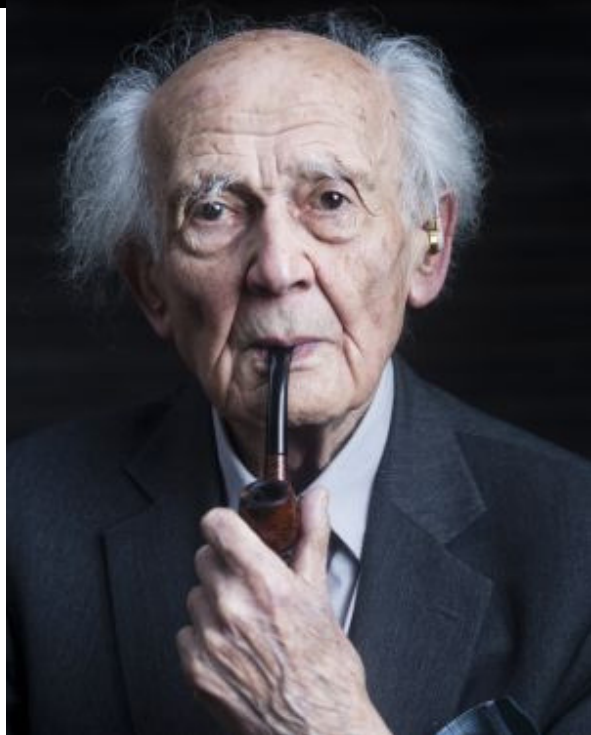


Remembering



Bauman

1925-2017

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Intro

Everyone at Manchester University Press was deeply saddened to learn of the death of Zygmunt Bauman. He was seen as a true original by many of our publishing colleagues, who, like budding disciples, read his work, attended his public lectures and spent hours encouraging booksellers and sales reps to spread the word in the hope that others would be as enriched as we were the first time we picked up a Bauman book.

And we were not alone...it turns out that our series editors and authors feel the same way, as shown in the reflections contained in this short piece, which include personal memories of Bauman the PhD examiner, or Bauman the shape-shifter, Bauman the liquid modern author, and Bauman the moral sociologist. Fascinating insights not just into Bauman himself but also our own thoughts, impressions of Bauman, as well as our appreciation of the gifts he has given to us in the form of his writings and, for those fortunate enough, private discussions.

If you have read Bauman we hope you will appreciate the reflections presented here. For those of you who are new to Bauman, please read on and see for yourself, then once you have finished, go out and read something by Bauman himself to truly get a sense of what all the fuss is about...

Remembering Zygmunt Bauman



In 1989, my PhD supervisor at Durham University, the late Irving Velody, suggested that Zygmunt Bauman would be a good external examiner for my thesis, a study of Nietzsche, Weber and Foucault. I had engaged with his 1987 work on intellectuals, *Legislators and Interpreters*, and was reading the tour de force that was *Modernity and the Holocaust* so this seemed a good, if slightly frightening, prospect. When the day of the viva came, Bauman and I were ushered into Robin Williams's somewhat small office that rapidly filled with smoke as Bauman puffed away on his pipe and I assuaged my nerves by chain-smoking cigarettes. In a relatively short time, we were immersed in a fug of fumes pierced only by very rapid Polish-accented questions, tentative replies and a growing number of requests for repetition as Bauman and I became increasingly invisible to one another. After about one and a half hours, we emerged into relatively fresh air. I had a PhD and Zygmunt was instructing me on what I had to do next – publish the thesis – and letting me know that he would write a strong letter of recommendation to the publisher urging them to accept it, which he duly did. This was, I discovered, an entirely characteristic piece of generosity – and although I took my time rewriting the thesis as a book and trying to find a job, Zygmunt remained a strong, if slightly impatient, supporter. Although we met occasionally over the next twenty plus years, my abiding memory of Zygmunt will be of infectious, even mischievous, intellectual enthusiasm forever encased in a penumbra of pipe smoke.

David Owen, University of Southampton, series editor of *Critical Powers*

Ave atque vale, Zygmunt Bauman

Suddenly he was gone. With a typical lack of fanfare, Zygmunt Bauman shivered our timbers for one last time. Hearing of Zygmunt's death last Monday afternoon, I had two immediate reactions. The first was a feeling of profound sadness; the second was a selfish complaint – for a moment, I just thought 'What am I going to do without that constant stream of books that always make it seem as if they are the only ones that matter?' While the former quickly turned into sympathy for Zygmunt's loved ones, the latter turned into sensible aftershock – as if he, the great sociologist, hadn't already left me, all of us, with more than enough to read.

