

“Our Ears Lived Their Own Lives” The Auditory Experience in Breslau Autobiographical Literature during the ‘Third Reich’

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Abstract

With Adolf Hitler coming to power in January 1933, the National Socialists staged their dominance in the city center of Breslau by using various visual and auditory elements – including swastikas, singing, marching, dispersing rumors – to spread their influence and keep the people under control. How were these changes in the city soundscape used for social exclusion and territory-marking? How were they experienced by the Jewish population and how can they be related to questions of identity and (non-)belonging? Addressing these questions with the corpus of autobiographical writings – both diaries and autobiographies – from Jewish victims from the city of Breslau will be the main aim of this article. This study of literary testimonies will focus on the constant and changing sounds of propaganda in Breslau, sound technologies such as radio and loudspeakers used for propaganda, and the relation between sound, identity, and trauma.

Keywords: city soundscape; Breslau; ‘Third Reich’; autobiographies; diaries; identity; trauma

1. Introduction

Various elements always contribute to the living environment of the individual, such as familiar buildings and landscapes, the use of writing in public space, smells, sounds of traffic, and familiar and unfamiliar voices. Most of the time, people are not conscious of the effects of these environmental elements, as Anne Buttimer (1980, p. 167) has pointed out: “the awareness of values associated with space is not brought to consciousness until they are threatened: normally they are part of the fabric of everyday life [...]”. When these familiar elements of urban space no longer exist or suddenly change, it leads to a certain disorientation and triggers

questions of identity and belonging. This is clearly manifest in diaries and autobiographies written during and/or after the ‘Third Reich’¹ – a moment of rupture in history when the living environment lost its façade of neutrality and became a stage for the exertion of national power.

In this context, references are often made to visual elements, such as the omnipresent swastikas, soldiers and SS with their party uniforms, signs with the text ‘Forbidden for Jews’, posters of the anti-Semitic journal *Der Stürmer*, and leaflets. This could be linked to a claim of Gustave Le Bon (2002, p. 35), who held as early as 1895 that crowds of people can only think and be influenced through images, since “it is only images that terrify them or attract them or become motives of action”. Carolyn Birdsall (2012, p. 35) writes that, therefore, “visual forms frequently [are] the preferred cultural objects for analyses of National Socialism”. The same can be stated for witnesses of this period, who are referred to as ‘eyewitnesses’ – a phrase emphasizing visual observation. However, the public staging of national socialist power was not only visual, but also significantly auditory. In this context, reference should be made to the Horst-Wessel-Lied buzzing through the air, the youth movements singing and cheering, verses stigmatizing the Jews, widespread rumors, loudspeakers used for public indoctrination, the roar of marching music, the planes in the air. Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels stressed that the spoken word exerted more effect than written words. For this reason, there was a strong focus on speeches and sounds in general, as he shared the view that sound could generate enthusiasm for the party (see Birdsall, 2012, p. 42). Moreover, it was Adolf Hitler himself who stated in March 1933: “In my opinion, sound is more suggestive than the image” and stressed the “magic force of the spoken word” (as cited in Birdsall, 2012, p. 36).

It is exactly the sounds and the auditory experiences of the ‘Third Reich’ that will be central to this article, which will focus on sound in urban space and everyday life. Publications such as Renata Tańczuk and Sławomir Wieczorek’s *Sounds of war and peace: Soundscapes of European cities in 1945* (2018); Carolyn Birdsall’s *Nazi soundscapes: Sound, technology and urban space in Germany, 1933-1945* (2012); Karin Bijsterveld’s *Soundscapes of the urban past: Staged sound as mediated cultural heritage* (2013) are just a few examples of a recent increased interest in sound.² However, it is striking in this context that most of the attention has been paid to the role of music as “boosting morale and shaping cultural experience” (Birdsall, 2016, p. 112) and specifically to the wartime years with a focus on the sounds of sirens, air raids and bombings (Birdsall, 2012, p. 119).³

¹ The terminology used or created by the National Socialists themselves will be put in single quotation marks.

² For more information on some keywords on soundscapes, I would like to mention Carolyn Birdsall (2012, p. 27), who refers to some important pioneer works, such as the one of Alain Corbin (1994/1998), who “analysed the debates about church bells in the French countryside and their structuring of time, power, meaning and identity in the early nineteenth century” (Birdsall, 2012, p. 27).

³ In this context, Annelies Jacobs (2018, pp. 12-13) noted that much work still had to be done: “Although scholarship on the Second World War has covered nearly all its aspects, the soundscape to which urban residents were exposed during those trying and dangerous years of war has largely been ignored. [...] Thus far, little research has been conducted into sounds during wartime”. Peter Bailey (1998, p. 211) also stressed the need for further research into non-visual culture, as historians “habitually invoke the ‘sights and sounds’ of an era as necessary objects of their enquiry, but the latter rarely receive more than lip service”.

As a counterpoint, my contribution aims to investigate the auditory dimensions of the changing living environment in Breslau as experienced by Jewish victims during the ‘Third Reich’ to the end of the so-called *Festung Breslau*⁴ in May 1945 as described in diaries and autobiographies of Jewish inhabitants. The diarists and autobiographers are in this case considered as not merely eyewitnesses, but also as ‘earwitnesses’.⁵ For space reasons, I will not focus on the sounds and their attached meaning during the war, as there have already been many references to them.⁶ Instead, I will pay particular attention to the sounds that become part of the everyday life under National Socialism beginning when Hitler seized power in January 1933.

The objective of this article will be threefold: first, I will focus on technology and how the different sounds were dispersed throughout the city through radio and loudspeaker installations. Second, I will examine the changed audio dimension in the city of Breslau during the ‘Third Reich’. I will focus on what the authors hear, how they refer to the changing soundscape around them, and how it influences their self-image. Third, I will scrutinize how sound can be related to trauma and how the autobiographers refer to this topic in their writings.

