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Unfamiliarity and Familiarity in the Bauman Archive

Abstract

Reflecting on the author's role in establishing, cataloguing and interpreting the personal papers of Zygmunt Bauman, this article reflects on central questions related to working on and with the archives of public intellectuals. It addresses the role that intellectuals, and Bauman in particular, hold in contemporary 'memory wars', and the role that diverse forms and practices of archives play therein. It considers the difficulties posed by and possibilities afforded by the existence of archives, as well as biographical and autobiographical writings, for the interpretation of theoretical work. To this end, the article deploys a number of keywords – estrangement, loss, silence, secrets – which have framed the author's encounter with the Bauman archive.

Keywords

Bauman; archive; memory; estrangement; loss; silence; secrets

Bio

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1. Bauman and the 'Memory Wars'

On a foggy day in November 2022, I felt like I had finally finished a project on the life and work of Zygmunt Bauman. I was in Warsaw to present on the book of the project at the Polish Academy of Sciences (PAN). This book, called *Zygmunt Bauman and the West: A Sociology of Intellectual Exile* (Palmer, 2023a), draws extensively on documents – many for the first time – from the papers of Janina and Zygmunt Bauman, an archive which I helped to assemble and catalogue over the course of the project and which is now open to the public in the Brotherton Library at the University of Leeds, UK. With a free day, I visited the Museum of the History of Polish Jews (POLIN) and in so doing was compelled to take a short detour past the Soviet-era apartment block which had been the Bauman family home until expulsion in the March events of 1968. Given that the book so centrally thematizes exile, and takes its various points of departure from the rupture that generated Bauman's 'exilic positionality', this detour felt somehow like a closing of the hermeneutic circle, an ending at the beginning.

Warsaw is a city full of memorials to 20th century barbarism. I was particularly drawn to three memorials just yards from the old apartment. The first was one of the *Granica Getta Warszawskiego*, fragments of the boundary wall of the Warsaw Ghetto. This one in particular stood at the entrance where, on April 19th, 1943, SS squads had entered with the purpose of 'liquidating' the Jewish population and were met with uprising. I was, of course, aware of the biographical significance of this deathworld and scene of resistance to the Baumans. Janina

Bauman, Zygmunt's life companion until her death in 2010, wrote about her experiences in the Ghetto in her remarkable testimony, *Winter in the Morning* (1986), which greatly influenced Zygmunt's *Modernity and the Holocaust* (1989). It was, she said, 'that world of my youth that was not his' (Bauman, 1986: vi). Among the images included in *Winter in the Morning* is one in which Janina is photographed in a group clearing the rubble of the ghetto in 1946 so that the destroyed capital might be rebuilt. Zygmunt in turn began *Modernity and the Holocaust* with by acknowledging that he had escaped the Nazi occupation of Poland by fleeing eastwards, into the Soviet Union, his first exile (Bauman, 1989: xvi).

The second memorial was on a stone placed at the centre of a square dedicated to the political prisoners of the Stalinist period of the Polish People's Republic (*Skwer Więźniów Politycznych Stalinizmu*). The stone was laid in 1999, two years following the inauguration of the 'lustration' process in post-communist Poland and a year after the founding of the Institute for National Remembrance (IPN). It bears the inscription that it is 'dedicated to the memory of those imprisoned for fighting for an independent and sovereign Poland'. The intensification of lustration process following the electoral victory of the Law and Justice party (PiS) in 2005, led to the 2007 'revelation' that Bauman had served as an officer of the Internal Security Corps (*Korpus Bezpieczeństwa Wewnętrznego, KBW*) between 1945 and 1953. The factual basis of this revelation, which Bauman claimed 'everyone knew' and amounted to 'dull office work ... in the division for propaganda and agitation' (Bauman, 2020: 13), was established from the archive of the IPN, an archive of a very different sort than the collection at Leeds but which nonetheless holds records on Bauman and his postwar activities. It exists to investigate and communicate information about Nazi and Communist crimes against the Polish nation. Indeed, the proximity of these monuments and their respective memorialization of victims of Nazism and Communism reflects the 'inter-imperiality' of twentieth century Polish history, pincerred between Nazi and Soviet totalitarianisms (Doyle, 2020). The work of the IPN is emblematic of a tendency, identified by Jelena Subotić in her *Yellow Star, Red Star* (2019), to conflate the memories of communism and the Holocaust. In Poland, nationalists reject *pedagogika wstydu* (the education of shame) which characterizes supposedly external narratives of the Holocaust, especially when they touch on the difficult subjects of Polish complicity and the longue durée of antisemitism (Subotić, 2019: 206). To the political right in post-lustration Poland, Bauman was and remained a Stalinist but this identification has often been folded into the antisemitic trope of the *Żydokomunista*, a specifically Polish inflection of the Judeo-Bolshevik myth. This reverberated, for example, in the chanting of the far-right *Narodowe Odrodzenie Polski* (National Rebirth of Poland) when they disrupted his public lecture in the city of Wrocław in June, 2013.