The intellectualising will start soon enough about how great a sociologist Zygmunt was. And as the tributes are being paid, it will all seem very cosy, the end of an honourable life of astonishing achievement. But some of us will remember that it wasn't always like this, because there was a time not so long ago when some know-nothings found sport in subjecting an old man to an attempted character assassination. Was it pure jealousy of his sheer success, or was it that this parvenu had made the established ways of doing sociology – and those who practice them – look out of touch with everyday reality? Who knows? All I want to say at the moment is what he did for me.

**'In transforming himself
Zygmunt also transformed
sociology'**

There is a quotation from Robert Musil that says: 'A man who wants the truth becomes a scientist; a man who wants to give free play to his subjectivity may become a writer; but what should a man do who wants something in between?' Well, he becomes Zygmunt Bauman Mark Two, a typical 'man without qualities', who as Musil argued, is the only kind of man who can possess any quality. It was in the late 1980s that Zygmunt became a shape-shifter, when he transformed himself from a cultural Marxist sociologist into Zygmunt Bauman Mark Two, Zygmunt Bauman, with the publication of a series of brilliant studies on modernity.

In transforming himself Zygmunt also transformed sociology. Sociology is like an old clock that stops ticking from time to time and needs to be shaken to get it working once again, and if that doesn't do the trick, opened up and disassembled, its gears, springs, sprockets and levers cleaned, oiled, and its 'movement' – the clock's condition embodied in its 'tick-tock' sound – made to run in an even balanced beat. Unlike clock-menders, scholars overhaul subject fields by leaving parts behind that after decades of use have become unnecessary to their workings, replacing these with new ones. They can't afford to be sentimental when it comes to replacing old parts; if getting the clock back 'in beat' is the objective, then it's best to replace what no longer works. In 1989, Zygmunt contributed a chapter to an edited book on Tony Giddens's sociology. He concluded with a challenge. After arguing that sociology is an anachronism with deep roots in the nineteenth century, he said that 'to claim the right to speak with authority sociology would have to update its theory of society'. In the years that followed he not only helped sociology get back its even balanced beat by just doing that with his penetrating insights on liquid modernity, but in so doing he magicked a nineteenth-century academic discipline into a twenty-first-century one.

Zygmunt's sociology was curiously slow-burn when it came to engaging my own imagination and I can only apologise for being late to catch on. But eventually I fell under its spell. I remember the day well. It was a stunning revelation. The actual epiphany – which was so incredible that a physical thrill ran through me as it dawned that another kind of thinking existed – occurred whilst I was reading *Mortality, Immortality and Other Life Strategies*.

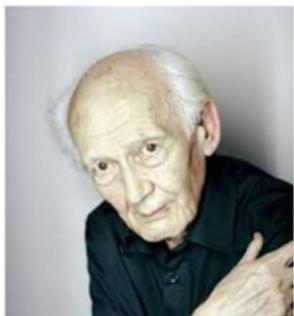
This is a book in which we see Zygmunt at the height of his sociological powers. It takes a single subject – poignantly, death – and finds doors to open in all directions. Amongst many other things it brilliantly reveals is that what is most important surrounding its topic is not that mortality is as certain as paying taxes, or even that for some people immortality is a pervasive need, but that without death life is not worth living. Zygmunt led a fine life and met with a good end at the age of 91. Reading this book also made me realise two important integrated things: on the one hand, the hardest thing of all to see is often what is directly in front of our eyes, and on the other, that thinking sociologically is above all else about learning to see differently. It dawned on me that day that Zygmunt was by an incalculable distance the pre-eminent thinker of his generation and a revolutionary who in challenging sociology's orthodoxies had changed it forever. Sociology was now a combination of four things in one. It was first sociological hermeneutics (not to be confused with hermeneutic sociology), second a healthy expression on behalf of those marginalised in our global world and unable to express the source of their humiliation themselves, third a guide to all of us for how to live our lives, and fourth a political manifesto.

We admire brilliance and respect achievement, but the thing that actually moves us is humanity and kindness. By all accounts Zygmunt wasn't the best teacher or the best research supervisor – his impatience with those less gifted than he saw to that. He was a man who did what he loved – reading and writing – did both wonderfully well and brought erudition to his students in the combining of the two. Even so he still managed to make a lasting impression on the lives of many of them with his personal touch. He always felt for those who needed feeling for and was an indefatigable supporter of those in need. To take just one example, a few years ago I struck up a conversation with a woman on a train journey, who turned out to be a former student of Zygmunt's from the 1970s.

Gushing in praise for her mentor, the woman told me the story of how she had been mortified to find herself pregnant in the first year of her degree, and how on hearing about her dilemma Zygmunt took her under his wing and helped guide her to a first class honours degree. Zygmunt was a beacon in a dark, uncertain world, and there will, I'm afraid, not be another like him. We should be grateful to our very core that his time has also been our time. Before long the thirteen most influential letters in sociology today – Zygmunt Bauman – will be little more than a name in textbooks. As is the way with immortals in our information age, Zygmunt himself will live forever on dated YouTube footage. And doubtless the University of Leeds will name a building after him. But it will be his work, his gift to us, that will be his memorial now. And for those of us who were lucky enough to be captured by its magic, he will always burn bright in our imaginations. The conspicuous 'man without qualities' who rewrote what sociology is and now moves on to a better place.