2. The Corpus: Diaries and Autobiographies of Breslau

The city of Berlin is always given more attention than other ones; this is not surprising “given the symbolic, political and cultural significance attributed to Germany’s capital city” (Birdsall, 2012, p. 13). Nevertheless, I will confine my exploration of the staging of urban sound and the auricular experience to the city of Breslau as represented in two diaries and two autobiographies. There are a number of reasons to focus on autobiographical literature from the Oder-Metropolis. Breslau used to be home to the third largest Jewish community in Germany (after Berlin and Frankfurt). The Jews were relatively well integrated in the city’s economic, political and cultural life. In January 1933, however, this favorable situation ended abruptly. Some managed to escape, while others remained in Breslau and wrote down their everyday experiences. As Breslau became Polish Wrocław after 1945, it was subsequently no longer an object of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* in German research. In the six articles about the soundscape in Wrocław contained in the above quoted book *Sounds of war and peace*, it is surprising that the focus is solely on Germans and Poles, but not on Jews, who will be central here. In the context of the present study, it is interesting to note that Breslau was the first city where the National Socialists installed public loudspeakers (*Reichslautsprechersäulen*) (Note by Norbert Conrads in Cohn, 2006, p. 764). Moreover, there is a corpus of autobiographies and diaries related to this city that has heretofore remained unexplored but will be the focus of this article.

⁴ For more information about Breslau being one of the latest cities serving as a buffer against the Red Army, see among others: Richard Hargreaves (2014), *Hitler's final fortress: Breslau 1945*. Horst Gleiss has also collected memoirs, documents and photos in the 10-part series *Breslauer Apokalypse 1945* (1987).

⁵ In this context, compare Birdsall (2012, p. 11), who refers to the origin of the concept of earwitness in the 1970s with Elias Canetti and R. Murray Schafer.

⁶ See for instance Birdsall (2012, pp. 103-180); also the book of Tańczuk and Wiczorek (2018) on *Sounds of war and peace* is enlightening in this context.

Authors Willy Cohn, Walter Tausk, Karla Wolff and Kenneth James Arkwright⁷ all refer to different and changing sensory experiences in the city in the period 1933-1945 that influenced the Jewish residents' self-image.

Even though it may seem peculiar to focus on written texts instead of tapes or recorded documents in the context of soundscape⁸, I do not use written sources for lack⁹ of auditory materials or because of the ephemerality of sound. I opt for written texts for three main reasons: first of all, radio scholar Josephine Dolan underlines that textual sources are indispensable to “take a closer listen” (Zuydervelt, 2009), since “the listening subject is constituted in relation to a range of cultural competencies that are produced at the interface of written, photographic and aural texts” (Dolan, 2003, p. 70). Second, and related to the previous point, historian Mark M. Smith and architect and social scientist Annelies Jacobs (2018, p. 12) remark that the meaning of sound and the ways of listening are tied to space and time and that written documents provide a “large majority of important insights” (Birdsall, 2012, p. 13; Smith, Snay, Smith, 2004, pp. 394-405) into the significance and value of sounds that original sound recordings cannot provide. In the written texts, the reader becomes aware of how the writer perceived, interpreted, and judged the sounds around him (see also Bijsterveld, 2013, p. 14, 21). The sounds that have disappeared can be brought back – as perceived through the subjectivity of the witness – by reading (see Zimpel, 2018, pp. 88-89). That is why R. Murray Schafer, who investigates the relationship between people and (changing) sounds in their environment in his book *The Tuning of the World* (1977/1994, p. 6), considers the ideal earwitness as an “author who lived in the past and who can be trusted when writing about sounds directly experienced and intimately known”. The references to the perceived sounds recreate the atmosphere of the city in the text (see Zimpel, 2018, p. 87); therefore, literature can be considered “an archive of lost sounds” (see Tańczuk & Wiczorek, 2018, p. 9). Moreover, as a literary scholar, I am interested primarily in literature and the representation of – in this case – different sounds in texts. Third, as Sten Pulz Moslund put it,

[j]ust as the place inevitably enters the main character through his body, nose, ears, eyes, and heart, the place inevitably enters the language of the book, issuing forth the smells of this place, its tastes and its sounds, its heat, its colors, its shapes and its temporal dimensions. (2011, p. 36)

In other words, the perceived sounds and other sensory experiences are displayed in the written text, as this medium “offers insight into the sensory, embodied experience of the city” (Tańczuk & Wiczorek, 2018, p. 10), making it an appropriate medium for exploring Breslau's soundscape.

⁷ His original name was Klaus Aufrichtig. All English quotations have been translated by the author. Italics have been added for emphasis. (Note: Yiddish/Hebrew words are in italics in the original publication of the diaries and are retained here).

⁸ I refer to the definition of Dorian Lange (2018, pp. 248-249): “A soundscape is understood as a sum or a collection of all audible elements, that is, perceivable acoustic manifestations, over a given time at a given place”.

⁹ Karin Bijsterveld (2013, p. 14) notes the following about this lack: “We usually do not have direct access to these past sounds, however. There are very few recordings of everyday Western life before 1900, in part because early anthropologists focused on making recordings of non-Western societies. And for the years up until World War II, most recordings of everyday sonic environments were in fact made for radio plays and films”.

Even though my selection of diaries and autobiographies does not reflect the whole population of Breslau, the authors considered in my study represent different social classes, convictions, and age categories. Therefore, they offer descriptions of a variety of sounds heard and experienced in the city. As the sources are previously unexplored materials, this article aims to open a dialogue that can inspire further investigations of this kind.

3. Sound, Technology and Breslau's Urban Landscape

Already from the beginning of the 'Third Reich', the cityscape of Breslau underwent radical changes. Walter Tausk refers to how the new regime acted daily: "About Nazi government art: Since February 23, every day at half past eight, Nazi people with big flags, newspaper posters and above all the jangling of 'coin boxes' are moving to exposed corners and squares in the city [...]" (Tausk, February 24, 1933, p. 28). Willy Cohn also notes down the changes he sees and hears:

Today is Hitler's birthday! Flags, trams with little flags, always one with the swastika and another with the black-white-red flag. The Horst-Wessel-Lied¹⁰ sounded from the open windows of a house. One was reminded of Wilhelm II's birthday. There is food for the needy!! (Cohn, April 20, 1933, p. 33)

Here, it becomes clear that the Nazis combined both visual ("big flags", "newspaper posters", trams with flags) and auditory elements ("jangling of coin boxes", "Horst-Wessel-Lied") in order to "achieve spatial and auditory omnipresence", to "sound out the city" (Birdsall, 2012, p. 139), and to dominate the environment. Sound was regarded as an excellent medium with which to establish presence¹¹, as it goes beyond the field of vision and so does not respect borders between public and private life (Birdsall, 2012, p. 36).¹²

In order to achieve this visual and auditory domination¹³, the Nazis even considered re-building the cities. Karolina Jara (2018) refers to plans for restructuring the city in her article "The soundscape of public space in Breslau during the period of National Socialism". These plans were created according to the law on the urban replanning of German cities (*Gesetz über die Neugestaltung deutscher Städte*) that would have included Breslau in 1939 (see Jara, 2018,

¹⁰ Horst Wessel was killed by communists in his home in 1930, and his song lyrics were employed as the second national anthem after 1933. This meant that he was repeatedly commemorated through song and remembrance during the 1930s and so was secured a sacred place in the canon of male "Nazi martyrs" (see Birdsall, 2012, pp. 37-38).