The third was Xawery Dunikowski's Monument to the Soldiers of the First Polish People's Army (*Pomnik Żołnierzy 1 Armii Wojska Polskiego*). Completed in 1963, it commemorates soldiers who had fallen on the 'battle trail' from Lenino to Berlin, including at the battle of Kolberg, named Kołobrzeg following its post-war absorption into Poland. In 1945, the 19-year-old Zygmunt Bauman had been wounded here. He travelled by foot from the military hospital and took part in the final days of the Battle of Berlin. Prior to this, his unit had supported troops on the left bank of the Vistula during the Warsaw Uprising. For his service, he was awarded the Military Cross of Valor and became, in the post-war period, one of the country's youngest majors. Upon his return, like Janina, Zygmunt had actively engaged in the rebuilding of Poland, a project that he identified in communism which 'gave us some reason to hope that our country could escape from the backwardness of the pre-war era and the cataclysm of the war' (Bauman, 2020: 9). His discharge from the army in 1953 due to his

father's attempt to secure a visa for a one-way trip to the state of Israel paved the way for him to become a sociologist in the department at the University of Warsaw. In 1968 he was persecuted as a Jew during the antisemitic purge of the 'March events', but also because his sociological work had made him a prominent figure among the revisionist intellectuals who developed a form of Marxist-humanism which posed serious challenges to Soviet orthodoxy.

It was overwhelming, this detour via the monuments. It was as if the old apartment – what had, up until March 1968, been a home, from which some of the archive materials now held in a public space in Leeds originate – was itself suspended within the threads of memory spun from the historical events monumentalized: the Holocaust and the Nazi conquest of Poland, Soviet communism and Stalinist repression, world war. The Warsaw fog was emblematic of what Enzo Traverso has termed 'melancholic memory', which 'floats in the air as the dominant feeling of a world burdened with its past, without a visible future' and which manifests in the 'tendency to draw competitive rather than complementary "history lessons"' from the Holocaust, communism and the histories of colonialism (Traverso, 2017: 18-19). The strong sense of Bauman's ensnaring in the 'memory wars' also brought home the fact that a public intellectual attains different degrees of publicity depending on which public receive them, especially pertinent in the case of émigré intellectuals across the poles of their migration. The contrast between Bauman as a public intellectual in Poland, in Israel (where he spent three consequential years before moving to Leeds in 1971), and in Britain, where he is known among a reading public, if at all, and was featured sporadically in the 'respectable' press, is very stark.

More than this, the memorials served as a reminder that the archive, connected inextricably to questions of legacy and remembrance, is a theatre of memory and one who works in it, however modestly, becomes complicit in its drama. This observation may appear trite in the wake of the long duration of critical-theoretical engagement with the archive. In 1969, Michel Foucault argued the archive establishes 'the law of what can be said', and orders discursive statements into a 'system of [their] enunciability' so that they do not remain 'amorphous masses' (Foucault, 2002 [1969]: 145-6). Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (1983) implicated the archive in the nineteenth century 'invention of tradition', wherein state archival collections came to serve as catacombic repositories of monuments to the national spirit. Hans Georg Gadamer identified this 'Romantic refraction' as a sufficient condition for the emergence of nineteenth century historical sciences and, as such, the genesis of modern historiography (Gadamer, 1999 [1975]: 275). Later, Jacques Derrida elucidated the imbrications of space and power at work in the concept of the archive. *Arkhe*, its etymological root, denotes 'commencement' and 'commandment' (Derrida, 1995: 9). These insights were taken up and significantly expanded in contributions to the understanding of the racialized, gendered and classed politics of knowledge. Anne Laura Stoler, for example, called for an 'ethnographic' rather than 'extractive' conception of the archive – the 'archive-as-subject' rather than simply 'archive-as-source' – in colonial and postcolonial studies (Stoler, 2002: 93). What the archives occludes and obfuscates also figures here. Every archive, as Michel-Rolph Trouillot wrote, gathers together 'a particular bundle of silences' (Trouillot, 1995: 27). The contemporary projects of decolonization, the attendance to and restoration of subordinated gendered and classed experience subject to historical erasure, for all their differences, gravitate around the questions of who gets to archive and what gets to be preserved.