I salute you, Zygmunt Bauman, and goodbye.

Tony Blackshaw, Sheffield Hallam University and editor of
The new Bauman reader, 2016



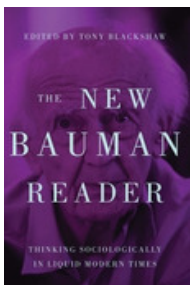
Bauman and the age of liquid modern publishing

I never met Zygmunt Bauman, but I feel I have published in the shadow of his influence throughout my career as a commissioning editor of sociology and politics. His work has informed my reading of sociology, shaped the books I have commissioned – on postmodernity, consumption, globalisation, precarity, even the way I think about the publishing industry, which seemed to enter a decisively liquid modern phase from about the turn of the millennium, as data-base entry and strategy meetings began to supplant intellectual exchange with authors and colleagues.

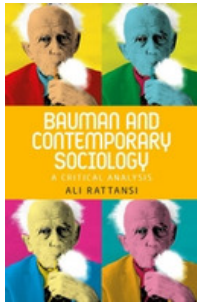
Modernity and the Holocaust was published just as I started at Routledge in 1989. This was the year of the Central European revolutions: the work of this brilliant Polish émigré was a sobering alternative to the euphoric narratives of the *annus mirabilis*. From then and throughout my publishing career, Bauman has published at least a book a year: *Intimations of Postmodernity* (1992) was one of the texts that fired Routledge's cultural studies programme; *Thinking Sociologically* became my guide as I started to commission sociology for UCL press and as I did my MSc at Birkbeck. As Bauman entered a long term relationship with Polity for his 'liquid' series, I tried and failed to get Polity to employ me.

Though I was never Bauman's book publisher, he generously contributed essays to a number of books I published over the years, starting with a perspicacious foreword to Ralph Fevre's *The Demoralization of Western Culture* for Continuum in 2000, to, most recently, an original essay in Tony Blackshaw's *The new Bauman reader* for MUP in 2016. He was unfailingly intellectually generous, conscientious and thoughtful. Partly as a consequence of my personal interest in Bauman's work, I have been lucky enough to work with some of the best of those writers who engage with it: I commissioned commentaries by Michael Hviid Jacobsen & Poul Poder and by Mark Davis for Ashgate, worked with Tony Blackshaw on his recent MUP Bauman reader (the original *Bauman Reader*, by Peter Beilharz, which I still like very much, having been partially superseded by Bauman's tremendous late-summer productivity). In summer 2017, MUP will publish a new book: *Bauman and contemporary sociology* by Ali Rattansi. Rattansi's is an engaged critique of the liquid modernity phase of Bauman's work in particular, though it ranges more widely too. I hope it will help to introduce Bauman to a new generation of students, as well as offer a persuasive (and sometimes controversial) reading to sociologists. But I very much regret that Bauman will not be around to respond to it, or to develop further his astute reflections on our contemporary predicament – Brexit, refugees, the new Populism – at a time when we seem to need him more than ever.

Caroline Wintersgill, Commissioning
Editor, MUP



The new Bauman reader
ed. Tony Blackshaw



Reflections on Zygmunt Bauman, 1925-2017

With the passing of the globally-renowned sociologist Zygmunt Bauman on 9 January this year, a unique and highly influential voice has sadly fallen silent. He was widely admired for his singular brand of sociology and his indefatigable support for the world's poor and downtrodden. His vision was his own, but of course his form of sociological thinking had its roots in his intellectual formation and biographical circumstances. He was born in Poznan, Poland into a poor Jewish family that had to flee to Russia (the Soviet Union as it was then) to escape the invading Nazis. Bauman fought in the war with the Polish army and was awarded a military Cross of Valour.

After the war, he stayed in the army as an intelligence officer, but also studied sociology at the Warsaw Academy of Political and Social Science. He was forced out of the army by anti-Semitism in 1953. He became a lecturer in sociology at the University of Warsaw, but was again dismissed, in 1968, in an anti-Semitic purge and for his support for students who were campaigning for greater democratisation. At this time he was only in his early thirties, but Bauman had already experienced Nazism, war, Stalinism and the anti-Semitism of a communist state that he had supported as a committed Marxist. Bauman emigrated with his young family to an academic post in Israel, but left to take up a professorship in sociology at the University of Leeds in 1971. He stayed in Leeds until his death.