¹¹ See, for instance, the following passages: Cohn, May 28, 1933, p. 49; Cohn, September 10, 1933, p. 76; Cohn, September 14, 1935, p. 275.

¹² Jacques Attali (1985, p. 6) states in this context: "More than colors and forms, it is sounds and their arrangements that fashion societies. [...] In noise can be read the codes of life, the relations among men. Clamor, Melody, Dissonance, Harmony. [...] Everywhere codes analyze, mark, restrain, train, repress, and channel the primitive sounds of language, of the body, of tools, of objects, of the relations to self and others. All music, any organization of sounds is then a tool for the creation or consolidation of a community, of a totality. It is what links a power center to its subjects, and thus, more generally, it is an attribute of power in all of its forms".

¹³ That is also why Birdsall (2012, p. 32) writes about "twin principles of sonic omnipresence and spatial monumentality underpinning emergent Nazi commemorative practices".

p. 156). The plans show the political strategies for auditory presence and focus on an impressive architecture with acoustic qualities in order to redesign the city center, because – as Jara explains – “the urban fabric, as a material and visual factor, is intrinsically linked to the soundscape of a place” (2018, p. 144). She, therefore, highlights the importance of the interplay of vision and hearing, speculates on how a reshaping would have changed the sound environment, and demonstrates how the National Socialists wanted to increase their presence in Breslau, transforming the city to show its eternal greatness and indestructibility.¹⁴ The plans express ideas about “what the character of the city should be like” (Bijsterveld, 2013, p. 14).

Although these designs have not been executed, it can be stated that the Nazis dominated the urban space both visually and aurally and, consequently, controlled the social order of the city itself. The sounds of marching troops as well as the singing and cheering mentioned above – all resulted in a “festivalization of the everyday”. This notion, discussed by Birdsall (2012, p. 65), refers to the numerous events that took place daily and were used to demonstrate the power and unity of the new regime and its dominance over the rest of society (see Jara, 2018, pp. 154-155). These parties, festivals, and grand parades were “very much about monopolizing the space across which a particular imagining of the community can be enacted and projected to a wider audience” (Marston, 2002/2003, p. 383). They provided both entertainment for the masses and served the purposes of propaganda. It can be said that these festivals, marching and songs became “acoustic signatures” (Schmidt, 2018, p. 46) of the city soundscape or its “sound marks” (the term coined by R. Murray Schafer – Bijsterveld, 2013, p. 15). Moreover, music and singing together were seen to express unity in sound.¹⁵

However, this unity only applied to members of the party and ‘Aryans’, since (spatial) domination always implies freeing the environment from unwanted elements – for example, the ban of subversive noise and the rejection of different political and social groups from public life (see Bijsterveld, 2013, pp. 17, 71; Attali, 1985, p. 7).¹⁶ Therefore, the festival organized almost daily functioned both inclusively and exclusively, as not everyone was allowed to take part in the festivities for the nation. As Lynn Hunt (1984) and Colin Lucas (1988) argue, festivals and public rituals have often been used to stage the nation, and they were often marked by such an exclusion-inclusion dynamic at least since the French Revolution. This was also made clear in the cityscape, as the Jews and political opponents were not allowed to decorate their houses during such parades. Willy Cohn and Walter Tausk refer very often to this social exclusion, when the Jews are not allowed to open their windows or to take part in the mass celebrations¹⁷:

¹⁴ According to Winfried Süß and Malte Thießen (2017, p. 15), the enormous destruction because of the Second World War appeared as a unique opportunity to redesign Germany’s cities from the ground up.

¹⁵ Another characteristic of music appears in the autobiography *Ihr sollt die Wahrheit erben. Breslau – Auschwitz – Bergen Belsen* (1997) of Anita Lasker-Wallfisch, also known as the ‘Cellist of Auschwitz’. For her, music played a very important role. It was a good distraction for her during her time in Breslau; afterwards, in Auschwitz, it literally became her survival instrument.

¹⁶ This should all be realized in the context of the so-called *Gleichschaltung* the Nazis were striving for, referring to the aim of political conformity, homogeneity and social reorganization. For more information, see the following chapter of Birdsall’s contribution: “Affirmative Resonances in Urban Space” (pp. 31-63).

¹⁷ See also Cohn, March 23, 1936, p. 315; Tausk, March 22, 1936, pp. 143-144.

The mood is very moderate among the people. Among the whole nation! One has enough of the eternal celebrations! Instead, the government celebrates the First of May as the National Day of Labour. [...] It sounds like a joke when Minister of Propaganda Goebbels blows the whistle: ‘On Labour Day, Jews may not put on swastikas or other party badges of the national parties. Nor are they allowed to affix swastika flags or take part in public celebrations.’ I say there: what modern person with a really sober mind participates in a popular amusement at all, may it be called what it is called. (Tausk, April 29, 1933, pp. 67-68)

As festivals became the norm – which is evidenced by the many events listed on the calendar during the ‘Third Reich’ – Tausk is sick of these alienating parties. The fact that Tausk thinks that people “have enough” of all the festivals and that he despises Hitler’s voice as “gurgling, ruffling, swallowing, roaring, whining, praying, pitying” (September 1, 1939, p. 230) could be interpreted as “not wanting to see or to communicate with the ‘enemy’” (Jacobs, 2018, p. 20). It can also be seen as a rhetorical strategy to present the noisemakers as a group with whom he does not want to identify (see Bijsterveld, 2013, p. 13). It is also clear from this quote that different listeners attach different meanings to sound¹⁸ and that sound is a contested phenomenon: what is noise for some is considered music by others. Tausk acts differently than the crowd does when he hears these noises: instead of cheering, he remains silent and lives his own life. He does not want to be identified with this exaggerated festivalization of the everyday. This resembles the attitude of Cohn, who avoids going out on such days:

It is said that the Führer also comes to Breslau. We Jews avoid the celebration road on such days, not for fear, but above all to keep the natural distance. It hardly touches us inwardly anymore. I used to be interested in everything related to the progress of my home province; that has now changed; one only has the feeling of merely being a guest! (Cohn, September 27, 1936, p. 359)¹⁹

This makes it clear that the identity of the city during the ‘Third Reich’ is constructed by using sound and visual presence, which affects identification with the place (see Tańczuk, 2018, p. 181). This leads the Jews to leave for other destinations or, as Cohn states, to withdraw from public life (Cohn, December 22, 1938, p. 571). It can be stated that the domination of the National Socialist Party caused a reduction of the visual and sonic presence of the Jews (see Birdsall, 2012, p. 98).²⁰

In the cases where the Jews and other (political) opponents were part of the parades, they were treated disagreeably, depicted as intruders and laughed at as they walked through cities. Tausk describes the day he saw such a parade when people were forced to go to the camp Dürrgoy in Breslau:

I won’t forget the sight, it should be preserved for posterity. Around twelve o’clock I have to go into town again and see a dense crowd of people, many policemen and a crowd of cyclists on Eichbornstraße. Everyone is staring at the police building, [...] So I walk on and

¹⁸ This varies according to circumstances, e.g. higher or lower sonic sensibility, education, or in this case, ideological convictions (see Rybchynska, 2018, p. 140).

¹⁹ See also Cohn, April 20, 1939, p. 633.

²⁰ Birdsall (2012, p. 93) writes that the process of constructing the Jews as the cultural and visual Other was based on both visual and auditory representations.

hear gruesome tin music, a kind of music played on a fairground: wild, tactless cramming and in between “tin plates” of trumpets: Noise, but no music, and I follow the sounds. [...] and as I stand still, the long train of the prisoners comes out. I immediately notice the direction of the march: Höfchenstraße. But they first lead the poor people around the left, around the entire police headquarters, so that all that worked there – including Mr. Heines – could see the prisoners: they walk, so to speak, past Heines and the police: it is sadism and sophisticated humiliation in one. (Tausk, late August 1933, p. 107)

On different occasions, Tausk expresses the feeling of being stigmatized by noisy parades. The unifying aspect of participating in parades and violence associated with them reinforced the sense of belonging to the Volk and *Heimat* (Jeggle, 1972, p. 49). When writing about the concepts of ‘nation’, ‘Volk’ and ‘national community’, I refer to Benedict Anderson’s term “imagined community” (Anderson, 1991). With this notion, he refers to the fact that it is impossible to be actually in contact with all the members of a nation, but that it is possible to feel a profound “attachment and commitment to the nation based on an image of community” (Anderson, 1991, pp. 4-5). According to Anderson, this image of community can be disseminated through education and literature that create a “national public sphere” (Birdsall, 2012, p. 106). He also states that music is an important medium for constructing this image, as singing together can produce a sense of community (Jacobs, 2018, p. 26). Tausk is aware of this power of music and criticizes the misuse of this medium on different occasions:

With old war marches, with the songs of the freedom wars, with wild screams: “Heil” and “Deutschland erwache!” under: “Where are the communists? In the cellar! What are they doing there? Hu, hu,” the crowd of about twenty to twenty-five thousand moved in a torch-light procession. The new Reichstag was opened in Potsdam. I also heard some radio broadcasts of the celebrations. [...] that’s how the atmosphere is created. [...] *Aren’t the people today again being led into the “great, glorious, roaring battle” with music?* (Tausk, March 25, 1933, pp. 42-44; my emphasis)

In this diary note, Tausk criticizes the tension between sound as a source of both power and pleasure and as a disruption of his daily life – he hears the procession marching by in the vicinity of his house (see Birdsall, 2012, p. 104).

Not only festivals and musical parties dominated the city soundscape, but new technology also helped disperse the ‘sounds of the (new) nation’. Here, a reference should be made to the rise of the radio, which was used for propaganda and nation building. Although Anderson does not refer to the radio as a medium to create this sense of “imagined community”, the use of radio – “a relatively new medium in the inter-war period” (Jara, 2018, p. 150) – was common during the ‘Third Reich’. It was promoted as a medium for “uniting ‘the people’” (Birdsall, 2012, p. 110). Since radio diffuses the same messages to listeners all over the nation, it creates the possibility of “imagining oneself hearing the same sounds as other listeners” (Birdsall, 2012, p. 106). Radio thus plays an important role in producing a kind of emotional bond and even “self-sacrificing love” for the nation (Anderson, 1991, p. 141). The radio was also used to spread information about different attractions and festivals and thus create a national public sphere to participate in as “the immediate experience of collective identity” (Frith, 1996, p. 273). David Morley (2000, p. 107) also notes the radio’s unifying power, as the sounds link the periphery to the center, and the sounds of radio fill the house, linking the private life of

ordinary citizens with the political authorities and national community, as Ursula S. declares in an interview in 2004: “You really felt like you were part of something with everyone else. When radio programs had soldier requests for songs from different regions, it was like everyone’s father was fighting in the war: that you were all the same” (as cited in Birdsall, 2012, p. 113; see also Jara, 2018, p. 150; Hilmes, 1990, p. 354; Błaszczak, 2018, p. 223). This indicates the performative aspect of sound as creating a bond between different members. However, the Jews – as was the case with festivals and parades – could not take part in this experience of being united by the radio, since they had to turn in their radios in 1939.²¹ They were thus excluded from participation in the public audio sphere. The imagined community of Anderson, therefore, consisted only of those who were ‘Aryan’. Cohn expresses this feeling of exclusion: “As I write this, the streets are deserted: Führer’s speech and Reichstag meeting. The shops all had to close. I still don’t know what has been said because we don’t have a radio” (April 28, 1939, p. 637). Even though Cohn did not have a radio from the very beginning, he develops a tactic²² to get access to information spread by radios: he listens to the radio of his neighbors when their window is open (August 25, 1939, p. 678); he writes: “Through the wall I heard something from the radio of our neighbors about the occupation of Albania” (April 8, 1939, p. 629). On the other hand, he also relativizes this exclusion by stating that “Now you live without telephone, radio, car, almost without a tram, not bad at all. It’s a simpler life, you can walk a lot and withdraw into yourself”²³ (December 9, 1939, p. 727). This response of living life more for oneself also appears in the other diaries and autobiographies.

