Historical Stories. *Thesis Eleven*, 107 (1), 72–80.
- Yerushalmi, Y. H. 1996. *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.
- Zubrzycki, G. 2006. *The Crosses of Auschwitz: Nationalism and Religion in Post-Communist Poland*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

10 Reading *Modernity and the Holocaust* with and against *Winter in the Morning*

Griselda Pollock

At the end her Preface to *Winter in the Morning* (1986), a formally innovative revisiting of her teenage years in and outside the Warsaw ghetto, Janina Bauman offered two discrete paragraphs:

My book is meant as a tribute to those innumerable people who helped me, my mother and my sister to survive the war. The majority of them were women of different social backgrounds, ages and occupations. The motives for risking their lives to help us were as varied as their characters.

During the war I learned the truth we usually choose to leave unsaid: that the cruellest thing about cruelty is that it dehumanises its victims before it destroys them. And that the hardest of struggles is to remain human in inhuman conditions.

(J. Bauman, 1986: ii)

In the autumn of 1983, I read Janina Bauman's manuscript. She also asked my help to facilitate its publication. She submitted it to Virago, a noted feminist press promoting the writings by women. I was able to contact Virago editor Ruth Petrie and alert her to the presence, in a pile of submissions, of a manuscript I encouraged her to draw out and read immediately. Virago published the book in December 1986. When I asked Ruthie Petrie whether the book was being classified as a story about a woman's adolescence or as a memoir of the Holocaust, she did not think the latter was any more important than the former. Thus, *Winter in the Morning* found its place on a women writers' list and with a feminist press.

In turn, Zygmunt Bauman's *Modernity and the Holocaust* was prefaced by reference to Janina Bauman's work of literature. It concludes with a film, *Shoah* by Lanzmann. As a self-defined memoir and novel, *Winter in the Morning* by Janina Bauman was indicative of a return to memory by survivors who had remained silent for decades. *Shoah* was discovery that such memories were a train or plane ride away, still raw, agonising and waiting for the right questions to be posed. This chapter is a long footnote to Janina Bauman's two statements by exploring tensions between thinking sociologically (Z. Bauman, 1990) and thinking aesthetically (J. Bauman, 1986) in terms of moral action in conditions when such action becomes a test of 'the human condition' (Arendt, 1958) and, more specifically,

the experience and actions of women during the events we term the Holocaust (Ringelheim, 1985; Ofer and Weitzman, 1998).

I offer, therefore, an eccentric reading of Zygmunt Bauman's *Modernity and the Holocaust* by suggesting that aesthetic practices – literature (Janina Bauman) and cinema (*Shoah*) – played a constitutive role in, or were a trigger for, his analysis of the sociological implications of the Holocaust. Yet there is no easy correspondence between the conclusions Zygmunt Bauman reached, apparently inspired by Janina Bauman's *Winter in the Morning*, and what the author herself concluded from her delayed return to her past in writing that book. I suggest that Bauman's response to *Winter in the Morning* involved a serious misunderstanding, creative for sociology but problematic for both cultural and political analysis where meaningful insights for living human lives offered in art (film and literature) depend on *aesthetic-affective thinking* evidenced by *Winter in the Morning* rather than what Zygmunt Bauman himself defined as 'thinking sociologically' (Z. Bauman, 1990).

Janina Bauman's Preface is titled: 'Why? And Why Now?' Why, indeed, write after 40 years of silence? Why begin this memoir at this moment, ca. 1981? What, moreover, is the insight she discovered *in writing* that is her gift to us who read it? I share with several other writers in this volume¹ a deep interest in the dialogue between Janina Bauman, a witness-survivor, and Zygmunt Bauman, an exiled sociologist turning belatedly to the question that the Event – the Shoah or Holocaust – of the mid-twentieth century must pose to both thought and art, and to all disciplines. Preparing to teach a course on the entry of the trauma of Holocaust into cultural memory, I noted in the later 1980s how widespread in the arts and humanities was the *belated* registration of the traumatically deranging impact of politically sanctioned, industrialised, racialised mass murder as an event that had effectively shattered the very foundations of Western philosophy, ethics, theology, museology, poetry, literature, history and, of course, sociology. A new density of publications revealed an academic engagement with the Holocaust emerging in advance of major public events such as the opening of the US Holocaust Memorial Museum (1993) or the release of Stephen Spielberg's film *Schindler's List* (1993).

Delay is a symptom of trauma. Trauma happens, but it overwhelms the psyche's capacity to process its devastating impact (Pollock, 2013). Culturally, traumatic events exceed existing frames of understanding. Thought was, in effect, traumatised by what historian Saul Friedländer defined as an event at 'the limits of representation'. (Friedländer, 1992). Arguing that the Holocaust is not unrepresentable, Friedländer insisted that as a state-sponsored, industrialised atrocity, it was, however, without precedent, hence without comparative measure or existing tropes (Lyotard, 1983/1988). To discern its form, let alone determine its significance, had almost defied disciplinary models and resources.

Across art, film, literature, philosophy, historiography, theology and museology Event, a cultural memory of the Event so disfiguringly termed the Holocaust (meaning *burnt offering*) took almost 50 years to form. By tracing this slow, uneven, scattered and often *theoretically overlooked emergence of aesthetic*

inscription of the Event – books, plays, images, films – this question emerged: did the aesthetic-artistic-literary-cinematic practices themselves seed into culture what, once it accumulated and was noticed across academic disciplines, generated the demand for meta-analysis that became interdisciplinary Holocaust Studies – not to be confused with the discontinuous, episodic studies of the Nazi genocide that appeared after 1945. The moment and conditions in which the Holocaust became a question beyond the historical narrative, local testimony and remembrance occurred in the 1980s. Claude Lanzmann's monumental film *Shoah* (1985) was both symptom and predicate, an aesthetic registration of the Event that, with *Winter in the Morning* (completed 1983), converged in one formative instance of the meta-discourse: *Modernity and the Holocaust* (published in 1989).

One of the now most repeated – and least investigated statements, including those made by Bauman himself – concerns the impact of *Winter in the Morning* on *Modernity and the Holocaust*. Zygmunt Bauman pointed to the influence on his work of Janina Bauman, not only on his own turn to a sociological study of the Holocaust, but, more significantly on his realisation that the Holocaust had sociological significance. He told Peter Beilharz:

[F]rom Janina I learned . . . that sociologizing makes sense only in as far as it helps *humanity* in life, that in the ultimate account, it is the *human* choices that make all the difference between lives *human* and, and that society is an ingenious contraption to narrow down, perhaps eliminate altogether, those choices.

(Bauman in Beilharz, 2001: 335, my emphasis)

The words *human*, *inhuman*, *humanity* mirror the vocabulary of Hannah Arendt, theorist of totalitarianism and its anti-political, depoliticising assault on what she defined, in the wake of several totalitarianisms' attempts to eradicate it, as 'the human condition' (Arendt, 1958). These words precipitate the following questions about: what Bauman learned from Janina Bauman's memoir and what Zygmunt Bauman defined in Arendtian terms, what Janina Bauman herself had discovered from writing her own book? I do not think so. I shall analyse Janina Bauman's *Preface* and Zygmunt Bauman's *Afterthought*, treating both texts to a symptomatic, textual reading, in the context of Lanzmann's film and the first published report on the extermination process.

Intellectual trauma and the question of evil

A symptom of intellectual trauma within sociology and relevant fields, the bibliography of *Modernity and the Holocaust* drew mostly on literature published after 1980. The exception is Hannah Arendt's work.

In 1945, Arendt, a penniless rookie journalist scratching a living in a foreign tongue in New York, reviewed Denis De Rougement (1906–1985)'s book, *The Devil's Share* (1944), where he wrote of the intellectual trauma of facing 'a "nightmare of reality" before which our intellectual weapons have failed so miserably'

(Arendt, 1945: 133). Arendt makes her famous statement of intent that will direct the rest of her intellectual life:

The reality is that ‘the Nazis are men like ourselves’; the nightmare is that they have shown, have proven beyond reasonable doubt what man is capable of. In other words, *the problem of evil will be the fundamental question of post-war intellectual life in Europe* – as death became the fundamental question after the last war. Rougement knows that ascribing all evils and evil as such to any social order or to society as such is a ‘flight from reality’.

(Arendt, 1945: 134, my emphasis)

From that moment, it appears that Arendt almost alone took up this challenge not to fly from reality by blaming systems (Marxism) and evil men (Humanism). Her evolving understanding of the question of evil developed in her resumed post-war correspondence in the later 1940s with psychiatrist and philosopher Karl Jaspers (1883–1969), even as she was plunging herself into all available sources for an understanding of what she came to define as *totalitarianism* that combined an attempt at total domination with experimental destruction, via the ‘concentrationary universe’, of human singularity (Arendt, 1951; Pollock and Silverman, 2013). Writing to Jaspers, Arendt argued out her move from Kant’s notion that evil is radical towards what Jaspers himself termed ‘a banality of evil’. Jaspers responded to Arendt with anxiety:

You say that what the Nazis did cannot be comprehended as a ‘crime’ – I’m not altogether comfortable with your view, because a guilt that goes beyond all criminal guilt inevitably takes on a streak of greatness, – of satanic greatness – which is, for me, as inappropriate for the Nazis as all the talk about the demonic element in Hitler and so forth. It seems to me that we have to see those things *in their total banality*, in their prosaic triviality, because that’s what truly characterizes them. Bacteria can cause epidemics that wipe out nations, but they remain merely bacteria. I regard any hint of myth and legend with horror.

(Arendt and Jaspers, 1992: 62)

Arendt concurred, reformulating her conclusion. Her object of analysis was not Nazi crime but totalitarianism – a systematic assault on political action that would thus destroy the *human condition* defined as the capacity for spontaneous action based on the political activity of a plurality of singularities: *whos* not *whats*.

However wrong Arendt proved to be about Eichmann who was, as we now know, a calculating, vicious and dedicated anti-Semite (Cesarani, 2004), the Eichmann who self-presented at the trial appeared to confirm and illuminate Arendt’s view that, in the enactment of racialised genocide, shallow thoughtlessness replaced moral sickness or evil intent in the classic theological and legal formulation of what constitutes either a sin or a crime (Arendt, 1963). From the point of view of the victims, however, the effect of the totalitarian system in the concentration camps in which they were incarcerated and tortured (distinct from the

dedicated extermination camps from whom none survived save the handful who revolted and escaped) was to incapacitate moral action by creating conditions in which action itself was useless, and even deadly, to those one might want to help (Pollock and Silverman, 2013/2022). Even as we continually misunderstand the banalisation of evil – the erosion of thoughtfulness – Arendt’s position remains the most significant and influential non-sociological and non-philosophical, *political* thesis on what had happened and what it means for us now in terms of our self-understanding as political agents. Both Arendt’s *Eichmann* and *Origins of Totalitarianism* are cited by Zygmunt Bauman: interlocutors with and powerful shadows on *Modernity and the Holocaust*.

Afterthought: rationality and shame, 1989

An ‘Afterthought’ concludes *Modernity and the Holocaust* in ways that echo Arendt’s concern with the human, moral choice and action while addressing morality with a staggering force of judgement:

The inhuman world created by a homicidal tyranny dehumanised its victims and those who passively watch the victimisation by pressing both to use the logic of self-preservation as absolution for moral insensitivity and inaction. No one can be proclaimed guilty for the sheer fact of breaking down under such pressure. Yet no one can be excused from moral self-deprecation for such surrender.

(MH: 205, original emphasis)

Bauman then adds:

The lesson of the Holocaust is the facility with which most people, put into a situation that does not contain a good choice, or renders such a good choice very costly, argue themselves away from the issue of moral duty, (or fail to argue themselves towards it) adopting instead the precepts of rational interest and self-preservation. *In a system where rationality and ethics point in opposite directions, humanity is the main loser.* Evil can do its dirty work, hoping that most people most of the time will refrain from doing rash, reckless things – and resisting evil is rash and reckless.

(MH: 206, original emphasis)

Are these really the lessons of Janina Bauman’s book? Or are they Arendtian arguments? Where do these two thinking-women meet?

The opening of ‘Afterthought’ speaks of lessons emerge from another work of art: Claude Lanzmann’s film *Shoah* (1986). After choosing six examples of moral quandaries faced by victims and bystanders, Zygmunt Bauman modifies Arendt’s revised concept of the banality of evil:

By far the most shocking among Lanzmann’s messages is the *rationality of evil* (or was it the evil of rationality?). Hour after hour during that

interminable agony of watching *Shoah* the terrible humiliating truth is uncovered and paraded in its obscene nakedness: how few men with guns were needed to murder millions.

(MH: 202)

While affirming his main thesis, Zygmunt Bauman discloses to us a rare moment of his affective response to a film: not any film, of course, but *the* film, lasting 9.5 hours, itself an edited distillation of 350 hours of filming undertaken over 11 years and simply titled *Shoah: Destruction* in Hebrew. Commissioned in 1974 in Israel as part of a trilogy, for lack of funding, French Jewish journalist and resistance fighter Claude Lanzmann's film was irregularly produced over those 11 years and only first screened in Paris in April 1985 and in New York in October 1985.

When did Zygmunt see the film? Did he see at the cinema in Leeds? Was it the condensed screening on Polish television in 1985 or the full screening at the Polish Embassy in London to which, it is possible, they were invited? Did both Janina Bauman and Zygmunt Bauman go to see it or watch it at home together? IMBD says *Shoah* had cinematic release in Britain in 1986 (Holocaust and *Shoah* film specialist, Sue Vice, personal correspondence 28.08.2019, says she saw it in 1985) but it only received classification from the British Film Board on 15 June 1986. Film historian Barry Langford tells me it was also shown on Channel 4 over two nights following its two-part format: *First Era Part I and Part II* and *Second Era*. In 1978, they had also watched with 120 million American and 20 million German viewers the four-part, also 9.5 hours American TV series *Holocaust* that has been credited with installing the term 'Holocaust' in the international cultural imagination and vocabulary (alternative terms in use being Shoah, The Destruction, Vernichtung der Juden, Nazi Atrocities, The Final Solution, World War II). A letter of 16 June 1984, to her editors at Virago, suggests that Janina Bauman had watched this cinematically banal but influential Hollywood dramatisation of the Holocaust told through the interwoven story of two families, one German-Jewish, one German-Christian-Nazi.

For obvious reasons I have followed everything that has ever been screened about the Holocaust. There were several Polish films after the war but told only half-truths. There was the *Diary of Anne Frank* made in America in 1960 and some minor films made also long ago. Recently there was the American *Holocaust*, the most serious attempt of all, entirely spoiled by its Hollywood style mannerism. There's been no British film or TV serial so far. Thinking about the superb TV plays and films made in this country, I have a strong feeling that my *quiet chamber kind of writing* lends itself well to the subdued tone of the British cinema. I wonder if you share my hope that a film team or TV producer could find it interesting.²

I love the concept of chamber writing, like chamber music – subtle and understated rather than symphonic or epic as later films will be. The tragedy is that no one took it up – yet.

These details are less important than the evidence in 'Afterthought' that Zygmunt Bauman had experienced the anti-epic *hour after hour*. Either cinematically or televisually, the Baumans' viewing of *Shoah* involved probably four hours per night. The film's demand for endurance was also experienced as *an interminable agony*, a phrase of exceptional emotional and even physical charge.

Interminable captures the strategic form of Lanzmann's film, its adamant refusal of any narrative promising to deliver an end. Layered, repetitive, circular, rhyming and relentless, *Shoah* simply stops as yet another contemporary freight train trundles towards, and past us, on its tracks. Freight wagons occur repeatedly across the film as a kind of punctuation point, resting the viewer after some particularly harrowing interview and providing space to absorb what has just been presented through the interviews, taking us to the places and making us watch the faces – Lanzmann's devastatingly simple components. Lanzmann used, however, footage of recognisably contemporary DB rolling stock on European railways whose ceaseless movement asserts that the transporting of human cargo to death camps occurred in modern, industrial society and with the ordinary systems of regular, time-tabled railways, costed 'tickets' required and paid for by appropriation from the victim-passengers. The perpetual present of these freight trains and continuous operation of the actual rail network index what a few elderly or middle-aged interviewees recall of train journeys to one-way destinations whose purposes they survived or escaped while some bystanders speak of the trains they shunted to such destinations. Lanzmann thus refused the fetishism of the cattle wagon as icon, initially created from a rare piece of archive footage of one iconic sequence – the propaganda film of a departure from Westerbork which had been used in Resnais' *Night and Fog* (1955), which itself had been quoted in a re-enacted sequence from the first Polish post-war film by Wanda Jakubowka's *The Last Stage* (1948), probably the one referenced by Janina Bauman earlier.

Shoah abolishes temporal and spatial distance between a historical past and the present, between the exceptional and the mundane. Lanzmann's aesthetic politics refuse to enclose the Event in the past by insisting on immediate, phenomenological encounters with the places of the Event right now: 'This is the place', says Simon Srebnik at Chelmno in the opening segment, returning 40 years after he survived a bullet in his head as the SS sought to erase the killing site and killed off its remaining forced labourers. A continuous present is written on the faces and in either traumatic silence or compulsively spoken words of survivors, bystanders, perpetrators in the now-time of Lanzmann's filming.

What *Shoah* made interminably and agonisingly present for Zygmunt Bauman was, his text reveals, the *terrible, humiliating truth*. 'Terrible truth' is a common phrase, but who is humiliated by this truth? The present tense gerundive, *humiliating* necessarily implies *being made a humiliated subject*. This subject is the viewer, of course, and, in this case, the writer of this passage, Zygmunt Bauman. This subject is also what we will come to understand from Bauman's conclusion and throughout his later work as the missing moral subject. The truth experienced before *Shoah* is the humiliation not of a human (any one viewer), but of *the*

human moving from the interpellation of a single individual, Zygmunt Bauman, to a more abstract, theoretical entity.

Whoever is terrified and humiliated by this truth also finds that truth *obscenely naked*. The legal definition of obscenity is ‘lewd, filthy, or disgusting words or pictures’. Can truth be disgusting? Can knowing it dirty us? Who is the subject of this obscenely naked exposure to truth? Does truth render us obscenely naked before the knowledge forced upon us by agonisingly enduring Lanzmann’s distilled 9.5 hours ‘in the place’?

Naked is troubling in relation to *Shoah* that so steadfastly refuses to show us any of the horrific photographic or filmed imagery that documented the *concentration* but not the dedicated *extermination* camps. The latter were never documented. Concentrationary imagery from camps in Germany is mistakenly used to signify Holocaust: the genocidal mass murder on Polish soil and the invaded territories of the Soviet Union. The visual archive of the Holocaust contains images of direct killing by shooting in the wake of Germany’s invasion of the Soviet Union made by perpetrators while concentration camp imagery was produced by the Allied liberators, intentionally horrifying, in order to expose the deathly nakedness of victims they found dead or starving in the thousands of concentration camps within Germany. There is, therefore, almost no primary film or photographic evidence of the obliterated sites of the four dedicated Operation Reinhard extermination camps – Treblinka, Sobibór, Chełmno, Belżec – that Lanzmann visited and filmed to fill their forgotten place names with our terror and horror. While there is no nakedness in *Shoah*, cruelty of the calculated humiliation of enforced and public nakedness is, however, invoked poignantly in the words and facial expressions of the witnesses and the perpetrators whom Lanzmann interviewed in their homes and other secure places mostly far removed from the places and times they describe. Teasing out the affective and unconscious freight of Bauman’s phrasing in ‘Afterthought’, that registers a physical and emotional reaction of considerable intensity if not confusion, tending to the epic registers the eruption of affect into academic writing that is preceded – framed if not contained – by a sociological statement. Bauman defines Lanzmann’s film as a film with a message: ‘the rationality of evil (or was it the *evil of rationality*?)’. Is the evil of rationality a simple rhetorical inversion or a symptomatic revelation? Is it the mirror-image of the rationality of evil that displaces the much-misunderstood Arendtian concept of the banality of evil articulated in 1963? (Arendt, 1963; Bernstein, 2002).

Rationality, of course, places us firmly in the territory of sociology, and notably in the sociology of Max Weber whose key terms include a hidden one: rationalism, rationalisation and rationality (Swidler, 1973). *Rationalism* means efficient orientation of means to ends; its opposite is irrationalism, doing things for idiotic, unproductive reasons. *Rationalisation* refers to the systematisation of ideas, when, for instance, ways of thinking become socially consolidated ways of thinking, systematised. *Rationality*, however, is the control of action by ideas, and the guiding ideas may not only be irrational – unlikely – but also non-rational. Hence, rationality-derived social action can also be shaped by passion, emotion, non-rational affects and phantasies, tipping into ideology and belief as well as the psychological

sources of action. The rationality of evil could be parsed as the control of rational, logical means-ends acts by ideas that have been systematised by rationalisation but depend also upon non-rational, passionate determinations that direct action such as cruelty. This opens up the can of worms about monstrous criminality, demonic evil and irrational disruption of the rationality – and leads to the modernisation thesis and modernity itself. Zygmunt Bauman's book does not endorse the confusion we feel before the idea of a thoughtless banality of evil, but what he produces, with rationality underpinning the Holocaust, is the *de-passioning* of the Event. This is what he found horrifying while using sociological analysis to deflect the passions his viewing aroused in him. If the Holocaust became possible through a rationality identified with modernity – modernity defined as a rationality – then we moderns have no defence before it as a process. From within modernity, then, the question of human action and choice, the moral human subject as agent, emerges precisely because this sociological thesis of modernity as a rationality removes the political – even the anti-politics that Arendt's thesis on totalitarianism defined as terror (Arendt, 1948). Bauman's evil of rationality might be understood as doing what is not good – evil such as hurting others – not merely as a logical means-end calculation, not merely as conformity to a socially sanctioned convention, but as an idea-driven action lined or surcharged with some kind of passion. The rationality of evil is, however, different. Doing inhuman harm becomes the rationality of the system that drives and justifies action.

What then is the message that Bauman read from *Shoah*'s well-known insistence that Lanzmann's film offered no explanation, no analysis, no modelling, no conclusion as Lanzmann pursued relentlessly two questions: What was it like? How did you feel when . . . ? Describe! Be precise! Tell me what you saw without comment or decoration! Between incitements to telling what they saw, heard, observed and felt in doing so, Lanzmann inserted or preserved silence and weeping wordlessness, registered visually a grief for the shaming that, however, the film refuses to allow to be shameful. Discussing the unrepresentability of the Holocaust at the limits of representation, French philosopher Jacques Rancière argued that *Shoah* does offer a representation of what the Event produced: absence. *Shoah* shows *absence* by tracking the absencing process. It performs, thus, the work of mourning whose 'subject' emerges as the missing Jews of Europe and the agony of those who had to live with such knowledge because, through chance, or their own defiance, they survived. We can ask the historians to document the process. We can read Arendt on the project of industrially producing corpses and the effect of experimentally destroying the human condition (Arendt, 1951). But the pathos of Lanzmann's film is this creation of absence. People – the Jews/les Juifs – are not there. The only way that world of people who were there can be encountered is in the paucity of those scattered and scarred remnants who belonged to that missing world. The 'interminable' effect of *Shoah* is to make each viewer a belated witness not to horror, but to a void revealed behind these few, mostly men's 'dead' if sometimes weeping eyes.

I come now to rethink the concluding sentence of this passage in Bauman's *Afterthought* that suggests that the cause of his agony, his sense of the obscenity

and the humiliation in facing the truth is the lesson: ‘how few men with guns were needed to murder millions’ (MH: 202). Zygmunt Bauman’s hypothesis is that the Holocaust is to be understood as one egregious instance of a rationality that defines modernity, modernity itself coming into view as a rationality that can accommodate or provide the intelligible conditions for a breach of covenant: ‘thou shalt not kill’, a commandment that marks the capacity for, and a way of adjudicating, the wrong of killing. It is the covenant for any form of sociality. Deviations have been figured in the Western cultural imaginary in the epic characters from Cain to Iago and Macbeth. Such Shakespearean vision is precisely what Karl Jaspers argued with Arendt must be resisted in the case of Nazism whose evil was merely banal yet gross enough to exceed any redress in conventional calculations of criminality.

What if it was not the case that few men with guns were needed to murder millions? Or if it was not the case that the rationalism of morally destructive cost-accounting guided the actions not only of perpetrators and bystanders but also of victims in their distorted conditions? At the heart of Bauman’s investigation is the conditions of people’s actions which predisposed the *event not to be stopped*. He later formulated this agonising question: ‘Why do Good People do Evil?’ Complicity is both explicable but not to a degree absolved by the proposition of either the evil of rationality or the rationality of evil. I am asking myself about the unconscious motives and perhaps even unacknowledged needs that produced, and perhaps ultimately undermined, Zygmunt Bauman’s now influential analysis. Did such motives, shared, also lead perhaps to the widespread embrace of his book in the 1990s and since? Whose shame is being named? Is it the Academy’s or is it personal? Where do these meet?