Bauman's Marxism was profoundly different from the rigid, doctrinaire official version promulgated under Stalinist regimes. Bauman was part of a new humanist, revisionist, more democratic current that was sweeping Eastern Europe and included other leading Polish intellectuals such as Leszek Kolakowski, who also emigrated. Bauman was particularly influenced by his sociology teachers at Warsaw, Hochfeld and Ossowski, who rejected a scientific, economically determinist version of Marxism. Instead, Bauman, and his teachers and many colleagues, embraced a humanistic sociology, inflected by hermeneutics, in which praxis replaced notions of laws of history. The Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci was a particular favourite in Bauman's intellectual circle, and thus an emphasis on the significance of popular culture in shoring up elite rule became an abiding element of Bauman's analyses. The Frankfurt School of Critical Theory and its unorthodox version of Marxism, in which Weberian themes of the dominance of 'instrumental reason' in Western modernity played a significant role, was to become an even more abiding influence on Bauman's thinking.

Had it not been for the publication of the controversial *Modernity and the Holocaust* in 1989, Bauman might have remained a relatively obscure figure. As he admitted, his interest in the Holocaust was sparked by his wife Janina's moving memoir of life in the Warsaw ghetto, *Winter in the Morning* (1986). Bauman's arresting thesis that it was not Germany's unique history, but the ordinary workings of normal, industrial modernity and its bureaucratic state that were primarily responsible for the Holocaust, was not entirely original, for Hannah Arendt and the German historian Raul Hilberg had argued along similar lines. But the power of Bauman's writing and the boldness of the argument immediately created a stir. Writing now from a post-Marxist, postmodernist perspective, for Bauman 'Modernity' was the prime animating and enabling factor in the Holocaust, rather than anti-Semitism. His book was awarded the European Amalfi Prize for Sociology and was widely read and debated, especially in Germany.

The Holocaust book unlocked a remarkable creative energy in Bauman, and he now began publishing books and articles at an astonishing pace. And there were some major, highly influential books in his rapidly expanding oeuvre. What was especially notable was Bauman's insistence that sociological analysis was barren without a moral underpinning, and so it is not surprising that books such as *Postmodern Ethics*, *Life in Fragments*, *Intimations of Postmodernity* and *In Search of Politics*, all published in the 1990s, began to influence a growing number of younger sociologists, especially those who had been his students at Leeds.

Although he formally renounced an allegiance to the postmodern current in his *Liquid Modernity* (2000), preferring the notion of 'liquid modernity' to 'postmodernity', his coruscating critique of a wide range of modern 'evils', as he came to call them, continued, and earned him respect and an ever-growing readership. Chief among the evils was the never-ending cycle of consumerism, waste and even more credit-driven consumerism. And he was a particular champion of what he called the 'new poor' or 'flawed consumers', liquid modernity's 'outcasts', locked out and humiliated by a culture in which wealth concentrated into the hands of a tiny elite, greed, celebrity and the degeneration of political debate into 'infotainment' became the norm.

In the new, rapidly growing globalisation, Bauman again focussed on the losers and the growing dispossessed. He pointed not only to the new world disorder, but the way in which what he called 'extra-territorial elites' and multinational corporations, with their ability to move around the globe in search of the lowest taxes and wages for workers, made the nation-state an irrelevance and rendered national states impotent. He highlighted, too, the growing individualisation, insecurity and anxiety that haunted ordinary citizens in the wealthy Western countries, especially the new 'precarariat', and in his last writings on Trump and the new populism, he saw the new economic insecurities and anxieties of an age of excessive individualism as important drivers.

His analyses were not without their flaws. In my forthcoming book I highlight his Eurocentrism, neglect of issues of gender and his surprising lack of attention to the racism faced by Europe's black, Asian and Arab immigrant communities. His remained very much a male, white European gaze. And yet his insistent focus on the dispossessed, the expelled, the shamed and the powerless, and his clarion call for a sociology that always had moral purpose rather than a 'scientific neutrality' will have a resounding influence as we face an even greater period of uncertainty and anxiety.

Ali Rattansi, City, University of London

Ali Rattansi's Bauman and contemporary sociology: a critical analysis will be published by Manchester University Press later this year

"...his insistent focus on the dispossessed, the expelled, the shamed and the powerless, and his clarion call for a sociology that always had moral purpose rather than a 'scientific neutrality' will have a resounding influence as we face an even greater period of uncertainty and anxiety."



“Beneath the dream of fame, another dream, a dream of no longer dissolving and staying dissolved in the grey, faceless and insipid mass of commodities, a dream of turning into a notable, noticed and coveted commodity, a talked about commodity, a commodity standing out from the mass of commodities, a commodity impossible to overlook, to deride, to be dismissed. In a society of consumers, turning into a desirable commodity is the stuff of which dreams, and fairy tales, are made.”

Zygmunt Bauman, *Consuming Life*, 2007, Polity Press

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