But what is procedural in the humanities and cultural theory is unfamiliar in sociology, the discipline ambivalently associated with Bauman and which constitutes my own frame of

reference. This neglect of archives is perhaps most peculiar in terms of sociology's own historicization. At the beginning of his monumental recent work on the colonial origins of French sociology which draws considerably on archival sources, George Steinmetz noted that 'social science disciplines do not provide their students with training in the methods and epistemologies of historiography', and refers to a study by Charles Camic which found that, between 1945 and 2012, only a handful of English language articles on the history of sociology utilized archival sources and methods (Steinmetz, 2023: 45; see also Camic, 2014: 99). Norbert Elias once said that sociology, in spite of its early synergies with historical scholarship, has 'retreated into the present' (Elias, 1987), and such claims about the poverty of the historical imagination of sociology have been repeated since (Abbott, 1991; Susen, 2020). My work on Bauman is situated in the context of a significant resurgence in interest in the sociology of intellectuals and I've been struck by why archival work seems to be absent from this resurgence and by what insights might be gained into the nature and functioning of intellectual networks, performative positioning, the practical 'making' of social knowledge, in various kinds of archival traces: correspondence, unpublished typescripts, lecture schedules, reading notes, and so on (see especially Baert, 2015; see also Bourdieu, 1988; Collins, 1998; Camic, Gross and Lamont, 2012).

Stood in front of this old apartment block which represented the locus of Bauman's exile, crucial theoretical and ethical questions remained. What is at stake in gathering together and making available the private papers of a public intellectual? How should we understand the relationship between state archives (such as those of the IPN) and personal or literary archives and their respective claims to truth? How might we understand the relationship between biographical experience and theoretical interpretation? How should access documents that weren't intended to be accessible and what is the value in publishing works that writers didn't publish in their own lifetime? Confronted with these questions, I wondered whether I had indeed finished my project.

2. Estranging the Archive

I am very grateful to be able to continue to grapple with these questions in the celebration of the 20th anniversary of *Cultural Politics*. The journal ran, in November 2017, a homage to Bauman following his death wherein he was framed as 'one of the most important cultural and political theorists writing in English over the past fifty years' (Armitage, 2017: 277). In the pages of this edition of the journal, Keith Tester, who himself died aged 59 shortly after it was published, reflected that: 'With his passing, our encounters with Zygmunt Bauman must change ... [I]t is perhaps now time for us to pay more focused attention to the work itself and to stand against the tide of fame (and its opposite, envy) that was tending to swamp it' (Tester, 2017: 306). Tester seemed to recognize that this is a difficult endeavor. His evocation of fame and envy posit Bauman, or a particular version of Bauman, as a *familiar* figure. In the time of my project, three biographies on his life have appeared, and with two of them being written in the Polish language and with particular attentivity to Bauman's life in Poland they have fed into highly charged public debates (Roziak, 2019; Wagner, 2020; Domasławski, 2021). A volume of autobiographical writing has also been published, drawing considerably on letters that Bauman wrote for his three daughters which are in the archive in Leeds and did not intend, in his own lifetime at least, for publication (Bauman, 2023).

Amid this flurry of activity, there has been the establishing of the Bauman archive itself. The Zygmunt and Janina Bauman Archive collects personal papers, the book collection, and other

materials amassed by Janina and Zygmunt Bauman over six decades. The archive was handed over by the Bauman family in the form of 156 large boxes of papers; 32 USB sticks; 126 3-inch CF2 Compact Discs; 216 3.5-inch Compact Discs; 98 CD/RW 108 discs; 20 VHS tapes; 38 Audio Cassettes; and a great many metres of books that made up Janina's and Zygmunt's personal libraries. Among the written documents can be found draft manuscripts, lecture transcripts and unpublished essays, some of which have been published in a series of selected writings for Polity Press (2021-24) which I have co-edited with Dariusz Brzeziński, Thomas Campbell and Mark Davis. It also holds a great many documentary materials – letters, autobiographical fragments, notebooks, typescripts replete with marginalia, and so on – which have hitherto not been accessed and incorporated into scholarly studies of Bauman's works.