The dispersal of sounds, however, was not only limited to the radio. After a while, loudspeakers²⁴ were introduced as public address systems (cf. Staško-Mazur, 2018, p. 95). This medium demanded attention and participation of the people and was an even more wide-reaching phenomenon than the radio. Moreover, Breslau was the first city in the German Reich where the possibility for public hearing and indoctrination was established by installing such *Reichslautsprechersäulen*. Cohn refers to them for the first time on March 10, 1940 (p. 764), when he hears a Führer speech coming out of such a loudspeaker column; his writings indicate that these loudspeakers brought the citizens into contact with Hitler and the war. However, the installation of a sample system of so-called *Reichslautsprechersäulen* had already happened two years earlier on June 23, 1938, when 100 loudspeakers were installed shortly before the beginning of the German Gymnastics and Sports Festival (*Deutsches Turn- und Sportfest*) in July 1938. They were an effective medium for propaganda and the indoctrination of the people,

²¹ Cohn refers to this fact on September 23, 1939 (pp. 696-697) when his mother has to hand over her radio to the *Staatspolizei* on the day of *Yom Kippur*.

²² This can be related to the concepts “strategy” and “tactic” by Michel de Certeau (1984). The French philosopher uses the term “tactic” to refer to practices of the weak to cope with imposed rules of the “powerful”. For another example, see Cohn, August 11, 1939, p. 672.

²³ See also Cohn, December 14, 1935, p. 307.

²⁴ Before the use of these fixed loudspeakers, the Nazis already used *Lautsprecherwagen* to distribute important information. These trucks were “purpose-built vans with loudspeakers attached to the outside. These Siemens & Halske vans were rented out during election campaigns, as a means for attracting the attention of citizens with Nazi speeches, songs and party slogans” (Birdsall, 2012, p. 39; see also Paul, 1992, p. 198). By using such vans with attached loudspeakers, the party already reinforced its own auditory presence and expanded the range of sounds that reached the citizens in their private spaces.

as it was impossible in some urban areas to escape hearing their sound.²⁵ Cohn is confronted with news sounding from the loudspeakers several times, as he refers to them quite often, for example, when he visits the exhibitions at the *Jahrhunderthalle* with one of his daughters on May 25, 1941 (p. 940).²⁶ In this way, the city of Breslau, which used to seem like home to the Jews, became a place of continuous aural bombardment whose environment was always saturated with sounds (see the next part and Chambers, 1985; Chambers, 2017; Farina, 2014; Krause, 2016). The occupation of the soundscape took on new proportions to demonstrate the Nazis' increasing presence via new sound technologies (see Birdsall, 2012, pp. 39, 61).

The use of parades, radio, and loudspeakers for dispersing sounds and propaganda through the city illustrates Theodor Adorno's theory on sound and its political nature. According to him, music, noise, and silence are "cultural constructs" that are "used to create and strengthen the social system" (Adorno, 2002, pp. 391-436; Rybchynska, 2018, p. 140). Such political pressure in everyday life, control of propaganda, and social coercion are characteristic of totalitarian cultures (see Rybchynska, 2018, p. 138; Błaszczak, 2018, p. 228).

4. Textualized Sounds in the Diaries and Autobiographies

It is remarkable that the diarists refer only obliquely to 'normal' everyday sounds such as the rattling of trams or cars passing by. The reader can only presume that these specific sounds were part of the soundscape of Breslau, as the writers refer to the objects that caused them. This is not so surprising, since Georg Simmel (1997) and Theodor Lessing (1909) stated that people would "tune out" and become indifferent to the sounds of their environment because the so-called modern city produced so many vibrations in the air. Moreover, as Uta C. Schmidt (2018, p. 41) explains, "sounds only catch the ear when they change, arise or disappear radically" (see also Missfelder, 2012, p. 37). Karin Bijsterveld (2013, p. 14) and Tańczuk (2018, p. 186) share the opinion that people pay attention to sounds when the soundscape changes considerably, when they are aware of danger, and when they are moved by particular sounds, either in a positive or a negative way.

That is why Bijsterveld (2013, p. 14) writes about a "dramatization of sound" in text, film, and radio, as attention is mostly paid to conspicuous sounds. In this context, it is interesting to note that the writers do not only refer to the big parades with their enormous loud noises, but also to the smallest changes in the urban soundscape. There was a heightened auditory awareness in Breslau in this period, as more and more sounds of daily life became associated with anxiety; this led to an alienated experience of everyday life for Breslau's Jewish residents. In what follows, I will provide some specific examples, ranging from anti-Semitic verses to silence. In this context, the daily notes made by Willy Cohn and Walter Tausk will be central, as their diaries offer unique insights into the daily changes experienced in the capital of Silesia.

²⁵ See in this context: Reichsminister Dr. Goebbels nahm Musteranlage des Reichslautsprecheresäulennetzes in seine Obhut. In *Schlesien - Volk und Raum*. Vierteljahresschrift, July 1938, p. 145; Wagner, *Das jüdische Breslau und der Rundfunk in Breslau (1933–1949)* (forthcoming).

²⁶ For other references to the loudspeakers, see: Cohn, April 9, 1940, pp. 778-779; Cohn, May 10, 1940, p. 791; Cohn, June 3, 1940, p. 802.