Literature and the Holocaust

The Event challenged existing systems of thought and of art. Let me take the case of literature. Testimony is a legal category. *Testimonial literature* – exemplified by Holocaust literature – confuses the categories of fact with fiction, history with memory, evidence and perception, objectivity and subjectivity. What, therefore, is the genre of *Winter in the Morning*? Diary, memoir, fiction, coming of age story, *Bildungsroman*, witness testimony? All of the above? In the archives of Janina Bauman, this uncertainty plays across proposed titles and specifically in the re-edited blurbs written for a feminist press known for advancing the women’s writing and gendered stories. Both editor and author debate subtitles and descriptions such as teenage, coming of age, a young girl’s story – then having to introduce ghetto, war, Holocaust. How can these be conjoined?

Janina Bauman’s book is not a diary. Her writing did indeed reconstruct a twice-lost original diary from memory, using transcribed fragments, and adding historical framing to each chapter.³ It is written, however, as memory-writing in a mature voice speaking to the reader now. It is named by the author in her letter to the publisher submitting the manuscript for their consideration as a *personal account of war and life* in occupied Poland 1939–1945 as *seen and experienced*

by a teenage girl and *told* by herself 40 years later. In some proposed blurbs, the girl is specifically identified as Jewish. Its first title was *Shadow of a Wall: One Girl's Road through the War* – War not Holocaust, because, of course, while threatened by deportation and death, Janina Bauman was experiencing the ‘war’ as a civilian in Occupied Poland. In a letter we find both terms:

I strongly believe that my account is not just one more testimony of cruelty and suffering experienced during the last war and Holocaust: *it is rather story of coming-of-age and struggle for identity in unusual conditions*. It is also a *tribute* paid to all those innumerable people who helped me my mother and sister to survive. The strong majority of them were women of various social backgrounds age and occupation the motives that cause them to risk their lives while helping us were also various. In my memoir I try to *sketch their portraits* and ways of life.

(My emphasis)⁴

Like all testimonial literature, this hybrid form of writing (chamber writing?) challenges the classic divisions between diary, memoir, history and literary invention. Its power and significance arises from its being literature – words finely crafted not to report but to conjure up conditions of living, and above all, of choice. Elsewhere in her exchanges with Virago, Janina Bauman names her book a novel: ‘I dearly hoped it would be a kind of novel read by those who are fond of fiction, though fiction it is not’.⁵ This question of literariness and genre arose again when the publishers wanted Janina Bauman to add more historical information to her book. While she felt it would possibly aid readers who knew little about what happened in Poland, she feared that it might distort the carefully created literary form and temporal, memory structure of her *Bildungsroman*. She compromised and inserted informational prefaces to each chapter, drawn from encyclopaedic sources, because only in retrospect could ‘historical knowledge’ have been accumulated. The bigger frame was invisible to those living through it.

The Preface to *Modernity and the Holocaust* opens with a reference to Janina Bauman: ‘Having written down her personal story of her life in the ghetto and in hiding . . . Janina thanked me, her husband, for putting up with her protracted absence, during the two years of writing, when she dwelled again in that world “that was not his”’ (MH: vii). He is actually quoting from her acknowledgements where she writes that she dwelled in the years of her youth ‘that was not his world’ (Janina Bauman, 1986, Dedication, n.p.). So let me return to her Preface once again but code it for specific words.

My book is meant as *a tribute those innumerable people who helped me, my mother and my sister to survive the war*. The majority of them were *women of different social backgrounds, ages and occupations*. The motives of risking their lives to help us were as varied as their characters. During the war I learned the truth we usually choose to leave unsaid: *that the cruellest thing*

about cruelty is that it dehumanises its victims before it destroys them. And that the hardest of struggles is to remain human in inhuman conditions.

(Janina Bauman, 1986: Preface. n.p.)

These powerful phrases appear across the drafts of the blurbs for the book. What is she saying? Her survival depended on *others*, who *chose* to help her and *at great risk*. She defines and celebrates individual actions of moral courage as the defiance of the dehumanisation of Polish Christian victims of Nazi domination and effective enslavement, defiance of official authorisation and indeed pressure to deliver cruel treatment to Polish Jewish victims destined for total annihilation. Her survival specifically depended on *women's moral courage*. One of the lessons we must draw philosophically and sociologically from her story and this specific observation in retrospect is that *gender* was a critical factor for the analysis of who made moral choices in extreme circumstances.

Gender was initially unthinkable in emerging Holocaust studies, where collective ethnic suffering was too egregious to allow distinctions between Jewish victims. The taboo was breached by Joan Ringelheim following the first conference in 1983 on the topic (Ringelheim, 1985). Reviewing her initial research, published in a feminist journal that Zygmunt Bauman would not have known or ever consulted, *Signs*, Ringelheim revealed that statistically fewer women survived the extermination processes and especially the Auschwitz selection. Women suffered the double jeopardy both as Jewish and as women, hence as bearers of a Jewish future and objects of sexual predation and abuse. They were specifically murdered when age and health might have made them candidates for selection for slave labour. Ringelheim also discovered significant gendered factors in prolonging survival in the face of deprivation and sexual and psychological violence, factors associated with women's traditional socialisation and capacity for communal solidarities (Ringelheim, 1985: 14; see also Young, 2009). Gender is so clearly flagged by Janina Bauman's observation of her own experience of depending on women. Gender so inflects the maintenance of human identity and links that it is extraordinary that it has not been taken up sociologically to a greater extent.

Let me return to Janina Bauman's statement: *cruelty dehumanizes the victims*. The struggle to resist, that is, to remain 'human' in the face of the rational choices to remain indifferent to dehumanisation of others is the hardest struggle. That struggle is, grammatically, the victims' struggle. I read this, therefore, as an insider statement, a comment on the subjectivity of the unevenly victimised, both Polish-Catholic and Polish-Jewish, and on the ethical struggle that takes place within any victim caught in a world in which cruelty determines choices and where solidarity may be violently disrupted when literal survival becomes the bottom line of every, and many daily, life or death decisions. Decision is not the same as choice. I am arguing that Janina Bauman's book is the self-reflecting study of her own struggle to negotiate the moral dilemmas *she herself faced*. It is her own honest, compassionate and self-judging memory-work that embraces those who succumbed in the struggle. She acknowledges some others who did not show cruelty but humanity, at the risk of their lives, and thus saved her, her

mother and sister. Chief among these is Auntie Maria, and last among these is Pani (Mrs) Pietrzyk, the 80-year-old farmer from Zielonki in October 1944 whom we meet at the end of the book. Their significance lies in being real but ‘different’ people – Polish-Catholic and thus other to Janina Bauman’s Jewish family and to whom she and that family were alien.

It is not generality but specificity that matters here. Her rescuers were not exceptions to the rule, but possibilities, that being made the substance of her book, shape its moral discovery, a message *the author herself had to learn* precisely when she confesses, on the final pages, her own feeling of vengeful cruelty towards a fleeing German soldier. If we really attend to the compassion for, as well as the judgement of, those in charge in the ghetto, notably those who took money to save their families while sending others to certain death, we must know that Janina Bauman is placing us *inside that world of extremity* which was not confined to the actual ghetto, but of which the ghetto was both the space of radical exception for its Jewish inmates and a symptom of a corruption that was encompassing an entire society under both occupation and brutal racially exterminatory colonisation.

A much-quoted passage in *Winter in the Morning* is the long final paragraph that describes the teenage Janina’s encounter – while hiding in the Polish countryside, on the last day of the war – with a frightened German soldier, perhaps younger than she, to whom the Catholic Polish farmer, who had given her family refuge, obliged her to take food. The dramatic writing of this story creates the defining scenario through which the reader becomes co-witness to the revelation the mature writer, Janina Bauman, had to receive in and from remembering and writing through this critical moment upon which she built her philosophical-sociological Preface. Having been forced to live on the run, in disguise and in constant terror of exposure that would surely lead to horrible death, the moment that this scared remnant of the once-all-powerful enemy cowers before her becomes a primal political and moral scene for her recognition of the terms under which she had come to realise – by writing – she had been protected by this rural Polish Christian woman.

The ethos that secured her survival was, I propose, one woman’s unquestioning fidelity to a personalised, activated Christian morality: ‘whosoever comes seeking my protection, irrespective of who and what she/he is, will receive it’. (Of course, its origins lie in the ethical code of the Judaic original about obligation to shelter the stranger.) Here is no rationalism, no rationalisation, no rationality. Her code had no conditions. Pani Pietrzyk’s attitudes were, no doubt, not only shaped by exposure to no other education but Catholic Christian doctrine but also determined by the mandates of peasant hospitality. Despite personal antisemitism (Pani Pietrzyk expresses openly the usual stereotypes about the physical signs of Jewish otherness), or even justified hostility to an invading enemy, the other in need – be it Janina, her mother and sister, or this terrified German boy – is safe within Pani Pietrzyk’s unconditional human solidarity. Her morality and her code of conduct were not socially regulated or such that, in the presence of Nazi occupiers, she abandoned it. My argument would be her decision to act as she did under the law

of hospitality and a rural society's indifference to 'them', the outsiders, the city and the government, had roots that were able to resist morality's political suspension in the context of a rationality of militarily enforced racism. She embodied the unconditional response to the other in her otherness that philosopher Emmanuel Levinas would later raise, in part from his impassioned reading of Vasily Grossman's novel *Life and Fate* (1980 [1959]) as the principle of a post-Shoah ethics, to which Zygmunt Bauman turned for hope at having come through the 'intellectual nightmare' of writing *Modernity and the Holocaust*. The deepest psychological sources for the unconditionality of hospitality to the other is the affective legacy – as Levinas would ultimately acknowledge when challenged by Bracha Ettinger, – of the maternal-feminine, the other by whom we have all been 'seduced into life' and not the paternal who has claimed the child as his by name to whom Levinas patriarchally transferred his ethical principle (Ettinger and Levinas, 1993; see also Derrida, 1999).

The war ended, wrote Janina Bauman, without qualification. What did not end was the need to reclaim the knowledge it had engendered in those final moments for the purposes of discerning a deeper understanding of what had happened not only in that single moment but on the larger world scale. To be human is to act with humanity *in the face of extremity of need* and to construct a world perhaps based on those principles. For a few years, the nascent communist project in Poland may have offered both Baumans a dream of such proportions, a 'dream of human belonging', translating the unquestioning performance of human solidarity experienced with Pani Pietrzyk into a social system. The lesson I discover, however, in reading Janina Bauman's last passage is this. The stunned young Jewish girl must follow through her protectress's morality in person by handing to the embodiment of those who had sought to kill her, and had indeed murdered millions like her, the very same steaming bowl of soup that been offered to her and secured her own family's continuing existence. Recreated moment by moment, sentence by sentence, the power of this chamber writing of the scene lies in its literary evocation of the *moment of subjective confusion – even shame – in the teenage girl*. She, the victim, is suddenly called to resist her own impulse to cruelty. She has then to recognise her survival results from an ethic with which she must now blunt her desire for revenge. The minimalist sentences with which Janina Bauman ends declare her state of mind at that very realisation. There is nothing to be said but the barest statement of a shattering confrontation it might take a long life to comprehend: 'I felt no pity, no hatred, no joy. The war ended' (Bauman, 1986: 190).

The archive traces the author's battle with her editors when they returned their edited version of her manuscript. Janina Bauman writes:

I definitely don't want 'I felt nothing' as the final sentence of the book, but I entirely agree with Julia that something short at the end would strengthen the impact. 'The war ended' is exactly what I felt at that moment, being unable to enjoy the fact of this, at the same time to give the reader a chance to grasp this hint without too much of our help.⁶

No pity, no hatred: these are opposing emotional states: compassion versus hatred – for the German boy. In that opposition, there could be no joy. ‘The war ended’. ‘The war’ is often used, thus hiding the genocide, effacing the possibility of there having been, independent of the Second World War, what historian Lucy S. Dawidowicz daringly defined as a ‘war against the Jews’ (Dawidowicz, 1975). War, setting group against group, making us enemies, was suspended. The effect to which Janina Bauman is testifying here is, however, what both the military war and the longer war against the Jews *had done to her*, and the emotions it now *aroused in her when both stopped*. Grammatically, ending is a full stop without significance. A full stop added in writing in 1983, however, summons into view the intervening years of compensatory socialism, creative work in film development, surviving social death and expulsion from Poland after 1968, migration, living in forced linguistic and geopolitical exile, becoming an intellectual and then a writer who was made incomprehensible to the foreigners among whom she lived and from whom she exiled herself to write this text.⁷ If we merely treat Janina Bauman’s literary work as a memoir offering a nugget-like insight that inspired Zygmunt Bauman’s book, we will miss the trauma around which her recreated diary was constructed that is secreted in those last words. Janina Bauman’s buried trauma surfacing as literary expression in this final scene is the confession of her own feelings of wanting to be revenged, and shame at having been made to want to be cruel to this frightened boy-soldier.

The brilliance and meaning of Janina Bauman’s book lies between the Preface – where she retrospectively acknowledges the courage of other women and poses the question of dehumanising power of cruelty in the abstract – and the final shocking scene so vividly evoked through which that truth had been encountered for herself as she battled with her own confusing emotions at the moment of apparent liberation. She writes from two temporal positions. She was the subject who experienced the event and is the subject of belated understanding of that once-real experience. Recreated in and as text when writing, the life-changing confrontation reveals at last its shattering moral core. The text’s literary cadence alone combines the lived moment and the monument to her *thoughtfulness* only *now* derived from a painful truth discovered as she dramatically revisited her last moments of ‘the war’. While she may have wanted to be cruel to the representative of her tormentors, she resisted. She fed him. Only in writing, later, could she fully disown what war had done to her, acknowledging that Pani Pietrzyk had stood fast to her abiding human morality, irrespective of World War or war against the Jews.

Do I think Zygmunt Bauman misread Janina Bauman’s discovery? Did he abstract from it the wrong, indeed the opposite, message and reframe that mistake through the authority of post-Holocaust philosopher Emmanuel Levinas whose ethical writings he discovered after/while writing his own book – with relief? Levinas offered Zygmunt Bauman hope that we can have an *absolute* basis for morality: obligation arises simply because the other is before me in her or his vulnerability as a human being. A beautiful illusion. Janina Bauman’s story carries a more penetrating *psychological* truth that, perhaps, only psychoanalysis

illuminates. To act humanely, we must work through the cruelty that others' cruelty *justly* inspires in us.

His was the indirect experience of a bystander, a non-participant, saved from the quotidian antisemitism of pre-war Poznan and genocidal assault after 1939 by his escape to Belorussia. What the sociologist then felt had to be asked was this. If some women individuals who had saved Janina and her family, acted morally, why did not the rest of the societies in which this happened do so? It is an observer's question, not one faced, like her, in his own life.

So let me remind you of the final sentence from the *Afterthought* that reveals the cause of the feelings of agony he felt watching *Shoah* – a truth . . . *how few men with guns were needed to murder millions* (MH: 202). I do not think that this is a justifiable conclusion from watching *Shoah*. Bauman, however, explains the situation of the few with guns managing this obscenity by identifying the effective 'cultivation' of rationality among the victims: 'The Nazis twisted the stakes of the game so that the rationality of survival would render all other motives of human action irrational. Inside the Nazi-made world reason was the enemy of morality' (MH: 203). I want to counter this notion of the rationality of complicity with a film *Son of Saul* by László Nemes made in 2015 and hugely embraced and admired by Claude Lanzmann even as it broke his prohibition on fictionalised representation. Nemes used cinematic reconstruction, actors, cinematic effects of an immersive soundscape and novel filming techniques that pinned the camera relentlessly to the rugged face of the eponymous Saul, a member of the Sonderkommando at Auschwitz-Birkenau. *Son of Saul* attempted to take the viewer into the core of the death factory that appeared in Lanzmann's *Shoah* as much as in Resnais' *Night and Fog* of 1955 only as abandoned, empty ghostly ruins (Pollock, 2019).

Scrupulously reconstructing the killing process, *Son of Saul* undermines any notion of 'few men with guns'. Nemes' reconstruction was based closely on another literature of the Holocaust – the buried writings by members of the Auschwitz Sonderkommando (Chare and Williams, 2016). These documented and the film then showed us a factory system surrounded relentlessly by armed violence, guns, beating, instant and sadistic or spectacularly agonising punishment. This 'knowing cruelty' we also learn from the German Corporal Suchomel's accounts of Treblinka secretly filmed in *Shoah* as well as Abraham Bomba's anguished testimony (Pollock, 2019).

Vicious dogs, guns, beating, noise and calculated cruelty drove terrified people down the *Schlauch* of Treblinka – the narrow funnel leading to the gas chambers – in violent conditions of utmost body-loosening terror. We also know this in horrific detail from the very first written account of an extermination camp, Treblinka, written by Russian journalist and novelist Vasily Grossman (1905–1964) in September 1944, as he moved with the Red Army westward across Poland after the defeat of the German invasion at Stalingrad. His report is titled: 'The Hell of Treblinka' (Grossman, 2010). When the Soviet forces arrived in the Treblinka area, they met with a handful survivors of the Sonderkommando-led uprising on 2 August 1943. Gassing was finally ended on 19 August 1943 when this camp and later Operation Reinhard itself were rapidly suspended. The Jewish populations of

the ghettos in Poland and beyond had already been murdered. All evidence was burned. The extermination camps were dismantled, the ground ploughed over, a forest planted to efface Sobibór, lupin fields at Treblinka. I now quote from the harrowing accounts of that the surviving Sonderkommando reported and Grossman reconstructed of the killing process long before Lanzmann started asking his questions in the then-forgotten Polish village: I need to warn my readers:

The wide doors of the house of death opened slowly and in the entrance appeared two of the assistants to Schmidt who was in charge of the complex. Both were sadists and maniacs. One, aged about 30, was tall, with massive shoulders, black hair and a swarthy laughing animated face; the other, slightly younger had short brown hair and pale, yellow cheeks as if he had just taken a strong dose of Quinacrine. The names of these men who betrayed humanity, their Motherland and their oaths of loyalty are known. The tall man was holding a whip and a piece of heavy gas piping about a metre long, the other man was holding a sabre. Then the SS men would unleash their well-trained dogs, who would throw themselves into the crowd and tear with their teeth at the naked bodies of the doomed people. And at the same time the SS men would beat people the submachinegun butts urging on the petrified women with wild shouts of *Schneller, Schneller*. Some of it is too horrible to speak out loud.

(Grossman, 2010: 137–138)

Then Grossman moves onto another level to draw his socialist reading of fascism:

Great is the power of true humanity. Humanity does not die until man dies. And when we see a brief but terrifying period of history, a period during which beasts triumph over human beings, the man being killed by the beast retains to his last breath his strength of spirit, his clarity of thought and passionate love. And the beast that triumphantly kills the man remains a beast. . . . The beasts and the beasts' philosophy seemed to portend the sunset of Europe, the sunset of the world, but the red was not the red of sunset; it was the red blood of humanity – a humanity that was dying yet achieving victory through its death. *People remained people. They did not accept the morality and laws of fascism. They fought it in all the ways they could; they fought it by dying as human beings.*

(Grossman, 2010: 138–139)

Grossman reports tales of how the living dead of Treblinka 'preserved until the last moment not only the image and likeness of human beings but also the souls of human beings' and continues:

We heard stories of *women* trying to save their sons and thus accomplishing feats of hopeless bravery. We heard of *women* trying to hide their little babies in heaps of blankets and trying to shield them with their own bodies. Nobody

knows, and nobody will ever know, the names of these *mothers*. We heard of *10-year-old girls* comforting their sobbing parents with divine wisdom; we heard of the young boy shouting out by the entrance of the gas chamber 'Don't cry Mama: the Russians will avenge us'. We heard about a *tall young woman* who on the road of no return tore a carbine from the hands of a Wachmann and fought back against dozens of SS; two of the beasts were killed in the struggle and a third had his hand shattered. He returned to Treblinka with only one arm. She was subjected to the most terrible torture and to a terrible execution. No one knows her name; no one can honour it.

(Grossman, 2010: 139, my emphasis)

Moved as we must be by the Tolstoyan rhythm and epic quality of Grossman's writing honouring one by one the nameless, we return to the sociological question of the social implications of neither this heroism of the victims nor the courage of the bystander-rescuers, but of the indifference of the world, the nations close and far whose response was to defeat the Germans in imperial warfare and not to rescue fellow human beings targeted for annihilation as a people.

This is the agony of knowledge also of those removed from such proximity or indirect witnessing by space, and now by time. The obligation and the shame take us back to belated witnessing and delayed acknowledgement. Having written through a discomfort, shock even and perplexity at returning to the 'Afterthoughts' of *Modernity and the Holocaust*, and having become a Holocaust studies scholar in the interim, I find myself confronting this conclusion. However sociologically enlightening the thesis of the potential evil in the rationality of modernity, Zygmunt Bauman's text fails at the point of encounter with Arendt's political thesis: her discovery, through the study of the question of the political evil of the twentieth century, of what constitutes the human condition – the capacity for spontaneous action. It is precisely such action that Grossman discovered, actions that totalitarian terror and killing, abnormally, systemically, innovatively and anti-politically tried to erode as the core of its all-too-humanly experienced psychological and physical cruelty impacting directly on its victims and immortalising its bystanders. Grossman's betrayed socialist and Arendt's unhappy liberal vision meet in the issue of the human. Drenched in despair, and possibly shame, *Modernity and the Holocaust* offers a brilliant sociological thesis daringly situating the extremity of the Holocaust within the rationality of modernity's gardening logic. Yet it risks distracting us from these lessons of singular, spontaneous actions by raising the problem to the level of the sociological abstraction of modernity. As its subjective bearers and products, we become mere symptoms. Yet once knowing that, we can learn constantly to be not only a social subject, but in Arendtian terms, a political subject and hence a human subject, as we face, every day, moral questions and are called upon to act.

This is the psycho-historical meaning of the scene with which Janina Bauman ended her journey into the world her husband had never shared. Perhaps, he did not fully see it even when she placed it before him – and us – in her finely, honestly and courageously crafted words. While there may indeed be shame on the

part of those who did not have to face, but might have done, the moral quandaries of survival, Janina Bauman was not shamed by her own impulse to cruelty. Avowing it, the moment of confrontation was dense with the experienced revelation that she would so elegantly encode as the final sentences of her Preface. Yet all the language of the human and the inhuman, be that Grossman's, Arendt's or Zygmunt Bauman's, fails to notice something about humanity in literary text or journalistic reporting. Humanity is not one, but two. Gender matters. It matters that we honour Janina Bauman not only for inspiring a celebrated sociological text on modernity, rationality and the Holocaust. We must also recognise her acknowledgement of the women who risked their lives to remain human. Yet, we must, furthermore, define the thought she derived from writing herself into renewed proximity with a past she could not then have fully grasped. *We* must acknowledge our capacity for cruelty if we are to disown the cruelty our circumstances foster. Daily, we have such moments, as we live in so cruelly unjust, sexist, racist, heterocentric, classed societies, where it is not rationality but the non-rational passions, affinities and capacity for care that are systemically crushed and we become more inhuman day by day.

Notes

- 1 See especially Lydia Bauman and Izabela Wagner.
- 2 Letter from Janina Bauman to Virago editors, 16th June 1984. In Janina and Zygmunt Bauman Papers, Brotherton Library, University of Leeds, MS 2067/A/4/1/2.
- 3 See Chapter 8 of this volume.
- 4 Letter from Janina Bauman to Virago editor, 5th December 1983. In Janina and Zygmunt Bauman Papers, Brotherton Library, University of Leeds, MS 2067/A/4/1/2.
- 5 Letter from Janina Bauman to Virago editor, 3rd December 1984. In Janina and Zygmunt Bauman Papers, Brotherton Library, University of Leeds, MS 2067/A/4/1/2.
- 6 Letter from Janina Bauman to Virago editors, 2nd February 1985. In Janina and Zygmunt Bauman Papers, Brotherton Library, University of Leeds, MS 2067/A/4/1/2.
- 7 See her follow-up testimony of post-war life, *A Dream of Belonging* (1988).

Bibliography

- Arendt, H. 1945. Nightmare and Flight. *Partisan Review*, XII (2), reprinted in J. Kohn (ed.) *Essays in Understanding 1930–1945: Formation, Exile and Totalitarianism*. New York: Schocken Books, 1994, 133–135.
- Arendt, H. 1948. The Concentration Camps. *Partisan Review*, 15 (7), 743–763.
- Arendt, H. 1951. *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. New York: Schocken Books.
- Arendt, H. 1958. *The Human Condition*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- Arendt, H. 1963. *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*. New York: Viking.
- Arendt, H., and Jaspers, K. 1992. *Correspondence 1926–1969*, ed. L. Lotte Kohler and H. Sanser, trans. R. Kimber and R. Kimber. New York: Harcourt & Brace.
- Bauman, J. 1986. *Winter in the Morning*. London: Virago Books.
- Bauman, J. 1988. *A Dream of Belonging*. London: Virago Books.
- Bauman, Z. 1990. *Thinking Sociologically*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Beilharz, P. (ed.). 2001. *The Bauman Reader*. Oxford: Blackwell.