How can we simply 'pay more focused attention to the work itself' in the context of this burgeoning familiarity with the life that stands behind it? I have found it useful to think about this question – and to navigate the cultural politics of the Bauman archive – with recourse to this concept of *estrangement*. To say something of Bauman's 'work itself' it pays to *estrange* him. It is well known that estrangement and the figure of the 'stranger' – a social type which denotes figures of the in-between, the interstitial, the margins – developed as a major theme of the most creative period of Bauman's writing, most notably in *Modernity and Ambivalence* (1991), but also across a range of more specific essays that he termed his 'Jewish studies'.¹ There, estrangement is a painful social *process*. The estranged, generalised from the particular case of German-speaking Jewry in the 19th and early 20th centuries, are made estranged via policies of assimilation and separation. But estrangement is also, as an abstract noun, a *condition* that one can inhabit, even in the absence of physical displacement.² Bauman shares with like Adorno, Said, Mannheim, Arendt, Glissant, and many others, the view that the condition of estrangement generates a specific hermeneutic vantage point that lends itself to intellectual and cultural creativity. In *Thinking Sociologically* (1990), where Bauman boils the sociological enterprise down to the pithy summation that it engages in the 'defamiliarisation of the familiar', he configures the figure of the stranger as the optimal positionality of the sociologist – in but not *of* the figuration in which they are entangled.

Across the pages of his research notes, in correspondence, and even in the marginalia of typescripts one sees Bauman develop, deploy and occupy this position. At one point, his descriptive, handwritten scrawl on a paper called 'Jews and other Europeans'³, defines Jewish intellectuals as 'multicentred cosmopolitans', an expression that does not appear anywhere in his published work but which beautifully, I think, challenges the charges of Eurocentrism levelled at exilic intellectuals, including Bauman. Can one be *Eurocentric* in the absence of a single centre from which to universalise? Can one be *Eurocentric* if they have moved between 'multiple and unequal Europes'? (Boatcă, 2021: 394).

In the Bauman archive itself we encounter what I'm tempted to call 'unfamiliar Baumans'. These are manifold. There is the Warsaw sociologist, invited by US luminaries to speak on 'Polish issues' at international conferences, but with a keen sense of general social theory and the world politics of decolonisation. There is the exile in Tel Aviv, between 1969-71, who struggled to get research projects on semiotics off the ground and who wrote some reflections on the March '68 events for émigré journals like *Kultura* before he went silent on issues of Jewish experience and interpretation for around two decades (Bauman, 1968a, 1969). This Bauman also, portentously, wrote of Israeli politics in the wake of the six-day-war, including an editorial for *Haaretz* called 'Israel Must Prepare for Peace' in which he warned of the corrupting possibility of the occupation, which he maintained was the only prediction he'd ever made (and he made very few) that had turned out to be true (Bauman, 1971). Another

‘unfamiliar Bauman’ is the ‘eastern’ socialist with an ambivalent relationship to the New Left in Britain, the expert on Soviet-type societies nearly appointed as a political scientist of communist societies at Yale in the 80s but who nevertheless refused to be known as a Sovietologist.

I’ve found that thinking with some of these ‘unfamiliar Baumans’ which run across the archive present a great impetus for thinking about Bauman’s sociology in novel ways and extending it in unexpected directions. Stuart Hall – whose own archives are now held in Birmingham – once wrote that ‘archives are not inert historical collections. They always stand in an active, dialogic, relation to the questions which the present puts to the past; and the present always puts its questions differently from one generation to another’ (Hall, 2001). The questions that the present puts to the past which frame my encounter with the Bauman’s work and his archive have arisen in the context of proclamations that the social sciences and humanities must be decolonised. Of interest to me throughout this book is not simply how a body of thought came into being in the course of Bauman’s life. Nor am I preoccupied solely with the internal dimensions of Bauman’s work. What is interesting is the question of how it can be put to use, including in ways for which it was not originally intended and may not have been apparent to its creator – *estranged* ways, in other words. In my archival work and the re-reading of Bauman’s oeuvre that it prompted, I developed that argument that Bauman develops an immanent critique of Eurocentrism across numerous threads of his work that deal with European colonial-imperialism, Jewish modernity, and eastern European communism. In his project is a rejoinder to Traverso’s ‘melancholic memory’, one which approximates the normative project of a ‘multidirectional memorialisation’ (Rothberg, 2009) which would not set these historical trajectories apart in competitive and hierarchical terms but would instead see them as part of an entangled whole: the *multiplicity of modernity*.