4.1. Stigmatizing Anti-Semitic Verses and Rumors

The festivities and radio seizures were not the only means used to exclude the Jews. Radios also broadcasted anti-Semitic verses to stigmatize them. Cohn and Tausk both describe the changes in the urban soundscape and hostile comments against the Jews, as Tausk (December 11, 1938, p. 207) writes in his diary:

Out of rage people no longer know how to vent their hatred towards the Jews and they exercise it in the truly lowest way on the radio. During breaks, mostly in the morning and afternoon, they recite short slogans. Like this:

The farmer plows, the Jew lies. [*Der Bauer pflügt, der Jude lügt*]

or

The mason builds, the Jew steals. [*Der Maurer baut, der Jude klaut*]

Such denouncing proverbs were not only dispersed by radio and loudspeakers. Cohn notes more often that he or his family were offended by people passing by and calling them "Judenpack" (September 10, 1939, pp. 688-689). Hearing such phrases day after day was frightening and threatening. Cohn indicates that he pities his children, who have to hear these negative comments, which bothers them.²⁷ Bijsterveld (2013, p. 13) would call such remarks "intrusive sounds", as they are considered disturbing, violent sounds that encroach upon people's lives and are inescapable. Indeed, the Jews were so overwhelmed by anti-Semitic propaganda that they began to reconsider their identity. In this case, Tausk stresses that he does not feel Jewish and does not want to be related to 'them'. Cohn, for his part, compares himself to a stranger, withdraws into himself, and states that it would be better to live elsewhere as "living amidst constant insults is in the long term unbearable" (Cohn, August 19, 1934, p. 149).²⁸ These examples show the social function of sound and its stigmatizing effects (see Schmidt, 2018, p. 33) that were harnessed to emphasize the difference between 'Aryans' (self) and the other. This ideology echoed in verses and phrases that reverberated across the city (see also Naliwajek-Mazurek, 2018, p. 68).

It is not only what one hears, but also the way in which it is told that has a distancing effect. For instance, Cohn and Tausk refer to aggression and hostility they experienced while queuing in shops. They were also shouted at in the street and during a summons at the Gestapo. They often write about being yelled at by the loud, screaming voices of the Gestapo commanders or other officials, even when some Jews just talk or ask for help when they are fainting.²⁹ In this context, the cry of the victim gets absorbed into the noisy din of the fascist's screaming and intimidation. This is related to the power of noise described by Attali; one of its manifestations is its ability to override the sounds made by its victims (1985, p. 6). Cohn refers, for instance, to a Saturday morning when it was still Sabbath and they were bothered by Hitler Youth roaming the streets with drums and making terrible noise (June 15, 1935, p. 241) as if seeking to drown out the sounds of the weekly Sabbath prayers. When the tone of the people on the street or the Gestapo becomes more moderate, Cohn and Tausk explicitly mention it: "[I was at the]

²⁷ See, for instance, Cohn, November 14, 1938, p. 544; Cohn, November 30, 1938, pp. 557-558.

²⁸ See also Cohn, October 22, 1941, pp. 996-997.

²⁹ See for examples in all these cases the following entries: Cohn, March 12, 1933, p. 18; Tausk, April 1, 1933, p. 53; Cohn, August 9, 1940, p. 826; Cohn, March 27, 1940, p. 772; Cohn, February 8, 1940, pp. 750-751.

[s]tate police, where I was not asked because of the emigration and also not further shouted at; the next reporting date is only on May 21” (Cohn, February 27, 1941, p. 908).³⁰ Occasions when they are not screamed at are all the more noticeable due to their infrequency, and they note such events down in their diaries. These kind or quiet words seem suspicious to them, as is the case with silence in general, which I will show in the section below.

The diarists not only record typically anti-Semitic poems that they hear, but also refer to texts that express the fear felt by the citizens, as is the case in the following excerpt: “At noon, I made a little walk, and met former students. I heard the new night prayer: ‘Dear G_d, mute me so that I don't go to Dürrgoy’ [*Lieber G'tt, mach' mich stumm, daß ich nicht nach Dürrgoy kumm*]” (Cohn, July 7, 1933, p. 58). Tausk (July 3, 1933, p. 87) refers to exactly the same verse and adds “But you have to keep your mouth shut – otherwise you'll end up in the concentration camp ‘Breslau-Dürrgoy’, about which people say th[is] verse”.³¹ Even though they do not give any further comments, it is remarkable that they both refer to it in the same period, which indicates that this prayer must have resonated both as an expression of the fear of the citizens of Breslau that they would be deported to Dürrgoy and as a reminder to live as discreetly as possible so as not to attract attention (see also *The Ominousness of Silence*, below). Such verses show that the Jews realized the precariousness of their situation and the attitudes and fears that resonated in the urban space.

This fear only increases when it becomes clear that war will break out. From this moment on, Cohn and Tausk meticulously note down the conversations and rumors spread by ‘Aryan’ citizens.³² These rumors become a prominent part of the soundscape and can be associated with the chaos omnipresent in the city. Even though they do not know if the rumors are true, they note them down as “faithful chronicler[s]” (Cohn, September 25, 1939, p. 698) to give an impression of how precarious life has become, and how aggressive the soundscape.

In opposition to the space that was dominated by the National Socialist Regime, there are some spaces that functioned as refuge in which Jews still could identify as themselves, such as the synagogue and the Jewish cemetery: “Far from the other community, we formed an island onto ourselves, in the midst of the cemetery, in the midst of the graves of our ancestors. [...] [W]e were far away from the city, from the fear of the boots on the stairs, the knocking at the door” (Wolff, 2012, p. 85). Cohn describes the synagogue as a site of diversity:

I was at the synagogue with Ruth this morning. She insisted now that I have time to go with her. [...] We just came to *Halle!* Today was *Rausch Haudesch*, now that you rarely hear music, it's especially good for you. You also become a little bit aware of yourself in other ways, even if it's perhaps not enough when you think so much. [...] Today Ernst took part

³⁰ See also Cohn, March 29, 1940, pp. 773-774.

³¹ It seems that jokes and poems against the Führer and the regime were spread in the city, as Herbert Jeschioro notes the following verse, on which the one of Dürrgoy is probably based: “Lieber Gott mach mich stumm, daß ich nicht nach Dachau kumm, lieber Gott mach mich taub, daß ich an den Führer glaub, lieber Gott mach mich stumm, taub und blind, dann bin ich Adolf Hitlers liebstes Kind” (1993, p. 39).