- Bernstein, R. 2002. *Radical Evil: A Philosophical Interrogation*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Cesarani, D. 2004. *Eichmann: His Life and Crimes*. London: Heinemann.
- Chare, N., and Williams, D. 2016. *Matters of Testimony: Interpreting the Scrolls of Auschwitz*. London and New York: Berghahn.
- Dawidowicz, L. S. 1975. *The War Against the Jews 1933–1945*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- De Rougement, D. 1944. *The Devil's Share*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Derrida, J. 1999. *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas*, trans. P. Pascale-Anne Braut and M. Nass. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Ettinger, B. L., and Levinas, E. 1993. *Time is the Breath of the Spirit: Bracha L. Ettinger in Conversation with Emmanuel Levinas*. Oxford: Museum of Modern Art.
- Friedländer, S. (ed.). 1992. *Probing the Limits of Representation: Nazism and the Final Solution*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Grossman, V. 1980 [1959]. *Life and Fate*, trans. R. Chandler. New York: Harper and Row.
- Grossman, V. 2010. The Hell of Treblinka. In R. Chandler (ed.) *The Road*, trans R. Chandler, E. Chandler, and O. Mukovnikova. New York: New York Review of Books.
- Lyotard, J.-F. 1983/1988. *Le Différend*. Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1983; *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute*, trans. G. Van Den Abbeele. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Ofer, D., and Weitzman, L. (eds.). 1998. *Women in the Holocaust*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.
- Pollock, G. 2013. *After-affects/After-images: Trauma and Aesthetic Transformation*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Pollock, G. 2019. Knowing Cruelty: The Negation of Death and Burial in SS Violence. In N. Chare and D. Williams (eds.) *Testimonies of Resistance: Essays on the Sonderkommando*. London and New York: Berghahn, 33–68.
- Pollock, G., and Silverman, M. 2013. *Concentrationary Memories: Totalitarian Terror and Cultural Resistance*. London: Bloomsbury, 2013; new edition 2022.
- Ringelheim, J. 1985. Women and the Holocaust. *Signs*, 10 (4), 741–761.
- Swidler, A. 1973. The Concept of Rationality in the Work of Max Weber. *Sociological Inquiry*, 43 (1), 35–42.
- Young, J. 2009. Regarding the Pain of Women: Questions of Gender and the Arts of Holocaust Memory. *PMLA*, 124 (5), 1778–1786.

Part 5

The legacies of *Modernity* *and the Holocaust*



Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

11 Bauman, the Frankfurt School, and the tradition of enlightened catastrophism

Jonathon Catlin

I learned from Adorno that the Holocaust is no less dangerous posthumously than it was when the ovens in the Auschwitz crematoria were still burning. I learned that the spectre of the Holocaust is as ominous as the crime itself was – more insidious because it wears masks and hides in the attic.

– Zygmunt Bauman, 1998a Adorno Prize acceptance speech (p. 7)

Modernity and the Holocaust theorised a fundamental problem in thinking about the nature of social catastrophes ‘after Auschwitz’. For Bauman, the Holocaust was not an aberration from the technical progress of modern civilisation but rather a *possibility* thereafter immanent within all modern societies. Bauman argued that the Holocaust was not an accident but a product of converging and continuing processes of rationalisation, abstraction, technologisation, bureaucratisation, and demoralisation (‘adiaphorisation’). Yet he also wrote that in this work his aim was not to develop this thesis not into an explanation of the Holocaust itself, but, on the contrary, to use the Holocaust to develop a more reflexive social theory of modernity.

While Bauman developed this radical thesis to its furthest extent, his work openly drew inspiration from a number of earlier social theorists, philosophers, and historians, notably Theodor W. Adorno, Max Horkheimer, Hannah Arendt, and Raul Hilberg. Despite their different and at times conflicting intellectual approaches, these thinkers collectively share the distinction of considering the Holocaust in a fundamental tension between conceptual frameworks of singularity and universality, Germanness and humanness, enlightenment and anti-enlightenment. This chapter attempts to connect *Modernity and the Holocaust* to a tradition of critical social theory upon which Bauman explicitly drew – one which, following Jean-Pierre Dupuy, I call ‘enlightened catastrophism’ (Dupuy, 2013). As Slavoj Žižek elaborates on this notion:

[S]ince one believes only when the catastrophe has really occurred (by which time it is too late to act), one must project oneself into the aftermath of the catastrophe, confer on the catastrophe the reality of something which has already taken place. We all know the tactical move of taking a step back in

order to jump further ahead; Dupuy turns this procedure around: one has to jump ahead into the aftermath of the catastrophe in order to be able to step back from the brink. In other words, we must assume the catastrophe as our destiny.

(Žižek, 2012: 983–984)

This chapter argues that Bauman's *Modernity and the Holocaust* possesses such a catastrophic imaginary. Bauman's work stares past catastrophes in the face and uses this knowledge to cast the light of rational social criticism on the structural and potential catastrophes of the present and future. I conclude by arguing for the relevance of this approach for developing a social theory of catastrophe for our era of 'unnatural disasters' in the Anthropocene.

Bauman as a 'student of Adorno'

When Bauman accepted the prestigious Adorno Prize from the city of Frankfurt am Main in 1998, he called himself a 'student' of Adorno and recalled the feeling of a 'spiritual affinity, or temperamental kinship which struck me when I first opened a book by Adorno many years ago, the feeling, "That's it!" one comes across so seldom, but, once recognised, brightly lit the path ahead and pointed the way for many years, if not forever' (Bauman, 1998a: 1). In particular, Bauman identified himself with several aspects of Adorno's biography, referring to Adorno as 'one of the most notorious among "persons with no permanent address", a prototypical free-floater, never and nowhere accommodated to his own and his hosts' satisfaction' (Bauman, 1991: 91–92). As Adorno wrote in *Minima Moralia* during his exile in the late 1940s, 'every intellectual in emigration is, without exception, mutilated' (Adorno, 2005: 33). Even once he arrived in Leeds, Bauman, likewise, remained a relative 'outsider' (Wagner, 2020).

In his 1992 review of *Modernity and the Holocaust*, the Frankfurt School theorist Moishe Postone calls 'surprising' and 'very puzzling' the fact that 'Bauman does not comment on the evident parallels' between his argument and that of the Frankfurt School's *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (Postone, 1992: 1523). Perhaps Bauman did not wish his own work to seem derivative. Whatever his reasons in 1989, two years later he openly professed his debt to the Frankfurt School: in the last of his trilogy, *Modernity and Ambivalence*, he claims in his introduction, 'Any reader of the book will certainly note that its central problem is firmly rooted in the propositions first articulated by Adorno and Horkheimer in their critique of Enlightenment (and, through it, modern civilisation)'; his book was an attempt 'to wrap historical and sociological flesh around the "dialectics of enlightenment" skeleton' (Bauman, 1991: 17; see also afterword to 2000 edition, pp. 222–23).

Bauman elaborated upon and complicated these connections to the Frankfurt School around the time he was awarded the Adorno Prize in 1998. In his private correspondence concerning the award, he says he was thrilled to have it presented to him by Claus Offe, a German sociologist who from 1965 to 1969 – Adorno's

last years as head of Frankfurt's Institute for Social Research – worked as Jürgen Habermas's assistant. Bauman wrote to Offe:

I guess I am in a *Wahlverwandschaft* (elective affinity) with Adorno, though I arrived at my 'dialectic of Enlightenment' not through reading him, but through struggling to emancipate from Marx (as a lawful scion of Enlightenment and the natural father of a line of Enlightenment's bastard mutants). There is a lot to link me to Adorno: his exilic modality (and I do not mean just his stay in the USA); his view of the intellectual vocation ('inviolable isolation is now the only way of showing some measure of solidarity'; 'he who offers for sale something unique that no one wants to buy, represents, even against his will, freedom from exchange'); his (unwinnable) struggle to get out from hermitage without polluting his dowry and to find power without violence; the ubiquitous, though alas never made explicit, ethical rather than ontological foundation of his thought; his anticipation of 'modern man' – the one who was to come into his own only under the aegis of postmodernity; above all perhaps his message of the *rationality* (not *banality*!) of evil. But there is much [that] separates me from him. I think mostly my sociological deviation: my lesser respect for what thinkers may think and greater reverence for what doers may do. I would not run, after, Plato, out of the cave. It is inside the cave after all that everything happens. . .¹

Bauman and Adorno had rather different backgrounds and political trajectories. Bauman survived the Holocaust due to his family's flight into the Soviet Union, where he was steeped in the Marxist-Leninist theory of which he later became a professor. Adorno and Horkheimer's backgrounds were far more bourgeois, and even before Stalin betrayed the Western Left with the Hitler-Stalin Pact of 1939, the Frankfurt theorists kept an arm's length from the Communist Party. During their exile in America, leading up to the early years of the Cold War, Horkheimer in particular became self-conscious about the appearance of his almost entirely Jewish institute of Marxist theorists (Jacobs, 2015). He reflected that he coined the term 'Critical Theory' as a kind of euphemism for Marxist theory separated from revolutionary politics and the Stalinist left. For the same reason, between the 1944 and 1947 editions of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, criticisms of 'monopoly' and 'capitalism' were transformed into blander criticisms of 'the system' and 'the existing order'. After Bauman's own repression under the Soviet-backed communist regime in Poland, one might propose that an analagous transformation in his thought took place as he became disillusioned with actually existing communism and turned to the non-Stalinist socialism of Israel and eventually into an ambivalent relationship with Britain's New Left (Wagner, 2020: 309). Although Bauman was closer in age to Habermas than Adorno and Horkheimer, because of their different political situations all three thinkers had to 'emancipate' themselves from 'Orthodox Marxism' and its totalitarian appropriations through the development of their own 'Western Marxism' in the tradition of Georg Lukács – aided in no small part by the late publication Marx's more humanistic and philosophical

works only published in the 1930s. In his laudatio, Offe expresses admiration for Bauman's ability to be, as one could still in the 1960s, 'first a Marxist loyal to the party and at the same time a productive social-scientific mind' – at least until the regime scapegoated and expelled its Jewish intellectuals and officials in 1968.²

Bauman suggests in his speech that the Frankfurt School lost some of its exilic character after it was institutionalised in the Federal Republic of Germany upon its return in 1949, with Horkheimer ultimately becoming Rector of the University of Frankfurt and Adorno later leading the Institute for Social Research. Yet neither figure achieved anything like Habermas's status as so identified with institutionalised liberal democracy that he became the intellectual face of the Federal Republic and later the European Union. Bauman likewise would be hailed as one of the leading sociologists of his time yet never shed his identification with intellectual exile.

Adorno's one-time assistant Habermas had been awarded the Adorno Prize years before Bauman in 1980, and his acceptance speech, 'Modernity: An Unfinished Project' is a characteristic defence of modern rationality against its emergent postmodern or anti-modern critics (Habermas, 1997). Dennis Smith writes that while Bauman admired the early Habermas, 'at some point in the 1980s, Bauman made a decisive switch of loyalty away from Habermas towards Adorno' – partly out of Bauman's view of their respective stances towards 'postmodernity' and 'postmodernism' (Smith, 1999: 176). By 1992, Bauman said flat out in an interview, 'I don't like Habermas' (Bauman, 1992: 217). In his essay 'Thinking in Dark Times', Bauman expresses his close affinity to Adorno's intellectual style characterised by writing 'messages in a bottle' and reflection on exile and negativity (Bauman, 2005a). Through citations from *Minima Moralia* expressing Adorno's deep scepticism about the ability to separate truth from the corruption of power and socially-determined opinion, Bauman casts doubt on Habermas's undue confidence in communication as the medium of rationality and democratic participation. In various texts, Bauman cites Adorno to the opposite effect: 'For the intellectual, inviolable isolation is now the only way of showing some measure of solidarity' and 'The history of the old religions and schools like that of the modern parties and revolutions teaches us that the price for survival is practical involvement, the transformation of ideas into domination' (Bauman, 2000a: 42, 43). In his Adorno Prize speech, Bauman refers to the latter sentence as 'the key to Adorno's life drama': '*tertium non datur*' – by the logical rule of the excluded middle, the intellectual is condemned to waver between the uncertain, indeterminate, and ambivalent poles of 'the Scylla of pure but impotent thinking and the Charybdis of the effective but poisoned grip of domination' (Bauman, 1998a: 5). It is on account of some of these fundamental contradictions that Adorno's thought has been called 'a Marxism for the postmodern' (Osborne, 1992).

Continuing his affinity with Adorno over Habermas, Bauman went on to cite Adorno's maxim that 'no thought is immune against communication, and to utter it in the wrong place and in wrong agreement is enough to undermine its truth' – and Adorno also referred in that text to 'the liberal fiction of the universal communicability of each and every thought' (Adorno, 2005: 25, 80). It is quite striking,

then, that in Bauman's 1976 *Towards a Critical Sociology* he affirmed the most radical insight of Habermas's philosophy of communicative rationality: 'There are, in other words, no barriers to communication which cannot be, at least in principle, dissolved' (Bauman, 1976a: 96). By the time Bauman wrote a text of praise in honour of Habermas's 80th birthday in June 2009, he wrote, 'we are in debt to him' for his work on the 'democratic deficit' and lagging democratic participation in Europe that had led to the resurgence of nationalism (Bauman, 2009). In a letter to Habermas on 4 June 2010, Bauman was even more praiseworthy: 'Would our knowledge and understanding of our *Lebenswelt* be today the same, if not for Habermas's insights?' He reflects, 'in particular *Knowledge and Human Interests* and *Legitimation Crisis*, were to me the eye-opening revelations and turning points in my own intellectual biography'. He signs off the letter, 'Yours, forever in debt'.³

I would begin to explain this ambivalence by arguing that Bauman identified with Habermas as an *intellectual engagé* but much more with Adorno's critical philosophy of negativity. In his Prize speech, Bauman cites a passage from *Negative Dialectics*: 'if thinking is to be true – if it is to be true today, in any case – it must also be a thinking against itself' (Adorno, 1973: 365). Bauman pairs this conception of critical theory with Adorno's famous maxim that 'A new categorical imperative has been imposed by Hitler upon unfree mankind: to arrange their thoughts and actions so that Auschwitz will not repeat itself, so that nothing similar will happen' (Adorno, 1973: 365). Taking these ideas together, Bauman reflects, helped him recognise that 'the ethical imperative to make the world impervious to the madness of Auschwitz' is 'at the same time to make the mind susceptible to the reason of self-criticism' (Bauman, 1998a: 6).

Yet Bauman worried that, 50 years on, both maxims had hardly been realised:

Half a century after Adorno's warning we hear again and again that Hitler and Auschwitz existed because bad people do bad things. If only those who advocate this were right – how much reason we would have to be happy, how comfortable and safe the world we live in would be, and how easy the work of thinking would be! But unfortunately they are not right – and by their way of assessing guilt they are guilty of exonerating the world which produced the crime and which survived the perpetrators. . . . I learned from Adorno that the Holocaust is no less dangerous posthumously than it was when the ovens in the Auschwitz crematoria were still burning. I have learned that the ghost of the Holocaust is as ominous as the crime itself was – more insidious because it wears masks and hides in the attic.

(Bauman, 1998a: 6)

Bauman closely echoes Adorno's concern in his post-war lectures 'The Meaning of Working through the Past' (Adorno, 1998 [1959]) and 'Education after Auschwitz' (Adorno, 1998 [1966]) that what makes this 'ghost' 'dangerous and insidious' is that it 'whispers all sorts of false, pernicious, even morbid lessons in many ears' – namely affirming the conventional view of the perpetrators as

aberrant and demonic. Living up to Adorno's new categorical imperative, however, requires understanding the 'real' lessons of the Holocaust, which Bauman also addresses directly in his 2000 afterword to *Modernity and the Holocaust*, 'The duty to remember – but what?'

Chief among these false lessons, Bauman says in Frankfurt, is the priority of 'staying alive' at all costs. Stories of heroic survival like *Schindler's List* (1993) garnered applause from audiences around the world. But 'the goal of staying alive made all moral issues obsolete' (p. 7). Viewers cheered when Schindler's personal manager is pulled off a train bound for Treblinka, but Bauman reflects that 'survival is selective by definition'. He calls Spielberg's morality a 'travesty against the teaching of the Talmud', citing Gillian Rose's claim that it is 'ruthless to save one or thousands'. He saw the 'cult of survival' the film encouraged, centred at that time around survivor Elie Wiesel, who proclaimed himself the moral conscience of his generation, as an 'immoral' parable of the survival of the fittest – a reprise of the Hobbesian war of all against all. In reality, Bauman reflects, 'If you make victims, it creates more victims . . . and seldom do they emerge from their victimhood morally ennobled' (p. 8). He says that 'martyrdom – whether in a real or virtual reality – is no guarantee of holiness' and he worries that 'the odds are at least as great that suffering will teach the opposite lesson', namely 'that humanity is divided into victims and perpetrators' and the task of victims is 'to turn the tables' (p. 8). He counts this 'curse' as 'Hitler's greatest posthumous victory' and connects it to the Zionist extremist Baruch Goldstein's mass shooting of dozens of Palestinian Muslim worshippers in 1994. Such 'landmines that that the crime of the Holocaust and its poisoned memories has left behind in our world' are hardly 'the moral renewal or ethical cleansing of the world as a whole' that many survivors hoped for (pp. 9, 8). It is not surprising that Claus Offe suggested Bauman cut some of the 'powerful arguments you present on Spielberg, Goldhagen (as well as, by implication, on the *Historikerstreit* and also some aspects of Israeli politics)'⁴ (Offe, 1998a). Bauman's sceptical views on mainstream Holocaust culture can hardly have fallen easily on the ears of his mostly German audience.

And indeed, Bauman and Habermas's approaches to the Holocaust led them into decisively different camps regarding the politics of memory. Hans Joas notes in his piece on 'Bauman in Germany' (Joas, 1998) that Bauman's *Modernity and the Holocaust* enjoyed mixed reception in Germany on the tails of the *Historikerstreit*, the debate among German historians launched in 1986 by Ernst Nolte's characterisation of the Nazi Holocaust as a mere imitation of the earlier 'Asiatic deed' of Soviet 'class genocide'. In his laudatio for Bauman, Claus Offe likewise offers that 'it might pay to speculate' on what Bauman's view might have contributed to the *Historikerstreit* had he been drawn into it, given the relative silence of German sociologists on the topic.⁵ This debate became so heated and political because it centred on the question of the 'Germanness' of the Holocaust and national responsibility for it. Habermas was the leading figure arguing for Germany's unique and primary responsibility for the crimes. Numerous liberal historians backed him up with '*Sonderweg*', or 'special path' interpretations that centred on Germany's late modernisation and unification; as Joas

notes, this fit with their optimistic view that as long as Germany further integrated into the liberal-democratic West and checked its historic nationalism, such crimes would not be repeated. In light of the radical universality of Bauman's thesis and his direct critique of the *Sonderweg* thesis, Joas reflects:

[Y]ou might be able to imagine what it meant to Germans when a Jewish sociologist from Poland or Britain was understood to say the Holocaust is not absolutely incomparable and not due to the particularities of German history. . . . What happened to Zygmunt Bauman in this respect is very similar to the reactions towards Hannah Arendt's (1964) book on Eichmann. There are clear similarities between the two books anyway.

(Joas, 1998: 49)

Joas goes on to specify that what in particular 'remained completely unassimilable for decades' was the second section of Arendt's *Origins of Totalitarianism*, which elaborates 'her claim that racism and bureaucratic domination over foreign peoples are intimately intertwined with the history of modern colonialism and imperialism'. Yet while the German reaction to Arendt was outright hostile, 'Bauman's book encountered the strong interest of mostly younger intellectuals in Germany', who showed 'clear sympathy with the general thrust of his argument, even when they criticise particular elements in it'. In particular, they accused Bauman, fairly enough, of neglecting the particular history of the cumulative radicalisation and decision-making process of the Nazi regime. But again, Bauman did not set out to explain the Holocaust in its granular particularity, but, on the contrary, to universalise it, characterising it as a 'window' through which to see all modern societies in a new light (Bauman, MH, p. viii).

Bauman's aim of universalising the Holocaust situates him squarely in the tradition of German-Jewish approaches to the Holocaust from thinkers he admired and often cited, including Adorno, Horkheimer, and Arendt – whom Peter E. Gordon has collectively characterised as

the most discerning and courageous of Europe's intellectuals [who] resisted the urge to see in the European catastrophe a radical departure from patterns of civilization, and . . . tried instead to recognize the strong lines of cultural and social continuity that connected the catastrophe to the deeper past.

(Gordon, 2015: 652)

Joas makes the further point that *Modernity and the Holocaust's* chief theoretical inspirations, Horkheimer and Adorno but also Norbert Elias (who also received the Adorno Prize) and his 1939 work *The Civilizing Process*, were all Jewish *émigrés* who wrote from the margins (Joas, 1998). This is no accident. In an insightful intellectual mapping of universalistic versus German-centric approaches to the Holocaust, Anson Rabinbach makes this point even sharper by identifying that the most strongly universalising responses to the Holocaust were developed predominantly by Jewish, and especially German-Jewish intellectuals; German intellectuals

like Thomas Mann, Karl Jaspers, and Friedrich Meinecke, on the other hand, focused on the characteristics and responsibility particular to the German nation. It should be noted, however, that Elias complicates this story a bit; his work *The Germans* (1996) advances a *Sonderweg* argument that goes beyond his earlier theory of modernisation (see Chapter 1 of this volume). In light of later genocides, including Bosnia and Rwanda (see Chapters 6 and 7 of this volume), Rabinbach invites a healthy dose of scepticism of Bauman's thesis that 'without modern civilisation and its most central essential achievements, there would be no Holocaust' (MH: 87). Yet what interests Rabinbach is that 'it is precisely this assertion that characterised the thinking of an entire generation of German Jewish exiles' (Rabinbach, 2003: 51). Thus, Rabinbach asks what 'investment' led them to so ardently defend this thesis: 'Was the émigrés' insistence on the modernity of the genocide a subtle exculpation of their own Germanness?' (p. 59). Rabinbach proposes, inspired by the work of George Mosse – who was himself a German-Jewish émigré – on German Jews and their close identification with *Bildung*, that German Jews' 'excessive focus on the modernity of the killing' might have functioned as a 'deep and positive transference' – 'a means by which they could hold on to their own most cherished cultural traditions and shift attention away from the German context of the genocide' (pp. 59, 53). And for Mosse, the German Jewish *Bildungsbürgertum* 'more than any other single group, preserved Germany's better self across dictatorship, war, Holocaust, and defeat' (p. 55). Bauman's bourgeois upbringing in formerly German Poznań was adjacent to this tradition, even though Bauman claimed he only reflected directly on his Jewishness after 1968 (Cheyette, 2020).

Bauman also shares with Arendt use of the broader category of 'racism' through which to understand the specificity of *modern* scientific, secularised, and exterminatory antisemitism that made the Holocaust possible; both thinkers identified these related hatreds as modern means used to advance non-modern prejudice. In Bauman's 1998 reflections on 'allosemitism', he described *Modernity and the Holocaust* as recapitulating Arendt's argument in the first part of *The Origins of Totalitarianism* – in Bauman's words, 'there was no door shut on the way to modernity in which the Jews did not put their fingers. . . . Into this Europe of nations, states, and nation-states, only Jews did not fit' (Bauman, 1998b: 153). In his Adorno Prize speech, he similarly downplays the centrality of individual anti-semitic motives, invoking the work of Götz Aly and Susanne Heim to the effect that we must not forget that the deportation and murder of Europe's Jews was conceived within a 'bold overall plan for comprehensive "resettlement"' premised on 'the vision of a European continent in which practically everyone was to be transported from the place where they happened to be to the place that rational consideration assigned them' (p. 8). Bauman goes on:

We must under no circumstances forget that the extermination of the Jews was designed within the framework of a total 'cleansing of the world' (which also included the mentally and physically handicapped, ideological dissenters, and the sexually unorthodox) by a state that was powerful enough and

sufficiently immune to every opposition to be able to afford such total plans and carry them out without fear of effective dissent.

(p. 9)

Contra Daniel Goldhagen's popular but unconvincing focus on what Arendt pejoratively called 'eternal antisemitism' and bloodthirsty sadism among Germans, Bauman claims that for every such enthusiastic murderer 'there were dozens, even hundreds, of Germans and non-Germans who participated no less effectively in the mass murder' (p. 9). As Arendt showed long ago, he says, 'antisemitism could at best explain the choice of victims but not the nature of the crime' (p. 9). It is thus unsurprising that Bauman finds Arendt's thesis of the 'banality of evil' confirmed in the 'great memorial work by Primo Levi, the great historical research by Raul Hilberg, and the great documentation by Claude Lanzmann' (p. 9) – all of which exemplify a detached, scientific, and male-coded approach to the Holocaust characterised by 'rhetorical austerity' and 'minimalistic style' (Dean, 2010: 52–53).