Other ‘unfamiliar Baumans’ are, dare I say, domestic and private. They include the keen amateur photographer who honed his craft in a purpose built red room at home and in the Leeds Camera Club during a period of profound disillusionment with academia in the 1980s (Beilharz and Wolff, 2023). These ‘unfamiliar Baumans’ wrote recipes for parsnip wine, exchanged Christmas cards and long letters with distant friends. Derrida wrote that ‘the meaning of ‘archive’, its only meaning, comes to it from the Greek *arkheion*: initially a house, a domicile, an address’ (Derrida, 1995: 9). Bauman’s archive was kept, prior to its transference to the University of Leeds, in a house just off the ring road in Lawnswood, Leeds. If one looks at the background of those pictures where he is photographed at home, in an armchair shrouded in the pipe smoke which over the years embedded its scent within the surrounding documents, it’s possible to see the archive haphazardly piled on overflowing shelves. This juxtaposition the public figure and his private papers accounts for another, more agonising, modality of estrangement, namely my own estranged positionality vis-à-vis the Bauman archive. Throughout my work, I have struggled with the fact of my being a stranger to him. I have come to know him – quite intimately – only through family members, friends and the ‘documents of life’, to use the late Ken Plummer’s terms, that were left behind as traces (Plummer, 2001). My familiarity with Bauman is entirely of a second-order, an *estranged* familiarity. Again, as so often, this estrangement is double-sided, productive as well as disquieting. Estrangement is operative in the researcher’s relation to traces of the past, those ‘marks, inscriptions, documents, archives, and the monuments of all kinds that play the role of “facts” for historical inquiry’ (Ricoeur, 1976: 691). Siegfried Kracauer, for example, once wrote that the ‘state of self-effacement or homelessness’ forced upon the exile is the ideal disposition for the historian who confronts the past as ‘*a stranger to the world*’ (Kracauer, 1995 [1969]: 84).

3. Loss, Silence, Secrets

Grateful to *Cultural Politics*, and Eva Giraud in particular, for gathering us around the notion of ‘unfamiliar archives’, I have also been inspired by the other keywords which figure in contributions to the roundtable and that elucidate other challenges: ‘loss’, ‘silence’ and ‘secrets’. The papers of Janina and Zygmunt Bauman are redolent of how the twentieth century archive became, in the words of the German cultural historian Ulrich Raulff, ‘the emblematic location of a cataclysmic century’ which has ‘conferred a new, existential and political, value on memory’ (Raulff, 2011: 165). As an archive of Holocaust survivors established at a time when the generation with direct experience of the event has all but disappeared, what is lost and what remains, the politics of mourning and the difficulty of remembrance, are themes that run across the collection (Eng and Kazanjian, 2003; Hawkes, 2019). The Bauman archive’s ‘bundle of silences’ are constituted by experiences of war, displacement and exile.

Janina’s personal diaries from the Warsaw ghetto, miraculously preserved during the war itself, were seized when the family was exiled in 1968. Remarkably, she reconstructed her testimony from memory (Bauman, 2022). The diaries remain in the archives of the IPN. What is absent is also especially pertinent in Zygmunt’s case; the sources of controversy in Poland about his past are based on fragmentary materials also found in the IPN archives, for example, which also contains a great deal of documentation on Zygmunt produced by communist-era surveillance agencies, as is made very clear in Izabela Wagner’s biography (Wagner, 2020). This kind of surveillance followed him to Leeds. As he notes in his autobiographical writings, the house in Lawnswood was broken into on two occasions, first (he suspected) by a Stasi agent undertaking a PhD in the politics department tasked with reporting on Bauman’s ‘conspiratorial activities’ during the time of *Solidarność*, and second (he suspected) by a group interested in the activities of his grandson, the Israeli human rights lawyer Michael Sfard (Bauman, 2023: 147-8).

Also present in the archive are life possibilities, career trajectories, and status symbols that were lost amid this historical tumult. Particularly fascinating are the documentary illustrations of the connection that Bauman had with France and prominent French intellectuals prior to 1968, including those whose own reflections on the archive have been so influential. Bauman was one of the figures that circled on an outer orbit around *Recherches Sémiotique*, edited by Julia Kristeva whom he corresponded with in French. That journal published his essay ‘Semiotics and the Function of Culture’, originally delivered at the 1966 International Conference in Semiotics in Kazimierz Dolny at which he had met Kristeva and others (Bauman, 1968b).⁴ He also exchanged letters with Maurice Godelier, first a student of Claude Lévi-Strauss and now one of his foremost interpreters (Godelier, 2018 [2013]). This was Bauman’s ‘Lévi-Straussian period’, as he wrote in the afterword for *Sketches in the Theory of Culture* (Bauman, 2018: 251-2). Another symbol is the paper ‘Marx and the Contemporary Theory of Culture’, submitted as a background paper to a Paris symposium in May 1968 in the midst of France’s social and political convulsions (Bauman, 1968c).⁵ Over forty contributions to the conference were published in a volume called ‘Marx and Contemporary Scientific Thought’; Bauman’s text appears alongside the likes of Raymond Aron, Mihailo Marković, Erich Fromm, Herbert Marcuse, and Anouar Abdel-Malek. In exile at the time of its occurrence, Bauman’s non-attendance at the conference was a micro-illustration of Tony Judt’s reminder that the vista of 1968 looks very different depending on whether the vantage point was the streets of Paris or those of Prague or Warsaw (Judt, 2005: 421). Bauman’s ‘French connection’ was not reconstituted after the ‘March events’ of 1968. Bruno Latour