³² See Cohn, January 14, 1940, p. 742; Cohn, September 25, 1939, pp. 697-698; Cohn, August 15, 1941, p. 968.

in the gymnastics games in the stadium and had to raise his hand at the fourth verse of the Horst-Wessel-Lied! (Cohn, June 24, 1933, p. 55)³³

In a city that is becoming increasingly strange, these sites provide a sense of familiarity. These places are represented by opposites: real music and singing or even silence contrasted with the Horst-Wessel-Lied and the noise and screams of the regime, spirituality instead of festivity (see Rybchynska, 2018, p. 139). Cohn even notices that it has been a long time since he has heard some music³⁴ and afterwards refers to the Horst-Wessel-Lied, which most likely inspires nothing but negative sentiments and does not count to him as music. At the synagogue or the cemetery, he enjoyed traditional sounds and tried to avoid the noise on the street; he was able “to forget everything” and appreciated the Jewish sounds and those of nature (Cohn, December 16, 1934, p. 190).³⁵ It is as if the music played in the synagogue made him forget about the horrors of everyday life and about the uncertainty of the future (see also Naliwajek-Mazurek, 2018, p. 70). Karin Bijsterveld, who created a typology of different sounds³⁶, would classify this as an example of “comforting sounds”. This sound *topos* “foregrounds people’s experience of safety, a calm atmosphere, a sense of security” (Bijsterveld, 2013, p. 13).

4.2. Everyday Sounds Becoming a Source of Fear

As the normal sounds changed in Breslau, the Jews started associating threat and death with sounds they had not paid attention to in the past. Even everyday sounds, such as footsteps or the ringing of a doorbell, became associated with fear (see also Jacobs, 2018, p. 24). Hearing footsteps in the staircase was already enough to generate anxiety. When hearing something in the stair hall, Breslau’s Jews feared to hear banging at the door and then yelling because that could mean family members were being deported. They saw and heard this during ‘Kristallnacht’:

On a dark and gloomy September morning in 1941, between six and seven o’clock, we heard hammering fists on our door: “Open up, Gestapo!” My mother answered the door. Two Gestapo officers pushed her aside. “Where are the Jews Korngrün?” They stormed into the room of the family Korngrün without knocking. The family was still asleep. We were ordered to stay in our room. (Arkwright, 2011, p. 45)

Arkwright remembers every detail of this morning in September 1941, which indicates that it made a serious impression on him. Karla Wolff also expresses how such auditory experiences had a profound impact on her life:

³³ See also Cohn, November 23, 1933, pp. 105-106.

³⁴ See also Cohn, April 11, 1933, p. 29.

³⁵ The relative safety of rural and regional areas is also emphasized in Cohn’s diary: when he goes there, he notices silence and just natural sounds that have disappeared from the city. See, for instance: Cohn, May 1, 1939, pp. 638-639; Cohn, April 17, 1939, pp. 631-632; Cohn, July 7, 1940, pp. 816-817.

³⁶ See the introduction of Bijsterveld (2013), where she presents these different sounds in a grid (p. 19).

From November 1941 on, smaller transports from Breslau with unknown destination were continuously leaving. Our ears lived their own lives, they were only pointed at the sounds outside. Boots kicking in the stairwell, where do they stop? At which door do the German fists drum? On the first floor, at the side door, or are they still passing us this time? (Wolff, 2012, p. 62)

People learned to listen very closely to the sounds surrounding them, as Wolff admits by writing that “our ears lived their own lives”. While the whole body registers aural perception – this is also expressed in wartime quotations when the authors sit in the bunker and feel the walls trembling – the ear is the “focal organ of hearing” (Ihde, 1976, p. 45). That might also be the reason why Karla Wolff notes that her ears lived their own lives. Moreover, sounds are not just something aurally experienced; on the contrary, they are loaded with meaning (see Bijsterveld, 2013, p. 16). Usual sounds took on new meanings and the inhabitants of Breslau listened to them in a different way. For the Jews, who lived without any protection, sounds on the street became a “vital source for anticipating potential problems” (Birdsall, 2012, p. 96). Cohn (March 16, 1940, p. 767) even writes that his daughter, Susannchen, was always in a state of unrest when a strange man came into the apartment.

References in many testimonies to ‘Kristallnacht’ on November 9-10, 1938 all refer to aural and visual cues such as fire, sirens, and glass splinters (see Wildt, 2007, p. 344). These glass splinters are central in references to ‘Reichskristallnacht’; however, it was not only during this night that windows were broken:

This morning at four o’clock I heard glass shattering. In the morning we heard that Mrs. Gärtner, the young wife of a Reichswehr soldier living on the 1st floor, had thrown herself out of the courtyard window from the 4th floor – dead. They have a very young child. Probably she has done this terrible deed in mental derangement. (Cohn, April 28, 1935, p. 219)

Shattering glass can not only be associated with ‘Kristallnacht’, but also with sounds made by people in distress. The sound of broken glass must have made a powerful impact upon Cohn’s imagination, as he does not neglect to note it down (see also Tańczuk, 2018, pp. 197-198).

4.3. The Ominousness of Silence

When the city is usually filled with sounds, one notices when it suddenly becomes calm. The words ‘silence’ and ‘quiet’ have multiple meanings. During wartime, they indicate that the noises of sirens and airplanes have subsided. After ‘Reichskristallnacht’, silence becomes associated with the streets and shops that have been destroyed and the arrest and deportation of men to Buchenwald (see Cohn, November 26, 1938, p. 555). Cohn compared the city after ‘Reichskristallnacht’ to a ghost town (March 17, 1940, p. 768) (see also Tausk, November 15, 1938, pp. 194-195). In most cases, the reference to silence has a negative connotation, as people disappeared and did not know what was going to happen. They felt as if danger was waiting silently around the corner: “Four weeks ago it was not as quiet as today, and still one knows that beneath this calm surface lies a ‘silently moving sea’” (Tausk, December 11, 1938, p. 207).