It is not entirely surprising that Moishe Postone, a social theorist indebted to Adorno and Horkheimer and like them an inspiration for the Antideutsche, wrote in his otherwise positive review of *Modernity and the Holocaust* that Bauman's book 'does not sufficiently distinguish modern antisemitism, which culminated in extermination, from other forms of racism, which do not implicitly point toward the annihilation of the other' (Postone, 1992: 1523). The relation between racism and antisemitism remains to this day a contentious issue in Germany, as seen, for example, in the 2020 'Mbembe affair' and subsequent furore surrounding the translation into German of Michael Rothberg's 2009 book *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Catlin, 2021). Postone was also right to reflect, in light of work on Nazism in the vein of Jeffrey Herf's 1984 *Reactionary Modernism*, that Bauman's analysis is sometimes muddled by the way 'the difficulties in adequately characterising Nazi antisemitism as anti-modern reveal the limits of "modernity" as an analytic concept' (Postone, 1992: 1523).

This author sees merit in some of Postone's other criticisms of the book as well. As has been noted, Bauman strangely does not refer to Adorno in *Modernity and the Holocaust* except to uncharitably dismiss *The Authoritarian Personality* (Adorno et al., 1950) as reducing Nazism to abnormal psychology (Postone, 1992: 1523): 'To Adorno and his colleagues, Nazism was cruel because Nazis were cruel; and Nazis were cruel because cruel people tended to become Nazis' (Bauman, 1989a: 153). It is true that Adorno's dissenting contributions to that large multi-authored volume, which were critical of its use of reified personality types and other categories, were not included in the published volume and only finally included in the 2019 edition (Adorno, 2019 [1950]). But in the essay written around the same time, his 1951 'Freudian Theory and the Pattern of Fascist Propaganda', Adorno expressly conceived of the 'authoritarian character' not as a matter of individual psychic pathology but as a 'total structure' that 'is itself the product of an internalisation of the irrational aspects of modern society' (Adorno,

1991: 153). Finally, Postone criticises Bauman for simplistically inverting Durkheim's theory of the individual being moralised by society, instead arguing that the individual is made immoral by society (Postone, 1992: 1523). Indeed, *Modernity and the Holocaust* would have benefitted from taking seriously the sophisticated, dialectical, and psychoanalytically-informed theory of the subject's historical constitution from the Frankfurt School – Adorno in particular (Catlin, 2020).

Modernity's utopian pathologies

Significant parallels can also be found between Bauman's critical view of modernity and that of another luminary of the post-war West German intellectual scene: the father of conceptual history (*Begriffsgeschichte*) Reinhart Koselleck (1923–2006). Though Koselleck shares Bauman's critique of totalitarianism, the former wrote his dissertation under the former Nazi jurist Carl Schmitt and unlike Bauman advanced his critique of modernity from an essentially conservative position. Yet for that dissertation, completed in 1953 and published as a book in 1959, Koselleck originally intended another name: *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, or *Dialectic of Enlightenment* – that is, until he learned of Horkheimer and Adorno's volume by the same title first written in 1944 then published in Amsterdam in 1947 (Olsen, 2012: 88). The dissertation includes a citation to Horkheimer and Adorno's *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, and in Koselleck's personal copy of the book held in Marbach he tellingly underlined a thesis shared by all three thinkers to various extents: 'Enlightenment is totalitarian'. Likewise, Adorno and Horkheimer's book could easily have held the subtitle of Koselleck's: 'Enlightenment and the Pathogenesis of Modern Society' (Koselleck, 1988). When Arendt's *Origins* was published in 1955, Koselleck was likewise deeply engrossed and annotated his copy of the book meticulously. These disparate figures shared a Cold War context in which the concept of 'totalitarianism' was widely employed by figures of the liberal centre to collapse extremes of the left and right (Rabinbach, 2006; Traverso, 2017). Bauman reiterated this earlier generation's critique of totalitarianism in his Adorno Prize speech: 'The "worship of fascist barbarism" [Adorno and Horkheimer, 2002: 180], communist barbarism, or any other power that is decisive and capable enough to see the royal road to perfection in legalized violence is no longer an option for a reasonable person today' (Bauman, 1998a: 5).

Koselleck is influential for having characterised modernity as defined by the experience of temporal acceleration: as history changes at an increasing pace, it can no longer be anticipated, causing a widening gulf between *experience* and *expectations* into which utopian political projects could be projected based on prognostications rooted in the modern, progressive philosophy of history (Koselleck, 1988). Koselleck came to a similar conclusion as Bauman about the excesses of this modern rationality, which he argued led the French Revolution into the Terror: once a philosophy of history is prescribed, and prognostications about the future are made on those utopian expectations, those elements of society that do not fit with this vision of the future are easily characterised as obstacles to progress

and suppressed – even violently. Bauman called this tendency modernity’s ‘garden culture’ (Gellner, 1983), its ‘drive to a fully designed, fully controlled world’ aimed at enacting ‘grand vision[s] of a better and radically different society’ (MH, p. 93). Taken to its extreme in the Nazi revolution, Bauman continues, ‘Modern genocide is an element of social engineering, meant to bring about a social order conforming to the design of the perfect society’ (p. 91). Bauman also condemns modernity’s dreamworld as an ‘*artificial* order’ imagined up by ‘gardeners’ and ‘visionaries’ (p. 113). And as one sees in his many critical remarks about Soviet totalitarianism in *Modernity and the Holocaust*, the Nazi state was far from the only case in which utopian social planning led to organised mass murder.

We have seen Bauman remark in his Adorno Prize speech that this ‘royal road to perfection [through] legalized violence is no longer an option for a reasonable person today’ (Bauman, 1998a: 5). After the crimes of Hitler and Stalin, all such utopian prognostication and planning was thoroughly discredited. But what alternative conception of political vision for the future did thinkers like Koselleck and Bauman offer in its place? Bauman wrote in 2014:

Reinhart Koselleck, the late historian of concepts, used the metaphor of a ‘mountain pass’ to characterize our present situation. We are climbing a steep slope trying to reach the peak. The slope is too steep to stop and camp, no construction would survive the crosswinds and rainstorms, so we have to go on climbing, and we do. But what is on the other side (if we ever get there to look at it), we cannot know till we reach the pass. It is a different metaphor, yet it conveys a situation strikingly similar to that of Klee/Benjamin’s Angel of History.

(Bauman and Bordoni, 2014: 74)

While Koselleck did not use this term, I would suggest that if the *modern* era was characterised by utopian planning and prognostication, the West entered a *post-modern* era after 1945. As Dominick LaCapra has argued, ‘postmodernism can also be defined as post-Holocaust; there’s an intricate relation between the two’ (LaCapra, 2001: 179). Susan Neiman similarly argues that seminal catastrophes mark the beginning and end of the modern: the Lisbon earthquake of 1755 and Auschwitz ending in 1945 (Neiman, 2002: 2). Lack of vision into the future in this ‘postmodern’ condition implies a need for intellectual and political restraint. But this fits much better with Koselleck’s conservatism than Bauman’s lapsed communism turned socialism. This is what is so striking about Bauman’s analogy between Koselleck’s metaphor of the mountain and Benjamin’s famous metaphor of the angel of history, which is thrown blindly backwards by the storm of progress. This reading of the metaphor brings together the transcendental unknowability of history in general in Koselleck’s schema of ‘possible histories’ with the radicalisation of this uncertainty in the ‘liquid’ and ‘postmodern’ world of globalisation and late capitalism.

For Koselleck, Auschwitz and the atomic bomb were the most visible signs of the experience of technological acceleration in the hands of utopian regimes

outpacing reasonable expectations. The problem this widening gap poses is inverted in Bauman's text – that we doubt whether there is anything 'at all in our life' in everyday experience 'that points to the sheer possibility of a catastrophe' when, on the contrary, 'Life is getting better and more comfortable' (MH: 84). Thus, Bauman complains that catastrophist criticism like his own gets dismissed as the hand-waiving of 'prophets of doom' for crying wolf about what still *appear* as innocuous structures. Yet behind the curtain, the objective possibility of catastrophe lurks.

Adorno and Horkheimer identified a similar problem already in their *Dialectic of Enlightenment* in the 1940s: 'Today,' they write, 'motorized history is rushing ahead of . . . intellectual developments' (Adorno and Horkheimer, 2002: xv). In line with their critique of the reification of social reality under capitalist exchange and the hegemony of positivist science, they write that material history is running ahead of ideas and making them obsolete:

That the hygienic factory and everything pertaining to it, Volkswagen and the sports palace, are obtusely liquidating metaphysics does not matter in itself, but that these things are themselves becoming metaphysics, an ideological curtain, within the social whole, behind which real doom is gathering, does matter.

(p. xviii)

A classic problem in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* is how the authors' critique is possible in the first place if in fact the situation is so grim that 'thought finds itself deprived . . . of the conceptual language of opposition . . . and what threadbare language cannot achieve on its own is precisely made good by the social machinery' (p. xviii). What possibility is there for resistance if, as the authors write, 'The individual is entirely nullified in face of the economic powers'? (p. xvii).

This pessimistic diagnosis of modern society informed Adorno's interpretation of the Holocaust as continuous with the bad progress of modernity. On the one hand, the figure of 'Auschwitz' represents a '*Zivilisationsbruch*', or civilisational rupture, an absolute and universal turning point (Diner, 2000). At the same time, however, Adorno at times considers Auschwitz as a symptom of the broader 'permanent catastrophe' of capitalist modernity. He remarked a 1965 lecture on *Metaphysics* that his fixation on it should be taken to refer to 'not only Auschwitz but the world of torture which has continued to exist after Auschwitz and of which we are receiving the most horrifying reports from Vietnam' (Adorno, 2001: 101). The historical possibility of Auschwitz and the use of the atomic bomb at Hiroshima, in Adorno's view of history as progress towards catastrophe, 'form a kind of coherence, a hellish unity' (p. 104). Speaking at the height of the Cold War in his 1964–1965 lectures *History and Freedom*, Adorno reflected after Auschwitz and threats of nuclear apocalypse he could only conceive of 'progress' in its most minimal form as 'the prevention and avoidance of total catastrophe' (Adorno, 2004: 143).

This grim view of history bears the trace of Adorno's long and fruitful correspondence with his late colleague Walter Benjamin, with whom he jointly developed the concept of 'permanent catastrophe' over the course of the 1930s (Adorno and Benjamin, 2001). Benjamin wrote in his unfinished *Arcades Project*:

The concept of progress must be grounded in the idea of catastrophe. That things are 'status quo' is the catastrophe. It is not an ever-present possibility but what in each case is given . . . hell is not something that awaits us, but this life here and now.

(Benjamin, 1999: 473)

Benjamin would develop this idea in his iconic last text, his 1940 theses 'On the Concept of History', in which he invited us to adopt the perspective of the 'angel of history' who sees history not as incremental liberal progress towards humanity but as 'one single catastrophe' that hurls the angel in the winds of a violent storm called *progress* (Benjamin, 2006: 392). Bauman clearly admired Benjamin as a figure: 'To describe Benjamin is to describe the intellectual' (Bauman, 1999: 74). However, it is more difficult to say whether Bauman accepted Benjamin and Adorno's catastrophic view of history in light of his own more fluid, postmodern theory.

It is helpful to read such pessimistic claims in Benjamin and Adorno's thought as 'thought-images' or performative contradictions. They exemplify these authors' characteristically polemical styles. We might say they also relate to Adorno's claim (about psychoanalysis) that sometimes 'only the exaggerations are true' (Adorno, 1973: 49). Bauman, I have argued, borrowed the insight Adorno drew from Hegel's *Phenomenology* that the mind attains its full critical 'power only when looking the negative in the face, dwelling upon it' (Adorno, 1973: 16). But Adorno developed this negativity into a full-blown catastrophism, writing in 1949 that the entire world 'after Auschwitz' was becoming an 'open-air prison' (Adorno, 1967: 33), and, by 1966, writing that 'No universal history leads from savagery to humanitarianism, but there is one leading from the slingshot to the megaton bomb' (Adorno, 1973: 320). Bauman's theory, by contrast, is decisively more *ambivalent* and open-ended than either Koselleck's theory of modernity as 'permanent crisis' and Benjamin and Adorno's even more polemical theory of history as 'permanent catastrophe'.

As Hans Joas characterises Bauman's objection to such a theory of history, whereas Horkheimer and Adorno in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* 'assume a linear increase in the domination of instrumental reason . . . Bauman has a view which is more open to the internal contradictions of this process, less linear and more willing to allow for an alternative to the increase of the domination of instrumental rationality today' (Joas, 1998: 50). Yet Bauman no doubt suffers a similar popular reputation as Adorno and Horkheimer for being so pessimistic and catastrophist that they were considered (as Habermas sometimes said of his mentors) as irrationalist and anti-Enlightenment. Despite the difficulties, contradictions,

and at times irredeemable pessimism of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, it is crucial that its authors state in their preface that despite the fact that the perversion of Enlightenment rationality has produced evident calamity and always ‘contains the germ of regression’, it was their ‘*petitio principii*’ – their very premise – that ‘freedom in society is inseparable from enlightenment thinking’ (Adorno and Horkheimer, 2002: xvi). They had also planned a sequel volume to be called ‘Rescuing Enlightenment’ which was aborted not on account of their irrationalism but because Adorno rejected Horkheimer’s pessimism, a Schopenhauerian embrace of ‘senselessness’ in which Adorno perceived echoes of Heidegger (Rabinbach, 1997: 169). No doubt, ‘National Socialism enlisted enlightenment in the service of counterenlightenment’, but for Bauman as much as for Horkheimer and Adorno such a claim did not entail abandoning enlightenment or reason (Rabinbach, 2003: 62). As Adorno put it in *Minima Moralia*, ‘One of the tasks confronting thought – and not the least of those tasks – is to bring into the service of Enlightenment and of progress all the reactionary arguments that have been moved against Western civilization’ (Adorno, 2005: 192).

Still, Bauman emphatically shared Horkheimer and Adorno’s critique – echoing earlier warnings by Max Weber – which ran against the assumptions of mainstream sociology as a whole: against the view of the modern social sciences that society is a humanising institution, Bauman saw, with Adorno and Horkheimer, that it also produces inhumanity – an insight Bauman also draws from the highly influential empirical studies by the psychologists Stanley Milgram and Philip Zimbardo. A specific point of conjuncture with Horkheimer and Adorno is Bauman’s notion of adiaphorisation, ‘the tendency to trim and cut down the category of acts amenable to moral judgement’ – the pre-reflexive ‘effacing the face’ (Bauman, 2000b: 92). Bauman makes a nod here to Emmanuel Levinas on ethics as rooted in the ‘face of the other’, an idea he also employs in *Modernity and the Holocaust*. But instead of attuning individuals to the other, Bauman describes the process in modern societies of removing more and more social spheres from the domain of moral judgement. One could also argue that this concept bears traces of Habermas’s work on the division of knowledge and the spheres of life and society, which Bauman claimed was so important for his thinking. The crucial point is that Bauman locates morality and ethics outside and separate from the sphere of rationality. In this he echoes Horkheimer’s suggestion of ‘the impossibility of deriving from reason a fundamental argument against murder’ (Adorno and Horkheimer, 2002: 93). Bauman quotes a related maxim of Horkheimer’s in his Adorno Prize speech: ‘Scorn logic, if it is against humanity’ (Adorno and Horkheimer, 2002: 180). Confronted with the pathologies of instrumental reason, Bauman circles back to Levinas, for whom ‘ethics precedes ontology’ – thereby leading us away from the rationalist utopias of social engineering that ended in mass murder and towards the ethical utopia of Levinas’s Cold War philosophy (Moyn, 2005).

The insight of Bauman’s interpretation, his updating of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, lies in the way it qualifies the ‘permanent catastrophe’ that preoccupied Benjamin and Adorno by making it historical, social, and contingent – the permanent

possibility of genocide – rather than a seemingly impersonal and unstoppable force:

The design gives it the legitimation; state bureaucracy gives it the vehicle; and the paralysis of society gives it the ‘road clear’ sign. The conditions propitious to the perpetration of genocide are thus special, yet not at all exceptional. Rare, but not unique.

(MH: 114)

The catastrophe of genocide, then, is not ‘permanent’ but a permanent *possibility*:

Emphatically, this does not mean that we all live daily according to Auschwitz principles. From the fact that the Holocaust is modern, it does not follow that modernity is a Holocaust. The Holocaust is a by-product of the modern drive to a fully designed, fully controlled world, once the drive is getting out of control and running wild. Most of the time, modernity is prevented from doing so. Its ambitions clash with the pluralism of the human world; they stop short of their fulfilment for the lack of an absolute power absolute enough and a monopolistic agency monopolistic enough to be able to disregard, shrug off, or overwhelm all autonomous, and thus countervailing and mitigating, forces.

(MH: 93)

Bauman for the Anthropocene

In a further attempt to reactivate *Modernity and the Holocaust* for our era and its challenges, I would like to situate Bauman in not just an intellectual tradition of reflection on catastrophe generally, but one attuned to *slow catastrophe* or the *permanent possibility of catastrophe* – a tradition which, as we have seen, emphasises historical continuities over ruptures, social *structures* over individual *intentions*, long-term *processes* over single *events*, and the role of technology and environment – all of which are increasingly essential for social theory that can address the ‘unnatural disasters’ of impending climate catastrophe in the Anthropocene.

Bauman’s robust sociological theory leads us away from the kind of historical amnesia that in the field of critical disaster studies is condemned as ‘event-thinking’, the fallacy that sees each new disaster as sudden, unexpected, accidents or anomalies rather than as built-in features of the social orders in which they arise – in the case of ‘natural’ disasters (which in their highly disparate impacts are revealed to be in fact largely social), the failure of adequate prevention, emergency response, long-term infrastructure maintenance, and simple poverty. The foil to the error of event-thinking is the concept of ‘slow disaster’, which accounts for the continual catastrophic nature of processes even when they are so geographically or temporally spread out that they defy conventional spatio-temporal frames and causal links (Knowles, 2020). Chief among our current threats is the slow disaster of

the Anthropocene itself, a geological era out of Bauman's nightmares. As Amitav Ghosh asks, 'Now that the stirrings of the earth have forced us to recognise that we have never been free of nonhuman constraints, how are we to rethink conceptions of history and agency?' (2016: 119). This fundamental threat of the inability to control the consequences of human action, which have taken on an agency of their own, is all the more relevant as historians and critics alike warn us that the genocides of the next generation will be due to forced migrations due to climate exhaustion – indeed some already are (Snyder, 2015; Wallace-Wells, 2019).

Late in life Bauman saw this connection and said of the growing climate emergency:

[O]ur worries about the sustainability of the planet and the obstacles towering in the way of securing it against the tendency to devastate and exhaust its resources; the fear of impending catastrophe, which, crowded as we are inside an aircraft with the pilot's cabin empty, we feel hapless to prevent. The possibility of such a catastrophe is not a figment of our imagination. It has happened already in the past, even if not – as yet – on the global scale.

(Bauman and Donskis, 2016)

Bauman's metaphor of the airplane here is reminiscent of Adorno and Horkheimer's concern about 'motorized history' running ahead of ideas. It also closely reflects a conclusion in Bauman's 2000 afterword on 'The Uniqueness and Normality of the Holocaust', in which he quotes the great Holocaust historian Raul Hilberg: 'Our evolution has outpaced our understanding; we can no longer assume that we have a full grasp of the workings of our social institutions, bureaucratic structures, or technology' (MH: 83). The German-Jewish thinker Günther Anders called this tendency 'apocalypse blindness' – the fact that by the time apocalypse is realised, it is too late to be averted (1961). Yet Bauman remained ambivalent, like his hero Ernst Bloch, in balancing critical attention to catastrophe with an orientation of hope, at one point invoking Bloch to argue that 'utopia is an integral element of the critical attitude' (1976b: 15). Bauman thus shared Bloch's commitment to actively pursuing a 'concrete utopia' while also implicitly fulfilling Anders's task of the public intellectual: 'thinking against catastrophe' (Anders, 1992).

Climate change and its ensuing catastrophes radicalise this problem of non-agency, with both history, technology, and geology outpacing human reflection. It presents new problems of scale, duration, and structure that defy our efforts to grasp it in the conventional concepts of social theory or describe it in causal historical terms. As Dipesh Chakrabarty writes, 'In short, humans have acquired the capacity to interfere with planetary processes but not necessarily – at least not as yet – the capacity to fix them' (2021: 5). In the face of the challenges of globalisation in a slightly earlier age, Bauman called for a sense of 'planetary responsibility' based on the understanding that '[o]ur present-day misery and present-day problems in all their many forms and flavours have *planetary roots* and call for *planetary* (if any) *solutions*' (Bauman, 2005a: 153, 150). However, it is doubtful

that modern societies are sufficiently pursuing them. ‘Does one need catastrophe to happen in order to admit its coming? A chilling thought, indeed’ (Bauman, 2014).

Notes

- 1 Letter from Zygmunt Bauman to Claus Offe, 20th July 1998. In Janina and Zygmunt Bauman papers, MS 2067/B/8.
- 2 ‘Laudatio für Zygmunt Bauman’, 1998a, Janina and Zygmunt Bauman papers, MS 2067/B/8.
- 3 Letter from Zygmunt Bauman to Jürgen Habermas, 4th June 2010. In Janina and Zygmunt Bauman papers, USB_17, ‘LIST DO HABERMASA’.
- 4 Letter from Claus Offe to Zygmunt Bauman, 23rd August 1998. Janina and Zygmunt Bauman papers, MS 2067/B/8.
- 5 Claus Offe, ‘Laudatio für Zygmunt Bauman’, 1998, Janina and Zygmunt Bauman papers, MS 2067/B/8.

Bibliography

- Adorno, T. W. 1967. *Prisms*, trans. S. Weber. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Adorno, T. W. 1973. *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E. B. Ashton. New York: Continuum.
- Adorno, T. W. 1991. *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture*, ed. J. M. Bernstein. London: Routledge.
- Adorno, T. W. 1998 [1959]. ‘The Meaning of Working through the Past’. In *Critical Models: Interventions and Catchwords*, trans. H. W. Pickford. New York: Columbia University Press, 89–104.
- Adorno, T. W. 1998 [1966]. Education after Auschwitz. In *Critical Models: Interventions and Catchwords*, trans. H. W. Pickford. New York: Columbia University Press, 191–204.
- Adorno, T. W. 2001. *Metaphysics: Concepts and Problems*, trans. E. Jephcott. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Adorno, T. W. 2004. *History and Freedom: Lectures 1964–1965*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Adorno, T. W. 2005. *Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life*, trans. E. Jephcott. New York: Verso.
- Adorno, T. W., and Benjamin, W. 2001. *The Complete Correspondence, 1928–1940*, ed. H. Lonitz, trans. N. Walker. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Adorno, T. W., Frenkel-Brunswik, E., Levinson, D. and Sanford, R.N. 1950. *The Authoritarian Personality*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Adorno, T. W., Frenkel-Brunswik, E., Levinson, D. and Sanford, R.N. 2019 [1950]. *The Authoritarian Personality*. London: Verso.
- Adorno, T. W., and Horkheimer, M. 2002. *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*, ed. G. S. Noerr, trans. E. Jephcott. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Anders, G. 1961. *Die Antiquiertheit Des Menschen*. Munich: C. H. Beck.
- Anders, G. 1992. Radio Interview with Peter Leusch: Wider die Katastrophe denken: Günther Anders zum 90. Geburtstag. *Deutschlandrundfunk*, 1 July. Transcript accessed at the Deutsches Literaturarchiv Marbach.
- Arendt, H. 1964. *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*. London: Faber and Faber.
- Bauman, Z. 1976a. *Towards a Critical Sociology: An Essay on Commonsense and Emancipation*. Oxford: Routledge.