would later remark to Bauman, whilst inquiring about translating Bauman's 1992 book *Intimations of Modernity*, that 'I discover with amazement that there is nothing of yours available in France'.⁶ What is thought to be lost can also be found. Dariusz Brzeziński, my friend and collaborator, found in the library of the Polish Academy of Sciences the only remaining copy of the manuscript of *Sketches in the Theory of Culture*, a book published in English in 2017 but which had been intended for publication in the 1960s and was confiscated by authorities in the process of exile (Brzeziński, 2018).

Janina Bauman's materials lay bare the fact that, whilst all intellectual exiles may well be 'mutilated' as Adorno (2005 [1951]) postulated, the degree of mutilation differs dramatically according to the sociological determinants of gender, race and class, as well as career stage and status at the point of expulsion (Palmier, 2006 [1987]: 240). Prior to her expulsion, Janina had worked in a high-profile position in the Polish film industry and her exile was characterized by a specifically gendered downward mobility. She writes:

When I left Poland I knew that my professional life was at an end ... I was left on my own with no place to go and no clear aim to fight for. Bound only to the house, I automatically became a housewife. I have been a career-women since my early adult life, and this change came as a bitter blow. My only work now was cooking, cleaning and washing so as to keep my hard-working husband and children satisfied ... I soon discovered that my status as a housewife not only seemed natural but was also fully acceptable to our new acquaintances ... Nobody ever asked me what my profession was or what I had done in Poland. I was a wife, a professor's wife and my visitors seemed fully satisfied with that. The only questions they ever asked me were: 'How do you like it here?' or 'How old are your daughters?' Nobody ever asked me what my personal plans were or what I intended to do in this country (Bauman, 1988: 144-6).

Her life writing in the 1980s takes on an additional importance in the context of this admission. What is more, the archive is illustrative of *how* particular texts came into being, and this itself provides important insights into the institutional dimensions which condition practices of writing. Retained in the archive is a brilliant letter to Leeds City Council from Janina Bauman which lambasts them for withdrawing funding for a women's writing group which, she argues, has been particularly beneficial for her and the women, many of them in marginalized social positions, who frequented it.

Loss and silence also speak to more mundane issues concerning the materiality of the archive, how it moves through various stages of technological development, up to the digital, and in so doing poses specific challenges for those who wish to access and interpret it. This technological aspect accounts for specific kinds of silences in the archive. Fax paper is particularly prone to disintegration and fading and thus much of the faxed correspondence in the archive is degraded beyond decipherability. Zygmunt Bauman wrote most of his most acclaimed work (c. 1987-1996) on an Amstrad machine. Janina Bauman used the same device to write short stories. The editorial team on the Bauman archive project were only able to find two organisations capable of converting Amstrad files into PDFs and even then not all were successfully converted. The challenges of cataloguing digital materials is well documented and in the case of the Bauman archive was compounded by the regulatory context of GDPR and data protection law which has rendered much of the digital material, as well as the multilingual correspondence, silent so to speak. The transition of the Bauman papers to a 'digital archive' coincides with the period that he diagnosed as 'liquid modernity'.

At this point, ephemera proliferates and it becomes more unfocussed. Across numerous USB sticks, the visitor finds shopping orders, hotel reservations and flight tickets, emblematic of his own life as a consumer and as an intellectual tourist. The digital archive, it also has to be noted, does not preserve for ever as is often said. Many files in digital storage are now closed off forever having been corrupted. The periodic culling of physical materials throughout Bauman's life – presumably due to concerns for space – also accounts for specific gaps in the archive. There is very little correspondence in the collection held during Bauman's tenure as head of the school of sociology at the University of Leeds. I came to the assumption that these had once been held in his office on campus and would've been cleared out when the space was needed and when such materials were deemed worthless.

These kinds of silences, generated by catastrophic loss and mundane destruction, are unfortunate. But silence can also be productive. Silence can be made to speak, via, for example, visiting other archival collections to find correspondence (including those of Gillian Rose and Ralph Miliband, to name two). In this sense, I have developed an understanding of Bauman's archive as a nodal point in a whole system of archives which aid the reconstruction of various histories – of sociology, of the new left, of Soviet exiles, of post-Holocaust Jewish intellectuals, and so on. Bauman's archive, treated by the archival specialists at the Brotherton Library as a 'literary archive', can be productively thought of as a *sociological* archive, itself woven into a web of relations with other collections.