- Bauman, Z. 1976b. *Socialism: The Active Utopia*. London: George Allen & Unwin.
- Bauman, Z. 1991. *Modernity and Ambivalence*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Bauman, Z. 1992. *Intimations of Postmodernity*. London: Routledge.
- Bauman, Z. 1998a. *Ansprache des Preisträgers anlässlich der Überreichung des Theodor W. Adorno-Preises 1998*. Bauman Archive, University of Leeds.
- Bauman, Z. 1998b. Allo-Semitism: Premodern, Modern, Postmodern. In B. Cheyette and L. Marcus (eds.) *Modernity, Culture and 'the Jew'*. Cambridge: Polity, 143–156.
- Bauman, Z. 1999. Walter Benjamin, the Intellectual. In L. Marcus and L. Nead (eds.) *The Actuality of Walter Benjamin*. London: Lawrence & Wishart.
- Bauman, Z. 2000a. *Liquid Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Bauman, Z. 2000b. Ethics of Individuals. *The Canadian Journal of Sociology*, 25 (1), 83–96.
- Bauman, Z. 2005a. *Liquid Life*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Bauman, Z. 2005b. Modern Lover. Interview in *The Guardian*, 12 November.
- Bauman, Z. 2009. Den Vorhang wegreißen. *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 17 June.
- Bauman, Z. 2014. Disconnecting Acts: An Interview with Zygmunt Bauman Part II, by E. Kristal and A. De Boever. *Los Angeles Review of Books*, 12 November.
- Bauman, Z., and Bordoni, C. 2014. *State of Crisis*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Bauman, Z., and Donskis, L. 2016. *Liquid Evil: Living with TINA*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Benjamin, W. 1999. *The Arcades Project*, trans. H. Eiland and K. McLaughlin. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Benjamin, W. 2006. On the Concept of History. In Howard Eiland and Michael Jennings (eds.) *Selected Writings, Vol. 4, 1938–1940*, trans. H. Eiland and E. Jephcott. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Catlin, J. 2020. The Frankfurt School on Antisemitism, Authoritarianism, and Right-wing Radicalism. *European Journal of Cultural and Political Sociology*, 7 (2), 198–214.
- Catlin, J. 2021. Wounds of Democracy: Adorno's *Aspects of the New Right-Wing Extremism* and the German Antisemitism Debate. *Radical Philosophy*, 2 (10), Summer, 11–20.
- Chakrabarty, D. 2021. *The Climate of History in a Planetary Age*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Cheyette, B. 2020. Zygmunt Bauman's Window: From Jews to Strangers and Back Again. *Thesis Eleven*, 156 (1), 67–85.
- Dean, C. J. 2010. *Aversion and Erasure: The Fate of the Victim after the Holocaust*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Diner, D. 2000. *Beyond the Conceivable: Studies on Germany, Nazism, and the Holocaust*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Dupuy, J. P. 2013. *The Mark of the Sacred*, trans. M. B. DeBevoise. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Elias, N. 1996. *The Germans: Power Struggles and the Development of Habitus in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Gellner, E. 1983. *Nations and Nationalism*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Ghosh, A. 2016. *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Gordon, P. E. 2015. Interpretations of Catastrophe: German Intellectuals on Nazism, Genocide, and Mass Destruction. In M. Geyer and A. Tooze (eds.) *The Cambridge History of the Second World War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Habermas, J. 1997. Modernity: An Unfinished Project. In S. Benhabib and M. P. d'Entrèves (eds.) *Habermas and the Unfinished Project of Modernity*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

- Jacobs, J. 2015. *The Frankfurt School, Jewish Lives, and Antisemitism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Joas, H. 1998. Bauman in Germany: Modern Violence and the Problems of German Self-Understanding. *Theory, Culture, & Society*, 15 (1), 47–55.
- Knowles, S. 2020. Slow Disaster in the Anthropocene: A Historian Witnesses Climate Change on the Korean Peninsula. *Daedalus*, 149 (4), 192–206.
- Koselleck, R. 1988. *Critique and Crisis: Enlightenment and the Pathogenesis of Modern Society*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- LaCapra, D. 2001. *Writing History, Writing Trauma*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Moyn, S. 2005. *Origins of the Other: Emmanuel Levinas between Revelation and Ethics*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Neiman, S. 2002. *Evil in Modern Thought: An Alternative History of Philosophy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Olsen, N. 2012. *History in the Plural: An Introduction to the Work of Reinhart Koselleck*. New York: Berghahn.
- Osborne, P. 1992. A Marxism for the Postmodern? Jameson's Adorno. *New German Critique*, 56, 171–192.
- Postone, M. 1992. Review of *Modernity and the Holocaust*. *American Journal of Sociology*, 97 (5), 1521–1523.
- Rabinbach, A. 1997. *In the Shadow of Catastrophe: German Intellectuals between Apocalypse and Enlightenment*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Rabinbach, A. 2003. "The Abyss that Opened up before Us": Thinking about Auschwitz and Modernity. In M. Postone and E. Santner (eds.) *Catastrophe and Meaning: The Holocaust and the Twentieth Century*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Rabinbach, A. 2006. Moments of Totalitarianism. *History & Theory*, 45 (1), 72–100.
- Rothberg, M. 2009. *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Rothberg, M. 2019. *The Implicated Subject: Beyond Victims and Perpetrators*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Smith, D. 1999. *Zygmunt Bauman: Prophet of Postmodernity*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Snyder, T. 2015. *Black Earth: The Holocaust as History and Warning*. New York: Tim Duggan Books.
- Traverso, E. 2017. Totalitarianism between History and Theory. *History & Theory*, 55, 97–118.
- Wagner, I. 2020. *Zygmunt Bauman: A Biography*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Wallace-Wells, D. 2019. *The Uninhabitable Earth: Life after Warming*. New York: Tim Duggan Books.
- Žižek, S. 2012. *Less than Nothing: Hegel and the Shadow of Dialectical Materialism*. London: Verso.

12 *Modernity and the Holocaust* and the concentrationary universe

Max Silverman

At the time of its publication in 1989, Zygmunt Bauman's *Modernity and the Holocaust* stood out from the prevailing scholarship on the Holocaust by decontextualising it from arguments about uniqueness, absolute evil, civilisation versus barbarity, the history of antisemitism, the 'German problem', and the 'authoritarian personality', and recontextualising it within the bureaucratic and technocratic structures of modernity and their effects on our moral compass. By pointing up the connections between genocide and modernity, the book reconnects with Frankfurt School critiques of the Enlightenment, with the Arendtian notion of the banality of evil, and with post-war analyses of the normalised, invisible, and systemic forms of racism and violence in capitalism and the West.

But, just as Bauman recontextualised the Holocaust within modernity, is it time for us, 30 years later, to recontextualise *Modernity and the Holocaust* itself? As part of this retrospective on the book, I will argue that 'Holocaust studies' and 'genocide studies' (however broadly they are defined) are, perhaps, not the most appropriate places to situate the work as, despite its title, *Modernity and the Holocaust* is not, primarily, about the Holocaust. I will suggest that, in reconnecting with Frankfurt School critiques of the Enlightenment, *Modernity and the Holocaust* is a response to the atrocities of the Second World War that focuses not on the racial genocide of the Jews that came to be known as the Holocaust (despite those parts of chapters 2 and 3 which deal specifically with antisemitism), but on a different (though overlapping) history concerning the assault on the human qua human, that in France became known as the concentrationary universe. I will also argue that the distinction between these two histories allows us to specify Bauman's way of reading the invisible in the visible as a 'concentrationary' not a Holocaust reading.

The concentrationary universe

In their book *Univers concentrationnaire et génocide: voir, savoir, comprendre* (*The Concentrationary Universe and Genocide: Seeing, Knowing, Understanding*), French critics Sylvie Lindeperg and Annette Wieviorka show how the early post-war research of the pioneering historians Olga Jungelson (later Wormser and then Wormser-Migot) and Léon Poliakov shaped an understanding (at least

in France) of two parallel but often intersecting histories: on the one hand, the history of what David Rousset, returning political deportee from Buchenwald, termed ‘the concentrationary universe’ in his book (1946) of the same name (translated in English as *The Other Kingdom*, 1947, and then as *A World Apart*, 1951), and, on the other hand, the history of the genocide of the Jews that would later be known as the Holocaust (or Shoah in France).¹ Lindeperg and Wieviorka not only distinguish between these histories but also suggest that, in the post-war period, ‘the concentrationary universe and the annihilation of the Jews of Europe were recalled according to different rhythms’ (2008: 7).² In their book, they outline carefully the uneven ‘rhythms’ of the recording of these two histories to show how the commemoration of the experience of the political deportee (the major victim of the concentrationary universe) in the early post-war years gave way, from the time of the filmed trial of Adolf Eichmann in Jerusalem in 1961, to an emphasis on the figure of the racial deportee (the Jew as the major victim of the genocide), heralding what Wieviorka (1998) has called elsewhere ‘the era of the witness’ (‘l’ère du témoin’).

The distinction made by Lindeperg and Wieviorka between these two histories, and the uneven nature of their accounts in the post-war period, is particularly relevant to our understanding of the atrocities of the Second World War. By bringing back into focus ‘the concentrationary’, which has often been obscured in ‘the era of the witness’ – and which, outside France (or those influenced by French post-war writing on the camps such as Hannah Arendt) was never conceived in the same way in the first place – it raises the following question: what exactly is the object of our analysis when we are seeking to understand the atrocities? Is it genocide (which largely, though by no means exclusively, took place in *extermination* camps), or is it the process of dehumanisation and the evisceration of the political sphere that was a product of the political/industrial complex of the concentrationary universe (whose most egregious site was the *concentration* camp)?

The distinction between the concentrationary universe and the racial genocide (that is, between *the concentrationary* and *the exterminatory*) was a crucial point of departure for a research project that Griselda Pollock and I carried out over a number of years entitled *Concentrationary Memories and the Politics of Representation*. Our purpose was to bring to an English-speaking audience, for whom the Holocaust had become the major lens through which to approach the atrocities of the Second World War, an understanding of the history of ‘the concentrationary’ developed in France in the post-war period by David Rousset and other French political returnees from the camps. Our project did not in any way seek to downplay the significance of the attempted genocide of the Jews or suggest that the ‘duty of memory’ relating to the Shoah is not an ongoing duty for us all. It was to suggest, however, that we needed to disentangle certain aspects of the catastrophic histories of the twentieth century that had been folded into the Holocaust in order to identify a politics (or, in Arendt’s terms, an anti-politics) of total domination and its systematic destruction of the human that was distinct from the attempted genocide of the Jews.

In the introduction to the first of our four books on the theme of the concentrationary, *Concentrationary Cinema*, Pollock and I suggested that the affinities between *Modernity and the Holocaust* and the ideas of the concentrationary thinkers like Rousset make it more appropriate to situate the work within a concentrationary rather than Holocaust historiography, while recognising the connections and confusions between the two:

In his major sociological intervention *Modernity and the Holocaust*, Zygmunt Bauman . . . came to identify the same features [as Rousset] as the conditions within Modernity that could make possible racist, bureaucratically administered and systematic genocide. In arguing this, there is, however, a risk of confusion. We have again invoked the Holocaust even while we are aiming to shed light on the *concentrationary*, not as a totally independent or separate dimension, but as a specific site within the network of terror and violence unleashed by Nazism after 1933.

(2011: 23)

The risk of confusion is understandable as genocide emerges within the broader assault on the human. The distinction, however, is important if we are to specify the principal object of analysis in *Modernity and the Holocaust* and to identify its particular approach to extreme violence.

What, then, are the defining characteristics of Rousset's thesis that allow us to reinterpret *Modernity and the Holocaust* as a concentrationary rather than Holocaust work? *L'Univers concentrationnaire* acts as a warning to 'normal' men and women that now, following the events of Nazi totalitarianism, 'everything is possible' (1947: 168), a statement that Hannah Arendt quotes and repeats in *Origins of Totalitarianism* (1958: 427, 436–437, 440–441, 459). Rousset exhorts us to integrate this knowledge into our understanding of the human, however unbelievable that knowledge might appear in the light of what we thought about the West's march towards progress and civilisation. For, once unleashed on the world, and despite the defeat of its Nazi incarnation, the concentrationary universe will reappear unless we are permanently vigilant. Rousset's call for a new understanding of the relationship between the normal and the unimaginable is therefore premised on the belief that the concentrationary universe is profoundly connected to the world outside the camps rather than a site of barbarism separate from civilised life. As he says at the end of his essay:

[I]t would be easy to show that the most characteristic traits of both the SS mentality and the social conditions which gave rise to the Third Reich are to be found in many sectors of world society. . . . It would be blindness – and criminal blindness, at that – to believe that, by reason of any difference of national temperament, it would be impossible for any other country to try a similar experiment. Germany interpreted, with an originality in keeping with her history, the crisis that led her to the concentrationary universe. But the

existence and the mechanism of that crisis were inherent in the economic and social foundations of capitalism and imperialism. Under a new guise, similar effects may reappear tomorrow. There remains therefore a very specific war to be waged. The lessons learned from the concentration camps provide a marvellous arsenal for that war.

(1947: 173)

For Rousset, the analogical potential of the unimaginable experiment designed to strip humans of their humanity (without necessarily killing them) stems from the fact that it has its roots in the familiar soil of capitalism and imperialism. Defined in this way, then, 'the concentrationary' refers not only to the Nazi camps themselves but to a whole process of systematic dehumanisation of which, as Arendt said, 'the concentration camps are the most consequential institution' (1948: 746).³ Thus, 'the concentrationary' did not disappear with the liberation of the camps and the defeat of Nazism but permeates post-war 'normal' life in invisible ways. A crucial aspect of the works of both Rousset and Arendt is their attempt to defamiliarise the banality of the everyday to show the persistence of unimaginable horror and a radical reshaping of the idea of the human in post-war life; hence, to appeal to our slumbering consciousness by exposing the hidden potential of violence in the everyday and the overlap between supposedly 'different' worlds.⁴

Modernity and the Holocaust strikes a very similar chord to this approach. It is precisely in the tension between horror and the everyday, the normal and the extreme, and the exhortation to see one in the other, rather than separate from it, that the book is at its most powerful. The structures underpinning the atrocities 'have not gone away'. But, say those who deride 'the prophets of doom (and) dismiss their anguished warnings, (a)re we not vigilant already?' (MH: 84). Bauman warns against this complacency, especially on the part of sociologists and other academics who have failed to see the 'unanticipated consequences' of Weber's diagnoses of modern society (MH: 11).

In this respect, Bauman's approach is entirely in keeping with the way in which the term 'the concentrationary' came to be used in the post-war period in France to describe not simply the world of the camps but, more generally, the dehumanising process of rationalising modernity and commodity capitalism. Urban sociologists, social psychologists, linguists, cultural critics, and others dissected the everyday to reveal the hidden violence within. For example, the major French theorist of everyday life, Henri Lefebvre, stated 'the concentration camp is the most extreme and paroxysmal form of a modern housing estate, or of an industrial town' (2008: 245); in his famous 1949 article on 'The Mirror Phase', the psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan uses the term 'concentrationnaire' to define the way in which social relations have been subsumed within, and consequently disfigured by, a utilitarian ethos; the philosophers Cornelius Castoriadis and Claude Lefort define extreme forms of bureaucratisation in concentrationary terms in the first issue of the journal *Socialisme ou barbarie*; the Situationist Guy Debord similarly defines the systemic nature of the commodification of human relations in modern capitalist society in concentrationary terms, while, in his 'Comments against Urbanism', his

fellow Situationist Raoul Vaneigem, echoing Lefebvre, wrote the immortal line, ‘If the Nazis had known contemporary urbanists, they would have transformed their concentration camps into low-income housing’ (1961).⁵ More recently, the Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben has returned to this critique of modernity in his theorisation of the camp ‘not as a historical fact and anomaly belonging to the past . . . but in some way as the hidden matrix and nomos of the political space in which we are still living’ (1998: 166). Marie-Laure Basuyaux sums up well the expanded definition of ‘the concentrationary’ in post-war French thought:

This approach allows a broader reading of the phenomena which shape the concentrationary. The camp is raised to the level of an interpretive paradigm, an analytical tool for social anthropology. . . . The camp is therefore no longer confined within the field of the analysis of totalitarian societies but functions as a prism of analysis of phenomena which are, more broadly speaking, political, sociological, economic and also linguistic.

(2009: 113)

Bauman’s critique of existing scholarship on the Holocaust and his focus on the rationalisation, bureaucratisation, objectification, and demoralisation of human relations in modern capitalism is an implicit acknowledgement of the ‘concentrationnat’, even if he does not make this reference explicit himself.

Concentrationary art: reading the warning signs

It is not only the diagnosis of the invisible, violent, and dehumanising underside of modernity that Bauman shares with the theorists of the concentrationary universe. They also share a method for making the diagnosis, that is, a way of reading the invisible violence of the normal world, of perceiving the unimaginable in the banal, of ‘decod(ing) the warning signs’ (MH: 86).⁶ Bauman proclaims, ‘*(T)he unimaginable ought to be imagined*’ (MH: 85). *Modernity and the Holocaust* is about a sociology that can (indeed, must) imagine the unimaginable, comprehend everyday life in terms of the potentiality of extreme forms of violence, and see the latency of violence within normalised, ‘ordered’, and ‘civilised’ society. This is an extension of his wider view, expressed previously in *Hermeneutics and Social Science* (1978), that interpretation means ‘spotting the general in the particular’ (cited in Davis, 2020: 38). In *Modernity and the Holocaust*, Bauman advocates a hermeneutic sociology that can read the visible in terms of the invisible and what is present in terms of what is absent to expose modernity’s dark underside and perceive its Janus face. As he observes, ‘violence has been taken out of sight, rather than forced out of existence. It has become invisible, that is, from the vantage point of narrowly circumscribed and privatized personal experience’ (MH: 97). And again:

The disappearance of violence from the horizon of daily life is thus one more manifestation of the centralizing and monopolizing tendencies of modern

power; violence is absent from individual intercourse because it is now controlled by forces definitely outside the individual reach.

(MH: 107)

As a way of reading hidden violence in the everyday, the parallel with the concentrationary that I wish to make is with the work of another French political deportee to the camps, Jean Cayrol, and his concept of what he called concentrationary or Lazarean art. Cayrol was a published poet before joining the resistance in 1941. In March 1943, he was arrested and deported to the notorious Mauthausen-Gusen concentration camp in Austria under the infamous *Nacht und Nebel* (Night and Fog) decree, designed to make political resisters to Nazism disappear into the 'night and fog'. It is his experience at Mauthausen that forms the basis for his concept of the survivor as a 'revenant' from a state of death and is at the heart of his ideas on concentrationary art.⁷ For Cayrol, the new art would not be that of testimony of survivors of the camps, like him and Rousset: rather, it is an art which can depict the normal everyday world as one that bears the imprint of what happened in the camps and is therefore haunted by terror and death (like Lazarus who has known death and bears its mark on his return to the land of the living). The task, then, is to defamiliarise the everyday to reveal latent violence, and to read horror in conjunction with the normal, not as its opposite.

Cayrol wrote the spoken narrative for Alain Resnais's classic film on the camps *Nuit et brouillard* (*Night and Fog*) (1955). In the unforgettable opening sequence of the film, the camera slides effortlessly from the fields surrounding Auschwitz across the barbed wire to the interior of the camp while the narrator intones dispassionately 'even a peaceful countryside . . . even a road where cars, agricultural workers and couples pass by, even a holiday village with a market and church steeple can lead quite simply to a concentration camp' (Cayrol, 1997: 17). Following this shocking image of the proximity of horror and the everyday, the same message is delivered in different ways: concentration camps are shown to come in all sorts of common-place architectural styles and contain many of the attributes of 'ordinary' life; the familiar appearance of objects is simply a deceptive décor hiding something more sinister; torture is carried out in what appear to be hospitals; gas-chambers masquerade as showers; the post-war landscape of renewed normality is haunted by the millions of dead; the new executioners do not have a different face to our own. In the final sequence, the narrator implores us to open our eyes: 'we who fool ourselves into believing that all that happened in one country and who do not think to look around us, and who fail to hear the endless cry' will never be able to identify 'the concentrationary plague' still with us (Cayrol, 1997: 43).⁸

Although *Nuit et brouillard* does show atrocity images, the aforementioned examples tell of a different message about extreme violence underpinning Cayrol's concept of concentrationary art: an art that deals not with visible representations of violence but rather the everyday as a haunted space, an art that can read the hidden signs of violence in order to counter their subtle deformation of the human. In his work *Lazarus among Us* (*Lazare parmi nous*, 1950), Cayrol

describes this in terms of a ‘dual reality’ (‘dédoublement’) in which an ‘invisible thread’ (‘fil invisible’) ties the human to the inhuman (Cayrol in Pollock and Silverman eds, 2019: 53). The new art will therefore depict this other reality beneath the everyday not in a direct way but allusively and obliquely (see Basuyaux, 2009; Coquio, 2015: 271–288 and my introduction in Pollock and Silverman eds 2019). In his 1964 postface to Cayrol’s 1959 novel *Les Corps étrangers* (*Foreign Bodies*), Roland Barthes talks of the way Cayrol’s art never names the camps or ‘the concentrationary plague’ explicitly but conjures them up allusively as a sort of existential ‘malaise’ inhabiting everyday life:

Cayrol’s novels are the very passage from the concentrationary event to the concentrationary everyday; in them we rediscover today, twenty years after the camps, a certain form of human malaise, a certain quality of atrocity, of the grotesque, of the absurd.

(Barthes, 1993: 599)

Bauman’s hermeneutic reading of atrocity in everyday life also shuns the explicit and is founded on a similar double vision to that proposed by Cayrol:

We associate dehumanization with horrifying pictures of the inmates of concentration camps – humiliated by reducing their action to the most basic level of primitive survival . . . , by depriving them even of recognizable human likeness. As Peter Marsh put it, ‘Standing by the fence of Auschwitz, looking at these emaciated skeletons with shrunken skin and hollowed eyes – who could believe that these were really people?’ These pictures, however, represent only an extreme manifestation of a tendency which may be discovered in all bureaucracies, however benign and innocuous the tasks in which they are currently engaged. I suggest that the discussion of the dehumanizing tendency, rather than being focused on in its most sensational and vile, but fortunately uncommon, manifestations, ought to concentrate on the more universal, and for this reason potentially more dangerous, manifestations.

(MH: 102)

A short film by the Swedish film-maker Roy Andersson entitled *World of Glory* (1991) is a fascinating example of Cayrol’s concentrationary art and accompaniment to *Modernity and the Holocaust*.⁹ Released only two years after the publication of Bauman’s work, Andersson’s film shares with it the uncanny depiction of horror and the everyday. It starts with a shocking image of smartly dressed bystanders watching naked men, women and children being shut into a lorry (by similarly smartly dressed ‘officials’), a pipe conveying presumably lethal gas being attached to the lorry, and the departure of the lorry to the accompaniment of screams from within. One of the bystanders – a middle-aged man who remains nameless throughout the film – watches with his back to camera and occasionally looks back over his shoulder to face the camera.

The shocking history of the gas vans – the precursors to the industrialised slaughter of the gas chambers – is made even more shocking in this depiction by the apparent banality of the scene, the unremarkable and besuited appearance of the ‘officials’ – who have no weapons to coerce their victims into the lorry – and the passivity of the bystanders. None of the 14 other brief sequences that make up the rest of the film refer back explicitly to this scene, or deal in any direct way with the Holocaust. They show the middle-aged man in the most ordinary of settings (and often holding his briefcase) – standing by his car, in an office with his brother, standing in a corridor, having his hair cut, seated in a shoe-shop, in the bath, sitting on his bed – and with members of his family at significant moments – with his mother in hospital, at the grave of his father, holding his son while a doctor performs a minor operation on the son’s head. Yet, just as Cayrol’s concentrationary art deals not with the camps themselves or the testimonies of survivors but, rather, with the invisible imprint of the concentrationary universe on post-war everyday life, so the 14 sequences of banal actions bear the invisible imprint of the shocking opening sequence. The man whose life story is recounted in these brief tableaux is a Lazarean figure whose life is shadowed by death and whose apparent normality hides the grotesque, the absurd, and the horrific.

It is for these reasons that I would classify *World of Glory* (like *Nuit et brouillard* and *Modernity and the Holocaust*) as a concentrationary work, not a work about the Holocaust, despite the opening sequence.¹⁰ And, like them, Andersson’s film is concerned with a way of reading the everyday for the hidden signs of violence. In the opening sequence, the man twice turns to the camera to align the gaze of the spectator with the gaze of the bystander and make us (comfortable spectators cocooned in our safe world of normality) complicit with this scene of atrocity. In a later sequence, the man is dragged out from under a table in a restaurant shouting ‘I can’t see’. In the following sequence in a shoe-shop, he explains to the sales-woman ‘Yesterday I had a terrible experience. I thought I had lost my sight . . . that I couldn’t see . . . that I was blind. It was terrible . . . horrifying’. And, in the final sequence, seated on the end of his bed with his wife behind him, his hands clasping his ears, he shouts desperately (mimicking the famous painting by Edvard Munch and possibly also ‘the endless cry’ at the end of *Nuit et brouillard*) ‘Isn’t someone screaming?’. Seeing and not seeing, hearing and not hearing run through the film as warnings to open our eyes and ears to what is taking place beneath the surface of everyday life and resist the terrible illusion of normality.

Modernity and violence

My argument that *Modernity and the Holocaust* is really about the concentrationary universe, not the Holocaust, and that it proposes a similar way of reading the hidden violence in the modern world to that advocated by Jean Cayrol in his concept of concentrationary art, offers us a different way of approaching Bauman’s vision of the nature, scope, and understanding of modern violence. First, it short-circuits the argument that the book denies the singularity of the Holocaust. If the book deals more with the concentrationary universe than with genocide,

then the argument around uniqueness becomes redundant for, as we have seen, the idea of ‘the concentrationary’ is dependent on seeing the camps as part of the landscape of modernity rather than unique and singular. Of course, this approach does not remove the opposite risk of seeing ‘the concentrationary’ everywhere in contemporary life (rather like Agamben’s extended definition of the camp to encompass the whole of modern society).¹¹ Nevertheless, Bauman’s approach suggests that the risk is even greater if we fail to comprehend the multiple connections between the violence and dehumanisation that take place in camps and the surrounding landscape of modernity. We must think of violence beyond its visible signs.¹²

Secondly, it also recasts the critique of Bauman’s work in general that it is Eurocentric and fails to consider colonialism as constitutive of Western modernity (see, for example, Jay, 2010 and Rattansi, 2017).¹³ Rousset and Arendt clearly demonstrate how the realm of the concentrationary/totalitarian is ‘inherent in the economic and social foundations of capitalism and imperialism’, as Rousset says in the preceding quote and as Arendt argues in *Origins of Totalitarianism*. If Bauman does not make the connections explicit in *Modernity and the Holocaust*, the book’s affinity with the theorists of the concentrationary nevertheless allows us to read its critique of modern violence in the same broad way that they do. Bauman’s approach can therefore be said to prefigure transnational analyses of the histories of violence which challenge the idea of separate, comparative, and competitive histories (the worst manifestations of which are invidious comparative victimologies) and the compartmentalisation of metropolitan history, colonial history and the history of European genocide (see, for example, Rothberg, 2009; Silverman, 2013; Sanyal, 2015).