Other silences are *invitational*. On another scrawled marginalia comment, this time on the first page of an obscure essay called 'The Spectre of Westphalian Sovereignty', at precisely the point that Bauman locates the modern state in the 1648 treaty and its forebear in 1555, there appears in his handwriting: 'Some point to 1492 – king of Spain expelled the Jews and Columbus discovered America and declared it a fragment of Europe'.⁷ This consequential date does not appear in the discussion in the published text. It raises important questions. Who are those 'some' that he refers to? Most obviously, it brings to mind those Latin American decolonial theorists who deal with the legacy of the *Conquista*, the production of a Eurocentric world order. The omission of Enrique Dussel from Bauman's texts, and indeed from his correspondence files, for example, is all the more perplexing since he was among the most imaginative inheritors of Emmanuel Lévinas' ethical philosophy at precisely the time it became of such consequence for Bauman (Dussel, 1985). Chapters 3 and 4 of *Zygmunt Bauman and the West* present, among other things, the productive possibilities of imagining a dialogue between Bauman's critique of modernity and decolonial theory.

And there are secrets in the Bauman archive too. It is an 'intimate archive'. To quote Dever, Newman and Vickery – who work with this productive concept – at length:

In the normal course of events, we do not regard kindly those who read other people's mail and poke around in their private papers. Yet, scholars confronting intimate archives appear licensed to do just that - to operate in the guise of both spy and gossip, as they peruse and report on the details of private lives made public by virtue of their preservation within an archive. A sense of the delicacy of these operations has in all likelihood been blunted by the fact that we live in the age of disclosure, an age characterised by the public's right to know (Dever, Newman and Vickery, 2010: 120).

My unfamiliarity – or a sort of 'secondhand familiarity' - has posed ethical dilemmas at various points, which run much deeper than formal concerns with GDPR. For example, how should I read, organise and integrate into my work things that were written only for family

members like his autobiographical reflections in the letter to his daughters titled ‘The Poles, the Jews and I’, which touch on his childhood and wartime experience? This document, integrated into the autobiographical volume *My Life in Fragments* (2023), raises important questions about how personal the works of Bauman’s ‘Jewish turn’ might have been. How should one approach a document like the one found on a USB stick with the file title ‘the last words of Zygmunt Bauman’, which contains agonising reflections on his waning intellectual powers (as he saw it) during the last years of his life? How useful are such biographical documents to the interpretation of ideas? The Cambridge School intellectual historian, Quentin Skinner, confessed that he is skeptical of the value of biography precisely because of its testament to the ‘entrancing power of gossip’. It is, he says, ‘a genre that carries us away from the realm of intentions and into the much murkier depths of motivation and character’ (Skinner in Li, 2016: 125). In Georg Simmel’s essay on secrecy, the social function of secrets and the particular power that they imbue the possessor is presented with greater gravity. Secrets, according to Simmel, are interwoven with the temptation of treachery; ‘secrecy is ... sustained by the consciousness that it *might be* exploited, and therefore confers power to modify fortunes, to produce surprises, joys, and calamities, even if the latter be only misfortunes to ourselves’ (Simmel, 1906: 65-6).

4. Ambivalence, Vocation and Immortality

In Bauman’s case, this is especially difficult because he was notoriously resistant to connections being made between his personal life and his social thought. He admitted as much in an illuminating interview which, again, I shall quote at length:

You probably heard about how Franz Kafka asked Max Brod to destroy his manuscripts after his death. Not believing that he will do it, of course. Henri Bergson was much more determined, that he actually burnt not just his unpublished manuscripts but every personal document, with the purpose that his ideas should not be interpreted in the light of his biography, because he disliked this approach. Ideas have their own logic and life goes anyway its natural development. And that was his view. I think I share his sentiments. I find it very difficult to connect events in life with events in whatever happens when I am sitting in front of my word processor, think and write (Bauman in Welzer, 2002: 102).

Bauman was also highly critical of a tendency – inextricable, he thought, from consumerist liquid modernity – to render private troubles into public concerns. In typically metaphorical terms, he lambasted what he called ‘confessional society’ in which loudspeakers broadcast utterances captured in microphoned confession boxes onto public squares which were once used to thrash out matters of common concern (Bauman, 2011: 84).