Third, Bauman’s approach to violence unsettles the dichotomy between perpetrators and victims. His understanding of the systemic nature of racism and violence, his critique of Adorno’s thesis of ‘the authoritarian personality’ (which exonerates all those who are not proto-Nazis (p. 153)), and the conclusions he draws from the experiments of Milgram and Zimbardo regarding the connections between violence and normality, all suggest a far more nuanced picture of the ‘oppositions’ between guilt and innocence and the question of complicity (Rothberg, 2019). The startling declaration in *Nuit et brouillard* that the new executioners will not have a different face to our own is one that is implied throughout *Modernity and the Holocaust*.

And finally, thinking of violence beyond its visible signs entails a hermeneutics that privileges a symptomatic reading of the everyday. If Bauman’s work on modernity does not often engage explicitly with empire, neither does his method explicitly acknowledge psychoanalysis. There are, however, implicit signs of both in his approach. Although *Modernity and the Holocaust* deals more with ‘the social production of moral invisibility’ (MH: 24) rather than its psychic production, and is therefore more Marx than Freud, the symptomatic reading of the everyday that Bauman advocates nevertheless establishes a traumatic structure of understanding whereby banal objects, behaviour, practices, and institutions are, in Freudian terms, a sort of screen memory for repressed processes.¹⁴ The

connections with Cayrol's concentrationary art are once again striking: the influence on Cayrol of Brecht's *verfremdungseffekt* for demystifying the normalised everyday is married, in his thinking, to a Freudian-inspired Surrealist defamiliarisation, re-enchantment, and rehumanisation of the everyday. I suggest that Bauman's sociology of 'making the familiar strange' (Gunderson, 2020) also involves (if only indirectly) a blend of Freud's 'uncanny', Surrealism and Brecht.

In a more general sense, *Modernity and the Holocaust* adopts the logic of concentrationary art by beseeching us to break with the binary thinking that prevents us from identifying forms of dehumanisation in the most unlikely of places, and imagining them as latent in the most common of practices. In the Amalfi Prize lecture (delivered on 24th May 1990 and reproduced in Bauman 2000, pp. 208–221), Bauman refers to what the Holocaust historian Saul Friedländer describes as 'historian's paralysis' which, in Friedländer's words, "arises from the simultaneity and the interaction of entirely heterogeneous phenomena: messianic fanaticism and bureaucratic structures, pathological impulses and administrative decrees, archaic attitudes within an advanced industrial society" (p. 212). The important lesson that Bauman takes from Friedländer's insight is to reverse the assumption of 'heterogeneous phenomena':

Entangled in the net of marginalizing narratives we all help to weave, we fail to see what we stare at: the only thing we are able to note is the confusing heterogeneity of the picture, coexistence of things our language does not allow to coexist, the complicity of factors that, as our narratives tell us, belong to different epochs or different times. Their heterogeneity is not a finding, but an assumption. It is this assumption where comprehension could appear and is called for.

(MH: 212)

Only by demystifying our narratives and reworking our language will we be able to see what is hidden in plain sight. Bauman carried out this mission on language, narrative, and understanding in all his work. Whether it is deconstructing the modern discourse of 'progress' and 'order' (*Modernity and Ambivalence*, 1991), unpicking the euphemisms of 'waste' and 'redundancy' (*Wasted Lives*, 2004), or deciphering the sugar-coated strategies we employ for 'managing' death (*Mortality, Immortality and Other Life Strategies*, 1992), his unerring gaze is always on the ways in which the disfigurement of humanity and the ethical concerns around life and death are performatively acted out in the name of something else. In his introduction to *Wasted Lives*, he describes a method that aptly describes his approach in general:

My major, perhaps even only, concern is to offer an alternative viewpoint from which stock can be taken of those aspects of modern life that recent developments have drawn out of their previous concealment and brought into the limelight, allowing certain facets of the contemporary world to be better seen and their logic better understood. This book ought to be read as an

invitation to take another, and somewhat different look at the allegedly all-too-familiar modern world we all share and inhabit.

(2004: 7–8)

Bauman always knew how to read forms of violence beneath the managed décor and discourses of modernity and liquid modernity. Jacqueline Rose, among others, has updated this view with regard to recent forms of violence against women: ‘It is a truism to say that everyone knows violence when they see it, but if one thing has become clear in the past decade, it is that the most prevalent, insidious forms of violence are those that cannot be seen’ (2021). For Bauman, imagining those invisible forms of violence becomes an even more urgent task as power becomes more divorced from politics in a world of globalised capital, culture, and communications. It plays an essential role in drawing the new ‘normal’ into the realm of the political and, hence, challenging the ways in which everyday lives can be disfigured today in the name of progress, freedom, choice, efficiency, and other admirable terms, and the new ways in which democracy can be eroded from within. Vigilance and resistance, or resistance through vigilance, were the bywords of the theorists of ‘the concentrationary’. *Modernity and the Holocaust* is a major contribution to this tradition of critical thought.

Notes

- 1 Catherine Coquio has termed this ‘two distinct but, from the outset, inevitably intersecting historical phenomena’ (1999: 32).
- 2 All translations from the French are my own except where otherwise stated.
- 3 In chapter 9 of *Origins of Totalitarianism* (‘The Decline of the Nation-State and the End of the Rights of Man’), Arendt argues that, rather than being a formation totally alien to parliamentary regimes, totalitarianism was instead an offshoot of incipient tendencies within the nation-state and its imperial ambitions, ‘perplexities’, as Arendt says, which even date back to the Rights of Man, where the human (universal) and the national were already confused. As she observes, ‘(e)ven the emergence of totalitarian governments is a phenomenon within, not outside, our civilization’ (Arendt 1958: 302).
- 4 Arne Johan Vetlesen (2005: 14–51) also refers to Rousset and Arendt in his discussion of *Modernity and the Holocaust*. His aim, however, is to explore (and eventually disagree with) Bauman’s ideas on modernity and the construction of distance, indifference (*adiaphorization*) and immorality, whereas my concern here is to show how, by viewing the work through the lens of the concentrationary, we can shift the focus away from evil and the genocide to a new understanding of everyday life which blurs the frontiers between distance and proximity.
- 5 For a more developed discussion of ‘the concentrationary’ in post-war French thought, see my introduction (‘Introduction: Lazarus and the modern world’: 1–28) and chapter (‘Concentrationary art and the reading of everyday life: (in)human spaces in Chantal Akerman’s *Jeanne Dielman, 23, quai du commerce, 1080 Bruxelles*: 123–144) in Pollock and Silverman eds, 2019.
- 6 For an excellent overview of the debate about Bauman’s method – or whether, indeed, he had a method – see Davis (2020). Davis provides a riposte to Bauman’s critics and argues for situating Bauman’s method within sociological hermeneutics.
- 7 For a fuller discussion of Cayrol’s concentrationary art and the first translation into English of Cayrol’s essay ‘Lazarus among Us’ in which he outlines his theory, see Pollock and Silverman eds, 2019.

- 8 Drawing on Raul Hilberg's *The Destruction of the European Jews* and Richard Rubenstein's *The Cunning of History*, Bauman also shows how the process of the Final Solution – including engineering and chemical skills, railway design, bureaucracy, and factory production – were all harnessed from modern life. He concludes '(t)he truth is that every "ingredient" of the Holocaust – all those many things that rendered it possible – was normal (. . .) in the sense of being fully in keeping with everything we know about our civilization' (MH: 8).
- 9 I am grateful to Irena Bauman for drawing my attention to this film and to the work of Roy Andersson in general.
- 10 In *Concentrationary Cinema*, Griselda Pollock and I suggest that *Nuit et brouillard* is a concentrationary film, not a film about the Holocaust, despite the fact that that is how it is frequently characterised. Other works might usefully be reconsidered in the same way (for example, those of the French Auschwitz survivor Charlotte Delbo), so that the necessary distinction between two separate but overlapping histories (genocide and the concentrationary) can also be made with regard to cultural works.
- 11 Bauman is, however, quite clear on this point: 'Emphatically, this does not mean that we all live daily according to Auschwitz principles. From the fact that the Holocaust is modern, it does not follow that modernity is a Holocaust. The Holocaust is a by-product of the modern drive to a fully designed, fully controlled world, once the drive is getting out of control and running wild' (p. 93).
- 12 Bauman's view on the polemical argument of recent years about the uniqueness or comparability of the Holocaust would be close to that of the French historian Enzo Traverso, who warns us of the dangers of such a polarisation of views:

Those who deny the singularity of Auschwitz are not all 'revisionists'; those who argue for its singularity are sometimes blind to other sites of violence. On both sides of the argument the event can be instrumentalized for dubious purposes. The best way to preserve the memory of a genocide is neither to deny other genocides, nor to erect a religious cult. Today, the Holocaust has its dogmas – its incomparability and its inexplicability – and also has its formidable and fervent advocates. The recognition of the singularity of Auschwitz only has a meaning if it helps to found a fruitful dialectical understanding of the relationship between a memory of the past and a critique of the present, with the ultimate aim of shedding light on the multiple links between our world and the recent past, since which, in the words of Georges Bataille, the image of Man can no longer be dissociated from that of a gas chamber.

(Traverso, 1999, pp. 137–38)

- 13 For a critique of those who admonish Bauman for his Eurocentrism, see Dawson (2020).
- 14 I am referring here to a way of reading the everyday that resembles Freud's reading of trauma, rather than the personal trauma in the lives of Freud and Bauman as the inspiration of their works. For an interesting discussion of the latter, see Eyerman (2013).

Bibliography

- Agamben, G. 1998. *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Andersson, R. (dir). 1991. *World of Glory* [Film]. Gothenburg: Göteborg Film Festival.
- Arendt, H. 1948. The Concentration Camps. *Partisan Review*, XV (7), 743–763.
- Arendt, H. 1958 [1951]. *Origins of Totalitarianism*. London: Allen and Unwin.
- Barthes, R. 1993. 'La Rature' ('Erasure') (postface to Jean Cayrol's, *Les Corps étrangers*). In *Œuvres Complètes, Vol. 2, 1962–1967*. Paris: Editions du Seuil, 592–600.

- Basuyaux, M.-L. 2009. *Témoigner clandestinement: les récits lazaréens de Jean Cayrol*. Paris: Editions Classiques Garnier.
- Bauman, Z. 1991. *Modernity and Ambivalence*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Bauman, Z. 1992. *Mortality, Immortality and Other Life Strategies*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Bauman, Z. 2004. *Wasted Lives: Modernity and Its Outcasts*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Cayrol, J. 1997. *Nuit et brouillard (commentaire)*. Paris: Fayard.
- Coquio, C. 1999. Du Malentendu. In C. Coquio (ed.) *Parler des camps, penser les génocides*. Paris: Albin Michel, 17–86.
- Coquio, C. 2015. *La Littérature en suspens. Écritures de la Shoah: le témoignage et les œuvres*. Paris: L'Arachnéen.
- Davis, M. 2020. Hermeneutics *Contra* Fundamentalism: Zygmunt Bauman's Method for Thinking in Dark Times. *Thesis Eleven*, 156 (1), 27–44.
- Dawson, M. 2020. The War Against Forgetfulness: Sociological Lessons from Bauman's Writings on European Jewry. *Thesis Eleven*, 156 (1), 86–101.
- Eyerman, R. 2013. Social Theory and Trauma. *Acta Sociologica*, 56 (1), 41–53.
- Gunderson, R. 2020. *Making the Familiar Strange: Sociology contra Reification*. London: Routledge.
- Jay, M. 2010. Liquidity Crisis: Zygmunt Bauman and the Incredible Lightness of Modernity. *Theory, Culture and Society*, 27 (6), 95–106.
- Lefebvre, H. 2008. *Critique of Everyday Life*, vol. 1. New York and London: Verso (French original (1947) *Critique de la vie quotidienne*, Paris: L'Arche).
- Lindeperg, S., and Wieviorka, A. 2008. *Univers concentrationnaire et génocide: voir, savoir, comprendre*. Paris: Mille et une nuits.
- Pollock, G., and Silverman, M. 2011. Introduction: Concentrationary Cinema. In G. Pollock and M. Silverman (eds.) *Concentrationary Cinema: Aesthetics as Political Resistance in Alain Resnais's 'Night and Fog'*. New York and Oxford: Berghahn, 1–54.
- Pollock, G., and Silverman, M. (eds.). 2019. *Concentrationary Art: Jean Cayrol, the Lazaran and the Everyday in Post-War European Film, Literature and Music*. New York and Oxford: Berghahn (Includes Cayrol, J., *Lazarus Among Us*, pp. 29–62; French original (1950) *Lazare parmi nous*, Paris: Editions du Seuil).
- Rattansi, A. 2017. *Bauman and Contemporary Sociology: A Critical Analysis*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Resnais, A (dir). 1956. *Night and Fog* [Film]. Paris: Argos Films.
- Rose, J. 2021. Damage: The Silent Forms of Violence Against Women. *The Guardian*, 30 March.
- Rothberg, M. 2009. *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Rothberg, M. 2019. *The Implicated Subject: Beyond Victims and Perpetrators*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Rousset, D. 1947. *The Other Kingdom*, trans. Ramon Guthrie. New York: Reynal and Hitchcock. (French original (1946) *L'Univers concentrationnaire*, Paris: Editions du Minuit).
- Rousset, D. 1951. *A World Apart*. London: Secker and Warburg.
- Sanyal, D. 2015. *Memory and Complicity: Migrations of Holocaust Remembrance*. New York: Fordham University Press.
- Silverman, M. 2013. *Palimpsestic Memory: The Holocaust and Colonialism in French and Francophone Fiction and Film*. New York and Oxford: Berghahn.
- Traverso, E. 1999. La Singularité d'Auschwitz: hypothèses, problèmes et dérivés de la recherche historique. In C. Coquio (ed.) *Parler des camps, penser les génocides*. Paris: Albin Michel, 128–140.

- Vaneigem, R. August 1961. Comments Against Urbansim. *Internationale Situationniste*, no. 6, trans. P. Hammond. Available at: www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/si/comments.html, access 03.08.2017.
- Vetleson, A. J. 2005. *Evil and Human Agency: Understanding Collective Evildoing*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (see Chapter 1, 'The Ordinarity of Modern Evil-doers: A Critique of Zygmunt Bauman's *Modernity and the Holocaust*', pp. 14–51).
- Wieviorka, A. 1998. *L'Ère du témoin*. Paris: Plon.

Off-the-scene

An afterword

Bryan Cheyette

Those who experienced imprisonment (and, more generally, all persons who have gone through harsh experiences) are divided into two distinct categories, with rare intermediate shadings: those who remain silent and those who speak. . . . *We* speak because we are invited to do so.

(Levi, 1988: 121–22)

By 1989, those who had gone through ‘harsh experiences’ during the Second World War (a typical understatement by Primo Levi) had a ready audience of readers, viewers, and listeners. In contrast, those Jewish survivors (as opposed to non-Jewish partisans) who wrote during and straight after the war – even founding figures such as Hannah Arendt, Raul Hilberg, Primo Levi, Elie Wiesel – were not always heard immediately (Waxman, 2006: 100–112). While there were ‘historians in every ghetto, chroniclers in every camp’ (Wiesel, 1977: 10), as Elie Wiesel maintained, a receptive audience for these voices did not exist until after the 1961 Eichmann trial which established an ‘era of the witness’ (Wieviorka, 2006: 145). Without an interlocutor (or ‘invitation’), some survivors remained silent or waited for a more propitious time to speak. Janina and Zygmunt Bauman are exceptions to Levi’s binary rule (‘those who remain silent and those who speak’). They both occupy an ‘intermediate’ place (not quite a ‘grey zone’) between silence and speech.

All forms of memorialisation enact the paradox that the further we travel from a traumatising event, the more it is heard. *Modernity and the Holocaust* prefigured the early 1990s, which was dubbed by Frank Rich the ‘Holocaust Boom’, where the Shoah was memorialised and represented globally to an extraordinary extent within popular culture (Rich, 1994). The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum opened in Washington, DC, in 1993 and, in the same year, Steven Spielberg’s *Schindler’s List* was released and within a few years achieved a vast global audience of over 100 million viewers on the large and small screen. A decade before the ‘boom’, the *Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies* was founded by Geoffrey Hartman in 1982 at Yale University; three years later Claude Lanzmann’s *Shoah* (1985) was premiered in Paris and shown at the Polish-Jewish Institute in Oxford. A short (three-hour) version was broadcast on Polish

television in the same year which Janina and Zygmunt first saw. But, needless to say, without Janina Bauman's *Winter in the Morning: A Young Girl's Life in the Warsaw Ghetto and Beyond, 1939–1945* (1986), it is doubtful whether *Modernity and the Holocaust* would have been written and silence would have prevailed.

Janina Bauman's account of her family's escape from the Warsaw ghetto and survival in rural Poland was largely unknown to her immediate family: 'I never told my husband and daughters the full story of my survival' (J. Bauman, 2006: xi). Lydia Bauman reviewed the memoir on the grounds that her mother's life in the Warsaw ghetto was as much a revelation to her as to everyone else (L. Bauman, 1986: 59–61). Her poignant essay in the collection testifies to her continued fascination with her mother's past. As I have shown elsewhere, *Winter in the Morning* not only inspired *Modernity and the Holocaust* but, more generally, Zygmunt Bauman's decade-long 'Jewish turn' which included many uncollected 'Jewish writings' (Cheyette, 2020). His 'eyes' were 'opened to what we would normally refuse to look upon' (MH: 208). In other words, as Izabella Wagner explores, by breaking her silence Janina Bauman provoked Zygmunt Bauman's partial breaking of his own silence. At the same time, very little of his personal experience during the Second World War is included in his published writings. This includes his witnessing the liberation of the concentration and extermination camp Majdanek at the age of 19: 'The corpses were still lying around in heaps, their recycling begun yet unfinished' (Wagner, 2020: 93).

How can one 'see' such horror? 'Hour after hour of watching *Shoah* the terrible, humiliating truth is uncovered and paraded in its obscene nakedness' (MH: 202). One etymology for 'obscene' is 'off-the-scene' which derives from the Latin *obscaena* or Greek *ob skene*, meaning off-stage, not fit to be seen (Coetzee, 2003: 159). After three decades, it is possible to gain a perspective on what is 'off-the-scene' in *Modernity and the Holocaust* and place it next to that which is explicitly rendered. 'Obscene nakedness' is as much a reference to the corpses at Majdanek 'lying around' as to the film *Shoah* which famously included no documentary footage of the events. As Griselda Pollock notes perceptively, Zygmunt Bauman's reading of *Shoah* is simplified and evokes an historical trauma ('humiliating truth') which should be read next to his reductive conclusion: 'how few men with guns were needed to murder millions' (MH: 202). That which is off-the-scene, as the collection makes abundantly clear, is just as important as that which is made explicit. His non-identity as a non-survivor, non-victim, and non-Jewish Jew (*pace* Isaac Deutscher) allowed him to perceive that which was hidden or invisible. In contrast to his non-identities, his professed identity in *Modernity and the Holocaust* was as a generalising sociologist. But, as a recent collection has shown unwittingly, reducing Zygmunt Bauman to the discipline of sociology flattens that which cannot be ordered, categorised, and objectified (Blackshaw, 2016). In contrast, he came to characterise his intellectual project in the following terms:

[N]on-sequiturs, ambiguities, contradictions, incompatibilities, inconsistencies and sheer contingencies for which human thoughts and deeds are

notorious should not be viewed as temporary deficiencies. . . . They are rather the crucial, constitutive features of the human modality of being in the world.
(Z. Bauman, 2008: 235)

That which was once off-the-scene for the disciplinary sociologist became ‘constitutive’.

That is why Zygmunt Bauman’s exilic Jewishness should not be reified, but instead should remain ambivalent and indeterminate, nor should his life-experience be viewed one-dimensionally (*pace* Joanna Tokarska-Bakir) as a continual victim of antisemitism (Cheyette, 2020: 69–74). Wagner is absolutely right in arguing that *Winter in the Morning* precipitated a sustained and profound engagement with his and other forms of Jewishness which included his continued engagement with Polish history and culture, the theory of ‘allosemitism’ and the Holocaust (the genocidal potential *within* modernity), a lost Central Europe, and the failure of European nation-states to assimilate the ‘Jewish stranger’. Jewish jokes, the Hebrew Bible, and the textual homelands of many and varied Jewish intellectuals or ‘interpreters’ were also part of the mix and figure predominantly in *Modernity and Ambivalence*. His largely forgotten articles of this period, in stark contrast to his books, viewed this project unashamedly through the many-faced prism of Jewish history, creativity, assimilation, estrangement, and exiles. And yet, his ‘Jewish turn’ had an inbuilt tension as he wanted to incorporate the particularity of Jewish history into a more general social theory of modernity.

Moving from the particular to the general or from the ‘I’ to the ‘we’ (and vice versa), as many of the contributors to this splendid collection note, point to the limitations of *Modernity and the Holocaust* as well as its enduring influence. The complex relationship between Janina Bauman’s testimony and Zygmunt Bauman’s sociological treatise is a unique instance of the tension between individual experience and social theory. On the one hand, *Winter in the Morning* is said to have been the catalyst for *Modernity and the Holocaust* but, as Griselda Pollock rightly demonstrates, generalising from such an uncategoryisable text – part memoir, part diary, part fiction, part (anti-) *bildungsroman* – is inevitably facile. Janina Bauman’s testimony is hardly mentioned explicitly (apart from the preface and dedication) and nor are any other individual accounts of those who survived the atrocities. They are off-the-scene or deemed too emotional to be representable even as ‘histories’: ‘Overwhelmed by the emotions which even a perfunctory reading of the Holocaust records can arouse, some of the . . . authors are prone to exaggerate. Some of their statements sound incredible – and certainly unduly alarmist’ (MH: 87). Here Zygmunt Bauman’s rationality, against his own thinking, is deemed superior to the over-emotional Holocaust historian.

Hannah Arendt, as always, is influential here. As she indicates in her formative essay, ‘We Refugees’ (1943), it can be more ethical to speak generally, particularly when the individual survivor recognises themselves as an ‘anomalous minority’ (Levi, 1988: 64), one of the few who lived. At the very least, Arendt recognises the difficulty, from the beginning, of moving from the plural to the singular not

least when conventional language ('we don't like to be called "refugees"') categorises rather than captures individual experience. Such are the hazards involved in generalising from personal experience (Arendt, 1943: 264). And yet, there is a counterargument made most notably by three non-Jewish Polish Auschwitz survivors who Janina and Zygmunt had read. These partisans, Tadeusz Borowski, together with Janusz Nel Siedlecki and Krystyn Olszewski, collected their 'Auschwitz stories' straight after the war in a book entitled *Byliśmy w Oświęcimiu* (1946) [*We Were in Auschwitz*]. Their mutual perspective discounted the generalising principle: "'They' is always someone, not us, society. But 'I' reaches everyone. Everyone feels a shared responsibility' (Drewnowski, 2007: xi). As Borowski maintained: 'It is impossible to write about Auschwitz impersonally' (Borowski, 1967: 22). Perhaps this is another departure? Janina Bauman follows the conventions of her Polish compatriots, Borowski, Olszewski, and Siedlecki, and writes personally, whereas Zygmunt Bauman follows the rationalising anti-rationalism of the German (-Jewish) Frankfurt School and attempts, with only partial success, to write impersonally. No wonder Zygmunt Bauman struggled to bridge the partition 'between what we used to call "Eastern" and "Western" Europe' (Z. Bauman, 1991b: 137).

Here the dedication to *Modernity and the Holocaust* offers an insight: 'To Janina and all the others who survived to tell the truth' (MH: ii). This speaks to the critical orthodoxy which arose in response to Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (1964). This orthodoxy, still prevailing at the time that *Modernity and the Holocaust* was being written, privileged the victim's experience over the generalising and amoral social theorist who dismissed these experiences (Arendt, Bruno Bettelheim, and Raul Hilberg loomed large in the 1960s and 1970s). The foremost spokesperson for the orthodoxy was Elie Wiesel who personified the rise of the 'moral witness' (Dean, 2019: 14–21) and maintained precisely that only survivors can 'tell the truth' about the Shoah. As Wiesel put it in a lecture, 'Rabbis and scholars, merchants and cobblers, anonymous people – all served as historians, as witnesses to history' (Wiesel, 1977: 11). For Wiesel, and others – Saul Friedlander, Alvin Rosenfeld, Lucy Dawidowicz, George Steiner – it was the victims, above all, who were the unmediated witnesses to history. Writing in the late 1980s, Michael Marrus noted the extent to which survivors felt 'violated by many historians' efforts and are far more comfortable with acts of commemoration and the compilation of eye-witness testimony' (Marrus, 1988: 3). Whereas Wiesel wanted to 'consecrate' the experience of the Shoah, the generalist wished to 'apply the tools of historical, sociological and political analysis to the events of the war years and to understand what happened to European Jewry as one would understand any other history' (Marrus, 1988: 6). It would be a mistake to underestimate the gulf, at the time that *Modernity and the Holocaust* was written, between survivor-historians and those, outside of the event, who merely applied the 'tools of analysis'. Wiesel underpinned this rift by defining survivor testimony in unhelpful supersessionist terms as a wholly 'new literature' which

reduced the complexities of testimony (subjective and objective; narrated and factual) to one of its many aspects:

There are the witnesses and there is their testimony. If the Greeks invented Tragedy, the Romans the epistle, and the Renaissance the Sonnet, our generation invented a new literature, that of testimony. . . . We have all been witnesses and we all feel we have to bear testimony for the future.

(Wiesel, 1977: 9)

At the time, very few were communicating across the divide between truth-revealing testimony and generalising sociology or history which makes the complementary work of Janina and Zygmunt Bauman particularly significant. Not least as their wartime experiences were completely different: 'I was in Poland during the Warsaw uprising, my regiment was on one side of the river, Janina on the other' (Bielefeld, 2002: 113). As a witness, rather than survivor, Zygmunt Bauman understood all too well that he would always remain on the other side of the river. Both his life-experience and *weltanschauung* (in so far as he wrote as a Frankfurt School-inspired sociologist) could not be more dissimilar to that of Janina Bauman's.

As many of the essays in the collection note, *Modernity and the Holocaust* is indebted to the political scientist (now regarded as a historian) Raul Hilberg. *The Destruction of the European Jews* (1985 [1961]) followed the work of Hilberg's doctoral supervisor and mentor, Franz L. Neumann, who was part of the Frankfurt School in exile and had published *Behemoth: The Structure and Practice of National Socialism, 1933–1944* (1944), a flawed albeit early account of the rise of Nazism. Made up of three volumes, Hilberg's book, however, took nearly a decade to be published and was initially rejected by most major university presses and by the Yad Vashem institute in Jerusalem (Hilberg, 1996: 105–121). His *magnum opus* is rightly described as a 'masterful reading of German documents' and remains 'unsurpassed as a survey of the destruction process' (Marrus, 1988: 5). But *The Destruction of the European Jews* completely discounts the experience of Holocaust victims and is reliant on (persecutory) German sources, which was why Yad Vashem did not want to be associated with it. In discounting the experience of the Jewish victims (not least the leaders of the *Judenräte*), Hilberg particularly influenced Arendt. Near the beginning of his account was the following simplified statement which constructed European Jewry as passive, non-resisting agents:

Without regard to cost, the bureaucratic machine, operating with accelerating speed and ever-widening destructive effect, proceeded to annihilate the European Jews. The Jewish community, unable to switch to resistance, increased its cooperation with the tempo of the German measures, thus hastening its own destruction.

(Hilberg, 1985 [1961]: 24)

In this reading, the victims of the Shoah were essentially voiceless and determined by a quasi-social Darwinist, quasi-Marxian, form of history (or should that

be History?). This comes close to blaming the victim. How was it possible for Zygmunt Bauman to account equally for both his beloved wife's testimony and Hilberg's 'unsurpassed, magisterial study' (MH: 9)? As Dominic Williams shows astutely, the chapter on 'Soliciting the Cooperation of the Victims' (the word 'cooperation' echoing Hilberg above) does provide the victims with agency and with an affective dimension. But *The Destruction of the European Jews* directly influenced the rational anti-rationalism of *Modernity and the Holocaust* not least as the 'machinery of destruction', in Hilberg's words, was understood to be 'structurally no different from organised German society as a whole' (Hilberg, 1985 [1961]: 264). What was implicit in Hilberg – 'The machinery of destruction was the organised community in one of its special roles' (264) – Zygmunt Bauman made explicit in his counter-sociology. The Shoah was a genocidal possibility within civilised society, not merely an aberration caused by the collapse of civilisation.

* * *

Looking back at *Modernity and the Holocaust* after 30 years, and reading the stimulating responses in this collection, it is clear that Zygmunt Bauman's path-breaking work is above all Janus-faced. It is time-bound, as Larry Ray and Tokarska-Bakir argue, written before the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. The subsequent opening up of the archives in the former Soviet Union in the 1990s transformed radically our understanding of 'the Holocaust'. As Timothy Snyder has argued influentially (contra Hilberg), 'the Jews killed in the Holocaust were about as likely to be shot as to be gassed' (Snyder, 2010: xiv). For Snyder, the Holocaust is part of the 'bloodlands' (from Central Europe to Western Russia) which was a death zone where 14 million civilians were murdered by Hitler and Stalin between 1933 and 1945. Here the focus is on the eastern front before the death camps in Poland did their worst. Within six months of the German invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941, half a million Jews were slaughtered in what is now known as the 'Holocaust by bullets'. By the end of the war, over 1.5 million Jews were killed in trenches and ravines (or crammed into gas vans) on the outskirts of the 'towns and villages of the Ukraine, Belarus, Russia and other republics of the USSR' (Desbois, 2008: vii). Only about half of those missing are accounted for today and incriminating evidence of the 'barbarization of warfare' is difficult to obtain (Cesarani, 1994: 88; Lower, 2021: 1). It was severely prohibited to take photographs of the Jewish or civilian killings and testimonial evidence from Operation Barbarossa is much rarer than Polish ghetto diaries or concentration camp writings (Vice, 2019: 88–100). These improvised civilian murders eventually followed a ghastly pattern but remain off-the-scene not least as they were often 'personal' and 'primitive':

The Soviets and the Germans relied upon technologies that were hardly novel even in the 1930s and 1940s: internal combustion, railways, firearms, pesticides, barbed wire.

No matter which technology was used, the killing was personal. People who starved were observed, often from watchtowers, by those who denied them food. People who were shot were seen through the sights of rifles at very close range.

(Snyder, 2010: xv)

Although Snyder is locating the Jewish genocide in a wider context, as Zygmunt Bauman did from the start (MH: x), Snyder's approach does reinforce more recent historiography which characterises the 'dispersed Holocaust' (Vice, 2019: 88) on the eastern front. The intimate nature of the Jewish mass killings in trenches (close to where the victims lived and often shot by their near neighbours) contrasts with the death camps in Poland. As Hilberg notes, 'in essence, the killers in the occupied USSR moved to the victims, whereas outside this arena the victims were brought to the killers' (Hilberg, 1985 [1961]: 99). 'The Holocaust', in other words, cannot be reduced to detached and industrialised murder (metonymically 'Auschwitz') that was foregrounded in *Modernity and the Holocaust*. As Vetlesen and Palmer illustrate, the 'Holocaust by bullets', rather than 'Auschwitz', is akin to the experience of ethnic cleansing and genocide in Bosnia and Rwanda. There are, in other words, many different kinds of mass killings that make up 'the Holocaust'. It was impossible to know at the time, but *Modernity and the Holocaust* was engaged with the predominant version of the Jewish genocide in the 1980s and a construction of modernity in relation to this history that was essentially Western European. Palmer rightly argues that non-Western forms of modernity, with equally diverse genocidal potentials, complement a Western model. As early as *Life in Fragments* (1995), Bauman was to recognise much the same global possibility beyond the 'bloodlands' of 'solid' modernity: 'The modern era had been founded on genocide, and proceeded through genocide. Somehow the shame of yesterday's massacres proved a poor safeguard against the slaughters of today' (Z. Bauman, 1995: 193–194, 202–204).

There is, ironically, a clue in this formulation as to why 'the shame' of 'yesterday's massacres' have proven a 'poor safeguard'. Williams and Pollock both rightly stress the affective, poetic ('metaphorical'), written style that complicates the disciplinary and ordering nature of disciplinary sociology. Affective language was something that Bauman was to develop so that it eventually characterised his 'liquid modern' style. In fact, the shift to metaphorical thinking (from disciplinary thinking) is the formal aspect of his reconceptualisation of postmodernity (Davis, 2013; Cheyette, 2014). At the heart of this affective dimension in *Modernity and the Holocaust* is the notion of 'shame' as the Other to rationality ('Afterthought: Rationality and Shame'). As Ruth Leys has shown, this emphasis prefigured an astonishing number of subsequent books on shame by major theorists. She argues that this renewed emphasis on shame has replaced 'guilt' (or 'survivor guilt') as a means of understanding and conceptualising 'Auschwitz and after' (Leys, 2007: 1–16).

One reason for the shift from guilt to shame is that 'feelings of shame concern aspects of selfhood that are imagined to be amenable to correction or change' (Leys, 2007: 124). This is certainly the case for Zygmunt Bauman who argues

that ‘shame’ is an ‘indispensable condition of victory over the slow-acting poison – the pernicious legacy of the Holocaust’ (MH: 204). The ‘pernicious legacy’ in *Modernity and the Holocaust* is the cult of ‘survival’ – reaching its apotheosis in Spielberg’s *Schindler’s List* as Jonathan Catlin notes – which means ‘putting self-preservation above moral duty’ (MH: 207). Self-preservation may well have made ‘rational’ sense but it was, as Primo Levi has shown in his essay ‘Shame’, at the expense of others and strengthens the concentrationary universe. After sharing a dripping tap with Alberto rather than Daniele, both Italian compatriots, Levi feels a tremendous sense of shame:

I was not able to decide then and I am not able to decide even now, but shame was there and is there, concrete, heavy, perennial. Daniele is dead now, but in our meetings as survivors, fraternal and affectionate, the veil of that act of omission, that unshared glass of water, stood between us, transparent, not expressed, but perceptible and ‘costly’.

(Levi, 1988: 61)

In Zygmunt Bauman’s terms, Levi’s pre-social sense of ‘shame’ is a form of humanising morality that enables Levi to question an amoral survivalism at all costs (‘shame’ for Levi was another kind of ‘cost’). According to Leys, the danger of the recent turn to ‘shame’ is that it focuses on the question of ‘personal identity’ or ‘difference’ (Leys, 2007: 13). Here Zygmunt Bauman is worth re-reading as he is clearly articulating the emotion of ‘shame’ in a wider social context (‘the pernicious legacy of the Holocaust’). As Levi wrote, precipitously, ‘there is another, vaster shame, the shame of the world’ (Levi, 1988: 65).

The rejection of the ‘*rationality of self-preservation*’ in the name of a pre-social ‘*moral duty*’ (MH: 207) unites Janina Bauman’s testimony with Zygmunt Bauman’s sociology on the last page of *Modernity and the Holocaust*. That some acted morally (and risked their chances of survival) by helping to save Janina Bauman’s family illustrates that (*pace* Hilberg) the machinery of destruction or ‘technology of evil’ ‘can be resisted’ (MH: 207). No wonder both Janina and Zygmunt spoke as one when opposing the amoral survivalism of *Schindler’s List* (Farrar, 1994: 38–39). They opposed equally the anti-Polish bias in Lanzmann’s *Shoah*. Omer Bartov, in solidarity, speaks of Lanzmann’s ‘obsession’ in *Shoah* with the ‘complicity of the Polish population in the genocide’ and their ‘swift takeover of abandoned Jewish property and its amazing ability to erase the Jews from its memory’ (Bartov, 1997: 56). In contrast with the Poles, there is, Bartov argues, a marked ‘lack of interest’ in *Shoah* with both ‘the Germans’ (qua Germans) and with French complicity with Nazism (56). Janina and Zygmunt anticipated Bartov in this regard and viewed *Shoah* together through sceptical Polish eyes.

After all, *Shoah* excluded those Poles who helped around 28,000 Jews after they escaped the Warsaw ghetto. Gunnar Paulsson characterises the Jewish escapees as a ‘Secret City’ within Warsaw (Paulsson, 2002: 3) and locates ‘Janina Lewinson’ and her family in this collective context. He recognises that *Winter in the Morning* is told with ‘exceptional clarity and detail’ but is ‘quite typical’ of the

Warsaw ghetto ‘memoir literature’: ‘the constant moving from place to place, the repeated threat of blackmail and denunciation, the problem of money, the dependence on the goodwill of a large number of people who were essentially strangers’ (Paulsson, 2002: 52). As Janina Bauman wrote, ‘for the people who sheltered us our presence . . . boosted what was noble in them, or what was base. Sometimes it divided the [host] family, at other times it brought the family together in a shared endeavour’ (J. Bauman, 1986: 141). Lydia Bauman illustrates this complicated story of ‘noble’ and ‘base’ strangers by going back to her mother’s archive. Perhaps ‘moral duty’ is too facile a concept as *Winter in the Morning* is an all too human story of *both* selflessness and solidarity as well as greed and betrayal. But it is clear that Janina Bauman’s memoir underpinned *Modernity and the Holocaust* and that hers, and 28,000 other stories of hiding and escape, aided by strangers, were off-the-scene in Lanzmann’s *Shoah*.

* * *

With the knowledge that many thousands saved themselves from the machinery of destruction, Jonathan Catlin is quite right to characterise Zygmunt Bauman as an ‘enlightened catastrophist’ or soft catastrophist in relation to many of the proponents of the Frankfurt School. Adorno and Horkheimer obviously influenced his thinking (Z. Bauman, 1991a: 17), but he was determined to make their work his own. Rather like Edward Said’s appropriation of Adorno, Bauman’s Adorno may well have as much in common with his own preoccupations than anything else (Cheyette, 2012). There is no question that Zygmunt Bauman distanced himself from Adorno’s hard catastrophism which, as Catlin shows, characterised ‘progress’ minimally as the ‘prevention and avoidance’ of Nuclear Armageddon. The figure of Walter Benjamin – the ‘most important *German* aesthetician . . . of the twentieth century’ (Z. Bauman, 1991a: 17) – was clearly more amenable to Bauman’s fluid and uncertain metaphorical thinking as he showed in his essay, ‘Walter Benjamin: The Intellectual’ (Z. Bauman, 1993: 47–57).

I would go so far as to argue that *Modernity and the Holocaust* can be read as a book-length elucidation of Benjamin’s famous thesis: ‘There is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism’ (Benjamin, 1970: 258). Zygmunt Bauman extended this dictum by arguing that ‘solid’ modernity from the ‘start historicized and internalized the status of the barbarian’ which became a ‘kind of fifth column’ at the heart of ‘civilization’ always threatening to undermine it (Stone, 2003: 249–250). Such barbarism was supposedly ‘exorcised with the sophisticated products of technology, scientific management and the concentrated power of the state’ (MH: 46). Civilising structures attempted (to no avail) to expunge barbarism from within. The quest for order, or the exorcism of the barbaric, resulted in a ‘particularly bitter and relentless war against ambivalence’ (Z. Bauman, 1991a: 3) which applied above all to the era of ‘solid’ modernity (most egregiously Nazism and Stalinism). By the time of his Adorno Prize – just before he began to theorise ‘liquid modernity’ – he was clear that seeing the ‘royal road to perfection in legalised violence is no longer an

option' (Z. Bauman, 1998: 5). What is more, as he maintained in the book, and in response to many misreadings of *Modernity and the Holocaust*, 'emphatically, this does not mean that we all live daily according to Auschwitz principles. From the fact that the Holocaust is modern, it does not follow that modernity is the Holocaust' (MH: 93).

That is why Benjamin, rather than Adorno, is Zygmunt Bauman's angelic interlocutor in *Modernity and the Holocaust* and why he explicitly rejects *The Authoritarian Personality* (1950) by Adorno among others (MH: 152–154). Rather than the hard catastrophist, who focuses just on potential barbaric outcomes or fascist personalities, the soft catastrophist understands that 'barbarism is not produced by modernity, but rather inheres within it from the start' (Stone, 2003: 255). That is why there is a genocidal or extreme potential within the 'concentrated power of the state' as well as within racial, and other structurally oppressive discourses, which have taken a 'civilised' configuration since the Enlightenment. Zygmunt Bauman as a soft catastrophist, after Benjamin, differs from Max Silverman's account of *Modernity and the Holocaust* as he does not follow the French Marxian tradition which focuses on a dehumanising 'concentrationary universe' beyond the camps. Universalising the 'concentrationary' is given its harshest expression in the Auschwitz stories of Borowski. His 'concentration camp mentality' (Borowski, 1967: 122, 176) encompassed both the temporal – going back to slavery in ancient times and forward to a dystopian future where Nazism has triumphed (Young, 1988: 104–106) – and an extreme form of spatiality: 'The camp has been sealed off tight. Not a single prisoner, not one solitary louse, can sneak through the gate' (Borowski, 1967: 29). Such spatial and temporal absolutes structure the concentrationary universe so that we can only live, even after the camp itself is over, 'according to Auschwitz principles'.

But it was not just 'Auschwitz principles' which Borowski articulated. The master–slave dialectic dominating past, present, and future is based on a deeply pessimistic version of Marxism. Here Borowski and David Rousset meet. As Michael Rothberg argues, Rousset's concentrationary universe, not unlike Borowski's 'concentration camp mentality', drew on a 'Marxist conceptualization of society' in order to relate the 'specific fact of the camps to the question of human history in general' (Rothberg, 2000: 116). As the editors to the collection make clear, Zygmunt Bauman refrained from mainstream Marxist interpretations of the Holocaust (from either Eastern or Western Europe). He understood all too well the genocidal potential within 'communist barbarism' (Z. Bauman, 1998: 5) and lived in Stalinist Poland where Jewish survivors of Nazism were universalised out of existence (or silenced in the case of Janina and Zygmunt) as generalised 'victims of fascism'. Marxist grand narratives, in other words, can lead to a form of hard catastrophism which *Modernity and the Holocaust* specifically disavows. Here the elision between the concentration camp and modern capitalism – 'the dependence of man's condition on economic and social structures, the true material relations that determine behaviour' (Rousset, 1947: 171) – is exactly the kind of determinism that Zygmunt Bauman had long since eschewed. After all, by 1967, he had rejected the idea of 'the human' as a 'reactive being . . . determined

by outer forces' (Z. Bauman, 1967: 13). How else can he conceptualise a pre-social Levinasian morality to understand not only Janina Bauman's 'truth' but the myriad of other hidden forms of resistance which her experience represents? How else can he write from the 'off-the-scene' position of those marginal 'non-sequiturs, ambiguities, contradictions, incompatibilities, inconsistencies and sheer contingencies' which include, needless to say, the 'anomalous minority' who escaped the Nazi onslaught?

By locating structural forms of oppression as a potential 'extreme' *within* modern civilisation, *Modernity and the Holocaust* remains as relevant today as it was in 1989. It speaks to a wide variety of 'thinking actionists' (Adorno, 2005: 290) encompassing, most prominently, the disruptive decolonising agenda and the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement as many of these actionists live the barbarism inherent in our still hegemonic notion of 'Western' civilisation. As Catlin demonstrates, it also enables us to understand the adiaphorisation with regard to the slow planetary catastrophe brought about by the 'climate emergency' as acknowledged in Zygmunt Bauman's later thought. Such planetary humanism addresses the mass migration of refugees denied their humanity in the face of global indifference. It also speaks to that which is off-the-scene in *Modernity and the Holocaust* not least Zygmunt Bauman's historical trauma:

On the way to the camps, their future inmates are stripped of every single element of their identities except one: that of a stateless, placeless, functionless and 'paperless' refugee. Inside the fences of the camp, they are pulped into a faceless mass, having been denied access to the elementary amenities from which identities are drawn and the usual yarns from which identity is woven.
(Z. Bauman, 2007: 39–40)

The great strength of Zygmunt Bauman is his ability to move from the local to the global and the singular to the universal. This strength has enabled the decolonising movement, in relation to 'decolonial Judaism', to learn a great deal from *Modernity and the Holocaust*:

Notwithstanding the fact that Jews (especially pre-Holocaust European Jews) were largely victims of civilization and not of barbarism, the West portrays itself as the protector and liberator of the now-civilized Jews. . . . The irony is that the same Western narrative responsible for perpetrating the first Holocaust has assigned itself the role of pre-empting a second. Western civilization, tragically, uses the memory of some of its past victims to justify the same dualism that annihilated them. . . . Once barbarians among other barbarians, Jews progressively became naturalized as part of Western civilization.
(Slabodsky, 2014: 7)

Santiago Slabodsky's solution to this tragic irony is for Jews to reclaim a radical Jewish tradition, allied with other movements of the oppressed, as a resource for 'barbaric thinking'. In this way the dialectic between civilisation and barbarism

can be denaturalised and the hegemony of European colonial thought confronted (Frosh, 2020: 174–175). After all, the ubiquity of the Holocaust has turned an exception into a norm. Walter Benjamin who, in attempting to ‘escape Nazi-dominated Europe’, noted that ‘legal exception and legal norms had exchanged places, that the state of exception had become the rule’ (Z. Bauman, 2011: 127). Benjamin’s ‘legal exception’ under Nazism has been taken up by Giorgio Agamben’s version of a universal ‘state of exception’ under liquid modernity which ‘tends increasingly to appear as the dominant paradigm of government within contemporary politics’ (Z. Bauman, 2011: 127). These frequent ‘states of emergency’ (from the ‘war on terror’ to the ‘global pandemic’) illustrate the extent to which ‘global civilization’ is potentially under threat: ‘a spectre hovers over the planet: a spectre of xenophobia’ (Gane, 2004: 36). In the light of the climate emergency and global xenophobia, we may well have to adopt the emancipatory stance of the barbarian, confront the state of exception, and become an inner exile. This was Zygmunt Bauman’s position, insisting on a resistant ‘spiritual mobility’, which could also be a manifesto for the thinking actionist:

The resolute determination to stay ‘nonsocialized’; the consent to integrate solely with the condition of non-integration; the resistance – often painful and agonizing, yet ultimately victorious – to the overwhelming pressure of place, old or new; the rugged defence of the right to pass judgement and choose; the embracing of ambivalence or calling it into being – these are, we may say, the constitutive features of ‘exile’. All of them – please note – refer to attitude and strategy, to spiritual rather than physical mobility.

(Z. Bauman, 2000b: 208–209)

References

- Adorno, T. W. 2005. *Critical Models: Interventions and Catchwords*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Adorno, T. W., Frenkel-Brunswick, E., Levinson, D. and Sanford, R.N. 1950. *The Authoritarian Personality*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Arendt, H. 1943. We Refugees. In Jerome Kohn and Ron H. Feldman (eds.) *Hannah Arendt: The Jewish Writings*. New York: Schocken Books [2007], 264–274.
- Arendt, H. 1964. *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*. London: Faber and Faber.
- Bartov, O. 1997. Spielberg’s Oskar: Hollywood Tries Evil. In Yosefa Loshitzky (ed.) *Spielberg’s Holocaust: Critical Perspectives on ‘Schindler’s List’*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Bauman, J. 1986. *Winter in the Morning*. London: Virago.
- Bauman, J. 2006. *Beyond These Walls*. London: Virago.
- Bauman, L. 1986. Remaining Human in Inhuman Conditions. *The Jewish Quarterly*, 33 (4), 59–61.
- Bauman, Z. 1967. The Image of Man in Modern Sociology. *The Polish Sociological Bulletin*, 1, 12–21.