And yet, in the very room where this interview may well have taken place were amassed a large cache of personal papers, correspondence, autobiographical material, unpublished typescripts and lecture transcripts, photographs, awards and other personal objects, and much more. This room evokes the Derridean *archeion*, the home of ‘the *archons*, those who commanded’ (Derrida, 1995: 9). As a canonical figure, Bauman certainly has a commanding presence in the discipline of sociology. But his status in the discipline is ambivalent and so too is the notion of home. Edward Said’s essay on another Polish speaker who settled in the UK, Joseph Conrad, comes to mind. As with Conrad, Bauman’s ‘life and work seemed to typify the fate of the wanderer who becomes an accomplished writer in an acquired language, but can never shake off his sense of alienation from his new – that is, acquired – and, in Conrad’s rather special case, admired, home’ (Said, 2001: 554). Bauman, who never shed his

thick Polish accent, was suspended in the margins of the home he had to leave and the one he had to make, that ‘*contrapuntal*’ position of the exile where ‘habits of life, expression or activity in the new environment inevitably occur against the memory of these things in another environment’ (Said, 2001: 186).

There is also a clear ambivalence at work in the reference to Kafka and Bergson, one which plays out clearly in the archive. On the one hand, Zygmunt Bauman was an elusive, reticent and deeply private figure who prized a certain degree of unfamiliarity. On the other, he was perhaps the most interviewed of all sociologists, frequently invited to discuss his work, his choices, his motivations, and the relationship of his sociology to his life experience (Davis, 2008: 12). In so frequently taking up these invitations, he made himself familiar. As his grandson Karl Dudman writes in a poignant photo-essay which depicts the Bauman home in Leeds in the process of its emptying following its owner’s death, ‘this was not just a man who cared about demarcating his public and private life, but one who skilfully cultivated and managed a play of hypervisibility and solitude as discrete as night and day’ (Dudman, 2023: 131).

In an email interview I found in the archive, Bauman’s admitted that his most ‘personal’ books were *Legislators and Interpreters* (1987) and *Mortality, Immortality and Other Life Strategies* (1992), works whose reputation pales next to better-known works like *Modernity and the Holocaust* (1989) and *Liquid Modernity* (2000). These two books were, he said, ‘the products of protracted and often painful soul-searching. The first solved to me the puzzle of vocation, the second the mystery of that short visit to earth called ‘human life’ and of the consequences of that mystery’.⁸ The ‘puzzle of vocation’ and the ‘mystery of life’ come together in the urge to preserve in the form of an archive. It is no coincidence, perhaps, that the most feverishly documented period of the Bauman archive stretches over the publication date of these most autobiographical books, and includes ‘The Poles, the Jews and I’, as well as an extraordinary, untitled mosaic essay which begins with the line ‘suddenly, there is no time...’.⁹ In leaving traces of a life, he reflected, ‘the first thought is about death’ (Bauman, 2023: 14). To evoke the tributes published by this very journal, the products of his vocation, of ‘the work itself’, are the ‘intimations of his immortality’ (Armitage, 2017: 279; Tester, 2017: 306).

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¹ In a letter to the sociologist Irving Louis Horowitz, who expressed an interest in publishing these essays under the title *Paradoxes of Assimilation* for Transaction Publishers (which Horowitz headed) Bauman said that these were 'my Jewish studies'. Letter from Zygmunt Bauman to Irving Louis Horowitz, 19 May 1989, Amstrad File, 'Horomay.pdf', in Papers of Janina and Zygmunt Bauman.

² As Bauman wrote later: 'The 'exile' under discussion here is not necessarily a case of physical, bodily mobility. It may involve leaving one country for another, but it need not ... the distinguishing mark of all exile, and particularly the writer's exile (that is the exile articulated in words and thus made a communicable *experience*) is the refusal to be integrated – the determination to stand out from the physical space, to conjure up a place of one's own, different from the space in which those around are settled, a place unlike the places left behind and unlike the places of arrival' (Bauman, 2000: 208).

³ Papers of Janina and Zygmunt Bauman, MS 2067/B/2/6/2.

⁴ This conference was a joint venture of UNESCO's International Council for Philosophy and the International Social Science Council. See letters from Julia Kristeva to Zygmunt Bauman, 8 March 1967 and 22 January 1968, Papers of Janina and Zygmunt Bauman, MS2067/B/5/1.

⁵ This event was also sponsored by UNESCO and the International Council for Philosophy and Humanistic Studies (for some reflections on this event, set within the midst of the Paris protests, see Hobsbawm, 2002: 246-7).

⁶ Letter from Bruno Latour to Zygmunt Bauman, 23 October 1999, Papers of Janina and Zygmunt Bauman, MS 2067/B/5/9.

⁷ Papers of Janina and Zygmunt Bauman, MS 2067/B/2/7/4.

⁸ 'INTERVIEW – Patrick', Papers of Janina and Zygmunt Bauman, digital files, disk 92.

⁹ I discuss this mosaic essay in my contribution to Peter Beilharz and Janet Wolff's volume on Bauman's photography (Palmer, 2023b).