- Bauman, Z. 1991a. *Modernity and Ambivalence*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Bauman, Z. 1991b. The Social Manipulation of Morality: Moralizing Actors, Adiaphorizing Action. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 8 (1), 137–151.
- Bauman, Z. 1993. Walter Benjamin: The Intellectual. *New Formations*, 20, 47–57.
- Bauman, Z. 1995. *Life in Fragments: Essays in Postmodern Morality*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Bauman, Z. 1998. *Ansprache des Preisträgers anlässlich der Überreichung des Theodor W. Adorno-Preises 1998*. Bauman Archive, University of Leeds.
- Bauman, Z. 2000b. *Liquid Modernity*. Polity: Cambridge.
- Bauman, Z. 2007. *Liquid Times*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Bauman, Z. 2008. Pro Domo Sua. In M. H. Jacobsen and P. Poder (eds.) *The Sociology of Zygmunt Bauman*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 231–240.
- Bauman, Z. 2011. *Collateral Damage: Social Inequalities in a Global Age*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Benjamin, W. 1970. *Illuminations*. London: Jonathan Cape.
- Bielefeld, U. 2002. Conversation with Janina Bauman and Zygmunt Bauman. *Thesis Eleven*, 70, 113–117.
- Blackshaw, T. (ed.). 2016. *The New Bauman Reader*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Borowski, T. 1967. *This Way for the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen*. New York: Viking Penguin.
- Cesarani, D. (ed.). 1994. *The Final Solution: Origins and Implementations*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Cheyette, B. 2012. A Glorious Achievement: Edward Said and the Last Jewish Intellectual. In Tobias Döring and Mark Stein (eds.) *Edward Said's Translocations Essays in Secular Criticism*. New York: Routledge, 74–94.
- Cheyette, B. 2014. *Diasporas of the Mind: Jewish and Postcolonial Writing and the Nightmare of History*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Cheyette, B. 2020. Zygmunt Bauman's Window: From Jews to Strangers and Back Again. *Thesis Eleven*, 156 (1), 67–85.
- Coetzee, J. M. 2003: *Elizabeth Costello*. London: Viking.
- Davis, M. (ed.). 2013. *Liquid Sociology: Metaphor in Zygmunt Bauman's Analysis of Modernity*. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Dean, C. 2019. *The Moral Witness: Trials and Testimony after Genocide*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Desbois, P. 2008. *The Holocaust by Bullets*. New York: St. Martin's Griffin.
- Drewnowski, T. 2007. *Postal Indiscretions: The Correspondence of Tadeusz Borowski*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.
- Farrar, M. 1994. Zygmunt and Janina Bauman on Schindler's List. *Red Pepper* 2, July 1994, 38–39.
- Frosh, S. 2020. Psychoanalysis as Decolonial Judaism. *Psychoanalysis, Culture & Society*, 25, 174–193.
- Gane, N. 2004. Zygmunt Bauman: Liquid Sociality. In *The Future of Social Theory*. London: Continuum, 17–46.
- Hilberg, R. 1985 [1961]. *The Destruction of the European Jews*. New York: Holmes & Meier.
- Hilberg, R. 1996. *The Politics of Memory: The Journey of a Holocaust Historian*. Chicago: Ivan R. Dee.
- Lanzmann, C. (dir). 1985. *Shoah* [Film]. France: Les Films Aleph, Historia Films.

- Levi, P. 1988. *The Drowned and the Saved*. London: Michael Joseph.
- Leys, R. 2007. *From Guilt to Shame: Auschwitz and After*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Lower, W. 2021. *The Ravine: A Family, A Photograph, A Holocaust Massacre Revealed*. London: Apollo.
- Marrus, M. 1988. *The Holocaust in History*. London: Wiedenfeld & Nicolson.
- Nel Siedlecki, J., Olszewski, K., and Borowski, T. 1946. *Byliśmy w Oświęcimiu*. Monachium: Oficyna Warszawska na Obczyźnie.
- Neumann, F. L., 1944. *Behemoth*. New York: Oxford University Press, 475–476.
- Paulsson, G. S. 2002. *Secret City: The Hidden Jews of Warsaw 1940–1945*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Rich, F. 1994. The Holocaust Boom: Memory as an Art Form. *New York Times*, 7 April.
- Rothberg, M. 2000. *Traumatic Realism: The Demands of Holocaust Representation*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Rousset, D. 1947. *The Other Kingdom*. New York: Reynal & Hitchcock.
- Slabodsky, S. 2014. *Decolonial Judaism: Triumphal Failures of Barbaric Thinking*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Snyder, T. 2010. *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin*. New York: Basic Books.
- Stone, D. 2003. *Constructing the Holocaust*. London: Vallentine Mitchell.
- Vice, S. 2019. “Beyond Words”: Representing the “Holocaust by Bullets”. *Holocaust Studies*, 25 (1–2): 88–100.
- Wagner, I. 2020. *Bauman: The Biography*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Waxman, Z. 2006. *Writing the Holocaust: Identity, Testimony, Representation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Wiesel, E. 1977. The Holocaust as Literary Inspiration. In *Dimensions of the Holocaust: Lectures at Northwestern University*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.
- Wieviorka, A. 2006. *The Era of the Witness*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Young, J. 1988. *Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust: Narrative and the Consequences of Interpretation*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Index

- academia 153–154, 158–160, 166–171, 186, 221
- ‘activistic image of man’ 4
- adiaphorization 7, 13, 17, 19, 47, 53, 118, 199, 212, 228, 242
- Adorno, Theodor W. 20, 27–28, 113, 199–212, 214, 240–241
- A Dream of Belonging* 4, 152, 154–155, 195
- aesthetics 91–92, 119–120, 129, 177–179, 183
- Africa 127–129, 131–132
- Agamben, Giorgio 222, 226, 243
- agency 4, 10–11, 28–29, 60, 75–78, 80–86, 89, 93–94, 99, 106–107, 113–114, 117–118, 131–135, 168, 175, 177, 180–181, 184–185, 185, 192, 194, 213–214, 224, 231, 237, 244
- allosemitism 9–10, 165, 206, 234
- Andersson, Roy 224–225
- anomie 47–48
- Anthropocene 6, 200, 213–214
- anthropology 4, 9, 11, 41, 167, 171
- anti-: -enlightenment 199, 211; -fascism 2; -modern 27–28, 61, 202; -Polish 239; -rationalism 235, 237
- antisemitism 1, 3–4, 6, 9, 16–17, 28–29, 32–33, 40–44, 46, 48, 52, 59, 95, 97–99, 106, 146, 154, 166, 174, 180, 189, 192, 206–207, 218, 234
- anti-zionism 154
- archive 90–92, 183–184, 190, 232, 240
- Arendt, Hannah 7–8, 10, 14–15, 28, 35, 71, 76, 79, 85, 114, 139, 179–181, 184–186, 194–195, 199, 205–208, 218–221, 226, 228, 232, 234–236
- Auschwitz 2, 26, 29, 33, 35, 45, 59, 62–64, 66, 70, 117, 126, 188, 192, 209–210, 213, 223, 229, 235, 238, 241
- authoritarianism 27, 90, 96, 113, 207, 218, 226, 241
- banality 121, 180–181, 184–185, 207, 218, 221, 225, 235
- barbarism 6, 11–12, 16, 27, 60, 92, 126–127, 135, 138, 218, 220, 240, 242
- Bauer, Yehuda 8, 93–94, 118
- Bauman, Janina 2, 5–6, 10, 36, 52, 59, 78, 80, 125, 145, 147, 149, 153, 155–158, 160, 162–169, 171, 173–179, 181–183, 186–192, 194–195, 232–236, 239–242
- Begriffsgeschichte 208
- Beilharz, Peter 179
- Beispiellosigkeit 111
- Benjamin, Walter 209, 211–212, 240–241, 243
- Best, Shaun 29, 79
- Bildungsroman 186–187, 206, 234
- biography 3, 5–6, 79, 113, 126, 200
- Bloch, Ernst 214
- Błoński, Jan 6
- bloodlands 13, 237–238
- Borowski, Tadeusz 235, 241
- Bosnia 12–13, 111–112, 118–119, 121–123, 128, 206, 238
- Brecht, Bertolt 227
- Britain 3, 173, 182, 201
- Browning, Christopher 64, 71, 170, 174
- bureaucracy 7, 10, 13, 25, 28–29, 33–37, 59, 62–63, 78–80, 88, 90, 93, 95, 105–106, 113, 116, 118, 127–128, 136, 159–163, 169, 199, 218, 221–222, 224, 229
- bystander 25, 61, 63, 65, 76, 119, 181, 183, 186, 192, 194, 224–225
- capitalism 2, 27, 53, 91, 95, 201, 209–210, 218–220, 228, 241
- Castoriadis, Cornelius 14, 221
- catastrophe 14, 39, 199–200, 209–214, 242
- catastrophism 199, 210–211, 240–241
- Cayrol, Jean 223–225, 227–228

- Christianity 9, 28, 41, 43, 53, 146, 188–189
 cinema 178, 182–183, 192, 220, 229
 civilisation 9, 11, 27–28, 30–31, 52, 70, 92, 128, 131, 168, 199–200, 210, 218, 220, 222, 237, 241–242
 civilising process 30–31, 36, 49, 205
 cleansing 50, 111, 118–120, 122–123, 206, 238
 Cold War 201, 208, 210, 212
 collaboration 6, 77, 90, 93
 colonialism 17, 32, 42, 127–130, 132–133, 138, 169, 189, 226, 243
 communism 2, 4–5, 13, 17, 26–27, 36, 47, 50, 52–53, 125, 146, 152–153, 190, 201, 209
 community 33, 46, 70, 81, 134, 157
 comparison 12, 27, 36, 48, 111, 123, 127, 226
 complicity 16, 61, 65, 75, 186, 202, 225–226, 239
 concentrationary 15, 180, 184, 218–229, 239, 241
 concentration camp 14, 117, 180, 184, 219, 221–223, 233, 237, 241
 cooperation 30, 35, 63, 75–79, 85, 90, 93, 138, 236–237
 counter-: -modernity 36–37; -propaganda 101, 106; -rationality 71; -sociology 237; -violence 31
 critical theory 36, 199, 201, 203
 culture 1, 4, 6, 9, 15, 27, 31, 33, 36, 84, 94, 124, 128, 130–132, 134–135, 178–179, 182, 186, 214, 229, 232
Culture as Praxis 9

 dadaism 91
 data 2, 75–76, 88, 91–92, 95, 101, 103, 105, 158, 166, 170–171, 174
 Dawidowicz, Lucy 191, 235
 decivilisation 11, 25, 30–31, 34
 decoloniality 138
 decolonisation 128, 130–131, 242
 dedifferentiation 27
 dédoublement 224
 defamiliarization 221, 223, 227
 dehumanisation 3, 7, 16–17, 33, 76, 95, 99, 112, 123, 147, 162–163, 181, 188, 191, 219, 221–222, 226–227, 241
 Delbo, Charlotte 10, 229
 democracy 16, 30, 36, 133, 137, 169, 202–203, 228
 determinism 29, 241
 development 27, 31, 105, 128, 131, 133, 136

Dialectic of Enlightenment 200–201, 208, 210–212, 242
 dialectics 61, 208
 dialogue 125–126, 128, 136–138, 178
 disorder 10, 84, 121
 distance 7, 10, 13, 33, 83, 96, 113, 115–117, 160, 166–167, 183, 238
 documents 6, 77, 88–92, 94–95, 98, 105–106, 147, 169–170, 173–174, 207
 Douglas, Mary 9–10
 Durkheim, Emile 11, 41, 48, 114, 208

 eastern Europe 2–3, 13, 26, 36, 73, 75, 241
 Eco, Umberto 3
 Eichmann, Adolf 31, 76, 79, 114, 180–181, 219, 232, 235
Eichmann in Jerusalem 76, 114, 181, 235
 Einsatzgruppen 33, 117
 Eisenstadt, Schmuël N. 27, 125–128, 131–132, 134–138
 Elias, Norbert 30–32, 36, 205–206
 emotions 59–71, 80, 84, 112, 115, 121, 145–146, 158–159, 161–162, 166–167, 169, 172, 183–184, 191, 234, 239
 enlightenment 201, 218, 240–241
 ethnicity 13, 30, 32–33, 122, 132, 188
 ethnography 39, 53, 159, 167, 174
 eugenics 17, 105
 Eurocentrism 128, 226, 229
 Europe 1, 6, 26–27, 95, 131, 166, 202, 206, 238
 evil 7–8, 11, 29, 33–35, 66, 114, 116, 118, 179–181, 184–186, 194
 exception, state of 32, 127, 189, 243
 exile 3, 5–6, 9, 173, 191, 200–202, 234, 236, 243

 fascism 2–3, 8, 27, 30, 32, 193, 241
 Feher, Ferenc 125
 Feingold, Henry 40
 Fein, Helen 48
 feminism 20, 167, 171, 174, 177, 186, 188
 Fleck, Ludwik 159, 166
 France 218–219, 221
 Frankfurt School 2, 199–202, 208, 218, 235–236, 240
 Freud, Sigmund 226–227, 229
 Friedländer, Saul 64, 178, 227, 235
 Fromm, Erich 121
 functionalism 4, 7, 29, 36, 80

 gardening 7, 12, 32, 40, 60, 105, 135, 194, 209
 Gellner, Ernest 7, 40

- gender 32–33, 162, 168, 186, 188, 195
 Germany 1, 26–27, 29–32, 48, 50, 61, 77, 81, 83, 88, 93, 95, 99, 105, 123, 168, 184, 199, 202, 204–207, 218, 220, 235–237
 Ghetto 10, 33–35, 48, 50, 52, 59, 63, 66, 70, 167, 170, 186, 189, 193, 237; Łódź ghetto 65, 88–106; Vilna ghetto 64; Warsaw ghetto 2, 75, 77–84, 147–149, 159–160, 162–163, 177, 233, 239–240
 Ghosh, Amitav 214, 216
 globalisation 26, 37, 134, 209, 234, 228
 Goldberg, Amos 67
 Goldhagen, Daniel J. 62, 116–117, 202, 207
 Gombiński, Stanisław 83
 Gomulka, Stanisław 51, 54
 Gradowski, Zalman 67, 69–71, 74
 Gramsci, Antonio 4
 Grossman, Vasily 190, 192–195
 Grudzińska-Gross, Irena 167–168, 174
- Haaretz* 5
 Habermas, Jürgen 26, 36, 201–204, 211–212
 Heller, Agnes 125
 hermeneutics 5, 174, 222, 224, 226, 228
Hermeneutics and Social Science 5, 222
 heterophobia 11, 32, 115
 Hilberg, Raul 10, 33, 76, 85, 112–113, 199, 207, 214, 232, 235–239
 Hiroshima 210
Historikerstreit 1, 26, 204
 Hochfeld, Julian 4
 Hochschild, Arlie 173, 175
 hope 147, 131, 214
 Horkheimer, Max 27–28, 199–202, 205, 207–208, 210–212, 214, 240
 humanism 180, 242
- imperialism 13, 28, 42, 128, 205, 221, 226
 instrumental rationality 13, 28, 36, 48, 76, 114, 118, 212
 intellectuals 15, 60, 130, 165–166, 202, 205, 234
 intentionalist-functionalist 7, 29, 36
 Israel 5, 14, 125, 154, 173, 182, 201, 204
- Jakubowka, Wanda 183
 Jaspers, Karl 180, 186
 Judenältesten 66, 71
 Judenräte 10, 35, 59, 63–64, 66–67, 76, 88–90, 92–96, 98, 101, 163, 236
 Judt, Tony 1
- Kafka, Franz 15, 84
 Katyn massacre 147
 Kershaw, Ian 8
 Kolberg, Oskar 39
 Koselleck, Reinhart 208–209, 211
 Kristallnacht 61
- Lanzmann, Claude 6, 45, 173, 177, 179, 181–185, 192–193, 207, 232, 239–240
 Leeds 5, 17, 126, 150, 155, 165, 182, 200
 Lefebvre, Henri 221–222
 Lefort, Claude 221
Legislators and Interpreters 40, 60, 166
 Lemkin, Raphael 137
 Levi, Primo 10, 26, 35, 64, 66, 90, 117, 207, 232, 239
 Levinas, Emmanuel 11, 47, 116, 123, 190–191, 212, 242
 Lewental, Zalman 67–68
Life in Fragments 11, 60, 238
 Lindeperg, Silvie 218–219, 230
 liquidity 12–13, 79, 128, 134, 209, 228, 238, 240, 243
Liquid Love 169
Liquid Modernity 134
 Litzmannstadt 73, 88, 101, 105
- Majdanek 4, 233
 marginalisation 19, 99
 Marx, Karl 29, 226, 241
 Marxism 2, 4, 27, 180, 201–202, 241
 ‘Mbembe affair’ 207
 metaphor 7, 27, 61, 90, 158, 174, 209, 214, 238, 240
 method 20, 27, 169–170, 174, 222, 226–228
 Milgram, Stanley 71, 113–116, 121, 212, 226
 modernisation 6, 26–27, 32, 92, 96, 131, 134, 185, 204, 206
Modernity and Ambivalence 9, 12, 40, 60, 166, 200, 227, 234
 monopoly of violence 30–31, 78, 134
 morality 11–12, 16, 29, 33, 60, 65, 77, 113–114, 116, 118, 181, 186, 189–193, 204, 212, 239, 242
Mortality, Immortality and other Life Strategies 227
 Moses, Dirk 14, 28
 multiple modernities 126–128, 131, 134, 137, 139
 Munch, Edvard 225

- nationalism 2, 5, 8, 203, 205
 Neiman, Susan 209
 normalisation 15, 84, 129, 218, 222–223,
 225–227
Nuit et brouillard 223, 225–226, 229

 obedience 25, 29, 77, 113, 118
 Obirek, Stanislaw 138
 obscenity 182, 184–185, 192, 233
 occupation 30, 32, 35, 44, 48, 50–51, 64,
 75, 83, 88, 130, 186, 189
 Offe, Claus 200–202, 204
 order 2, 4, 6, 8–10, 12, 40, 51, 60, 105,
 128, 135, 138, 209, 222, 227, 233,
 238, 240
 ordinary 6, 13, 33, 76, 79, 82, 90, 134,
 145, 156, 162–163, 167, 170–171, 174,
 183, 223, 225
 organisation 7, 9–11, 27, 32, 47, 88–90,
 92–93, 105, 128, 131, 159–161, 163
Origins of Totalitarianism 7, 10, 181,
 205–206, 220, 226, 228
 Ossowski, Stanislaw 4

 Palestine 52, 152, 204
 Parsons, Talcott 27
 Paulsson, Gunnar 239
 performance 65–66, 68, 114–115, 148, 190
 performative 115–116, 120, 211, 227
 perpetrators 25, 28–29, 32–34, 43, 51, 59–
 60, 62–64, 67–68, 70–71, 75–76, 78–79,
 93–94, 99, 113, 116–117, 119–123, 134,
 174, 183–184, 186, 203–204, 213, 216
 pessimism 26–17, 214–216, 241
 photomontage 89, 91–92, 95–97, 99,
 104–105
 Pietrzyk, Pani 164–165, 189–190
 pluralism 12, 16, 122, 132, 137–139, 169,
 180, 213, 234
 poetry 147, 150–151, 168–169, 173–174,
 178, 223, 238
 pogrom 49–50, 54, 61
 Poland 1–6, 17, 29–30, 35, 39, 42–48,
 50–52, 54, 83, 137, 146–147, 152–154,
 159, 165, 169–170, 174, 182
 positivism 210
Postmodern Ethics 60
 postmodernity 6, 12, 27, 40–41, 53, 125,
 201–202, 209, 211, 238
 Postone, Moishe 200, 207–208
 prediction 4, 15
 premodernity 39–44, 47, 50, 52, 59–60,
 92, 127, 135
 primordialism 135–138
 propaganda 29, 33, 53, 61, 88, 90, 92–93,
 95–99, 101, 105–106, 123, 134, 153,
 183, 207
 proteophobia 9
 proximity 33, 113, 115–122
 psychoanalysis 2, 171, 174, 191, 208,
 211, 226

 Rabinbach, Anson 205–206
 racism 7, 16–17, 33–34, 41–42, 48, 60, 76,
 116, 129–130, 132, 135–136, 178, 180,
 189–190, 195–196, 218–220, 226, 241
 railway 30, 83, 183, 229, 237
 Rancière, Jacques 185
 rape 33–34, 119, 122
 rationalisation 7, 36, 84, 90, 162, 184–185,
 189, 199, 212, 221–222, 235
 rationalism 16, 92, 184, 186, 189
 rationality 6, 11, 13, 25, 28, 31, 34–36,
 49–51, 59–66, 70–71, 76–78, 88, 90,
 92–94, 105, 111, 114, 118, 121, 135,
 181, 184–186, 188–190, 192, 194–195,
 200–203, 206, 208, 211–212, 234,
 237–239
 reason 28, 36, 59–65, 70, 121, 192,
 211–212
 refugees 4, 13, 235, 242
 remembrance 1, 3, 7, 12, 179
 representation 6, 178, 185, 192, 219, 234
 Resnais, Alain 183, 192, 223
 responsibility 3–4, 7, 11–12, 15, 29, 25,
 47, 79–80, 113–116, 123, 204, 206,
 214, 235
 revisionism 4, 26, 229
 Riemann, Gerhard 75, 80–81
 Rothberg, Michael 207, 241
 Rousset, David 219–221, 223, 226,
 228, 241
 Rubenstein, Richard 28, 229
 Rumkowski, Chaim 35, 64–66, 70, 88–90,
 92–97, 100
 Russia 52–53, 125, 154, 164, 237
 Rwanda 12–13, 33, 111, 121, 125–134,
 136, 206, 238

 sadism 30, 32, 34, 36, 121, 192–193, 207
 Sartre, Jean Paul 9–10
Schindler's List 6, 178, 204, 232, 239
 Schmitt, Carl 208
 science 7–8, 11, 15, 17, 61, 159, 206–207,
 210, 240
 Serbs 118–119, 121–122

- shame 31, 59, 61, 68, 121, 181, 185–186,
190–191, 194–195, 238–239
- six-day war 154
- Sketches in the Theory of Culture* 9, 17
- Slabodsky, Santiago 242
- Snyder, Timothy 13, 237–238
- socialism 2, 17, 191, 193–194, 201, 209
- Socialism: The Active Utopia* 14, 17
- sociologists 11, 15, 25, 47–48, 76, 202,
204, 221
- Sofsky, Wolfgang 10, 117
- Sonderkommando* 10, 35, 59, 64, 66–68,
71, 192–193
- Sonderweg* 1, 26, 31, 204–206
- Son of Saul* 192
- Soviet Union 1, 3–5, 50, 91, 116, 152, 169,
184, 192, 201, 204, 209, 237
- Stalinism 12, 128, 153, 169, 201, 209, 237,
240–241
- stigmatisation 13, 33
- strangers 9, 165–166, 189, 234, 240
- Strangers at our Door* 169
- Strauss, Anselm 75
- survivors 14, 26, 59, 71, 117, 122, 134,
157–159, 162, 164–166, 168–171, 173,
177, 183, 192, 204, 223, 225, 221, 232,
234–236, 238–239, 241
- Sznaider, Natan 27, 139
- technology 8, 16, 28, 39, 68, 116, 209,
213–214, 237–240
- testimony 2, 10, 51, 67, 90–91, 134, 157,
159, 164–166, 169–171, 174, 179,
186–187, 192, 195, 223, 225
- totalisation 9, 17, 27, 135–138
- totalitarianism 2, 7–8, 14, 17, 27–28, 30,
32, 77, 139, 179–180, 185, 194, 201,
208–209, 220, 222, 228
- Towards a Critical Sociology* 15, 203
- trajectory 75, 80–82, 84–85, 128
- trauma 2, 6, 14, 63, 67–68, 127–128, 132,
158–159, 170, 174, 178–179, 183, 191,
226, 219, 232–233, 242
- Treblinka 66, 84, 124, 150, 192–194
- trivialisation 14
- Ukraine 29, 50, 237
- uniqueness 1–2, 6, 25–26, 28, 63, 48–49,
77–78, 85, 88, 125, 131, 135, 157, 201,
204, 213–214, 218, 226, 229, 234
- universality 7, 10–11, 14, 26, 131, 199,
202, 205, 210–211, 224, 228, 241–243
- university 3, 61, 134, 137, 152, 154, 202,
232, 236
- unrepresentability 185
- utopia 59, 91–92, 105, 128, 208–209,
212, 214
- verfremdungseffekt 227
- victim-group 136
- victimhood 121, 204
- victimisation 154, 181, 188
- victims 10, 13–14, 16, 25, 30, 32–35, 50–52,
59, 61, 63–64, 66–67, 69–71, 75–82,
84–85, 89, 92–94, 106, 112–113, 116–123,
127, 147, 151, 156, 168, 174, 177,
180–181, 184, 186, 192, 202, 207, 225
- vigilance 12, 15, 41, 138, 169, 228
- Virago Press 177, 182, 187
- vulnerability 12, 121, 137, 191
- Wachsmann, Nikolaus 63, 69
- Warsaw 1–2, 4, 17, 44, 59, 75, 77–80,
82–85, 137, 146–147, 149, 151–153,
156, 159, 173, 177, 234, 236, 239–240
- Wasted Lives* 166, 227
- Waxman, Zoë 79
- Weber, Max 9, 27–28, 62, 114, 118, 166,
184, 212, 221
- Weisband, Edward 120–121
- Welzer, Harald 71, 121
- Wiesel, Elie 204, 232, 235–236
- Wieviorka, Annette 218–219, 232
- Winter in the Morning* 2, 6, 146, 150,
156–160, 163–170, 173, 177–179, 186,
189, 233–234, 239–240
- witness 14, 26, 31, 36, 39, 66, 68–69, 117,
119, 121, 134, 147–148, 158, 166–167,
169, 178, 184–186, 194, 219, 232–233,
235–236
- women 43–44, 122, 147–148, 153, 162,
164, 167–168, 170, 174, 177–178,
186–189, 191–195
- world war 2 2, 4, 13, 16, 50, 52, 75, 78–79,
81, 88, 91–92, 106, 146–147, 151–152,
157–159, 164–166, 168, 170, 173–174,
177, 180, 182, 187, 189–191, 201, 208,
210, 212, 218–219, 221, 231–232,
234, 236
- xenophobia 243
- Yugoslavia 26, 33, 127
- Zaslavsky, Victor 125
- Zimbardo, Phillip 121, 212, 226
- Zionism 98, 152, 204
- Žižek, Slavoj 199–200