Another reason for this negative association, as Annelies Jacobs (2018, p. 27) explains, is that “silence becomes a treacherous phenomenon if you do not want to be heard yourself”. This is clearly illustrated in Kenneth James Arkwright’s autobiography, when he writes that the Jews were deprived of their right of assembly in mid-1944 and that their religious services therefore could no longer take place. This decree, however, was an incentive to resist secretly and continue the weekly Sabbath service:

About twenty of us came to the small room of the carpenter Korotowski, which was at the same time kitchen, bedroom and living room. One after the other, as in the relay race, we arrived and went home so as not to arouse any suspicion. We could not keep the traditional beginning of the Sabbath, because of the curfew we were not allowed to stay on the street after dark. Prayers were not sung, but whispered, so that no one could hear them in the stairwell. Someone always kept watch in the hallway and would knock as soon as he heard any noise coming from Korotowski’s small room. These services offered tremendous satisfaction because we maintained Jewish prayer in a city where the Jews had been praying for over a thousand years. We kept the meetings until the last of us was deported. (Arkwright, 2011, p. 63)

What mattered now was that the neighbors or people marching on the street could not hear the group make any sounds. This “autosurveillance” that resulted – a term coined by Michel Foucault – was influenced by the idea of being continually controlled by the Nazi regime that was “not only all-seeing, but also all-hearing” (Birdsall, 2012, p. 131). The fact that even the home could not provide the needed protection shows the vulnerability of Jewish homes in Breslau, since sounds could go beyond walls and expose the inhabitants to potential danger. Richard Sennett, therefore, correctly observed in 1978 (p. 15) that when “everyone has each other under surveillance, sociability decreases, silence being the only form of protection”.

4.4. The Change of the City and its Soundscape³⁷

The diarists Cohn and Tausk could not witness the end of the war because they were transported to Kaunas in Lithuania as early as November 1941. Wolff and Arkwright, however, were earwitnesses to the change of Breslau into Wrocław before they moved to Palestine (Wolff) and Australia (Arkwright). They experienced what Zoriana Rybchynska (2018, p. 132) expresses as

a period of serious political, social and cultural transformations changing the face of the whole of Europe, affecting not just the fight against the great powers and the struggle for nationhood, but also the life of cities and their inhabitants, cast into the vortex of political games.

This certainly applies to Breslau and its transformed soundscape: after the capitulation on May 6, 1945, up to 80% of the city – now Wrocław – was reduced to ruins. However, in the environment of ruins and empty spaces, both silence and noise could be heard. In the first months after the capitulation, Wrocław was a dangerous city in which people were being killed and

³⁷ I will not delve into in this aspect of the soundscape, as this has been described in Wieczorek (2018, pp. 203-230).

raped. Sławomir Wieczorek (2018, pp. 203-230) refers to pot-banging in this context heard in the streetscape as a tactic to keep the intruders and rapists distant and to alarm other people to provide help. To help imagine the Wrocław soundscape after *Festung Breslau*, consider the following part of testimony of Ursula Waage:

When entire buildings are searched by Polish looters, people are making an unearthly noise with pot lids and other kitchen utensils, and shouting the names and numbers of the looted buildings into the darkness of the night. [...] On September 16, 1945 in the Zimpel [now Sepolno] residential area alone, there were 67 daytime and night-time lootings. There are heaps of empty bottles stacked in front of our cellar windows, so every clink of glass sharpens our senses in anticipation of an unwanted visit. We are then relieved to find out that it was only a rat that caused the noise. (Waage, 2004, p. 64)

Waage does not know who was banging on the pots, but it is clear that these sounds again instigated fear and violence. Whether or not people were robbed, they were intruded upon by the sound.³⁸

When Kenneth James Arkwright returned to his former Breslau after having been deported and hiding under a false name on a farm in Neudorf, he did not understand the new Polish language spoken in Wrocław. This made him feel like a stranger, indicating the importance of language for building one's identity. This also counted for the new inhabitants of Wrocław, who wanted to do away with German influences in everyday activities such as shopping. In October, *the Pioneer* wrote: "It is unimaginable that a Pole should take a dictionary with them when going shopping" (as cited in Dębski, 2018, p. 171). It reflects the need of a soundscape that relates to their identity (see Tańczuk, 2018, p. 198).

The language and sounds of pot-banging were not the only factors that changed the soundscape of Wrocław. In this context, Wieczorek (2018, p. 210) refers to people from rural areas coming to the city and bringing their farm animals, whose voices were heard in various parts of the city. For more information on these sounds after the takeover by the Poles, refer to the six contributions on the soundscape of Wrocław *Sounds of war and peace: Soundscapes of European cities in 1945* (2018).

5. The Aftermath: Sound and Trauma

The diaries are a fascinating source through which to listen to the sounds experienced during the 'Third Reich'. Whereas autobiographies are memory-driven narratives oblivious to all the details of everyday life, the diaries render the ephemeral character of sounds in quasi-instantaneous recordings of diarists' experiences. The autobiographies, however, show clearly how memories are bound up with specific sensory experiences and how sound relates to trauma.

In Arkwright's autobiography, for instance, it is clear that his memories are related to different senses, so there is a chapter entitled "smells" (Arkwright, 2011, p. 9). Arkwright often seems

³⁸ For more information about this pot banging, see Wieczorek (2018, pp. 203-230). There is also a novel that used these sounds as part of the story: Jacek Ingłot's novel *Wypędzony. Breslau – Wrocław 1945* [Exiled. Breslau-Wrocław 1945] (2012).

to take the reader on a sensory journey: by smelling certain odors or tasting specific things, it is as if he is catapulted back in time. For instance, the smell of violets brings him back to the flowers sold in the synagogue (Arkwright, 2011, p. 27), while the taste of spinach reminds him of the times they could not buy anything as Jews (Arkwright, 2011, pp. 46-47).³⁹ This function of specific sensual experiences as an activator of flashbacks recalls the madeleine in Proust's oeuvre, which also has a mnemonic function. Auditory images also play an important role showing the vividness of these memories. It is interesting that Arkwright and Wolff differ in their strategies to reconstruct past soundscapes. Arkwright usually refers to innocent childhood memories such as the voices of children vibrating through the orphanage. Wolff, on the contrary, ties the sounds with deeply imprinted trauma.

For Karla Wolff, having to pay attention to sounds around her and the feeling experienced when the violent sounds of steps on the stairs and banging on the doors were heard is deeply imprinted in her memory and still related with traumatic experience. These sounds that are linked with intense emotions continue to haunt and overwhelm her today, since some of the remembered sounds still have the alarming and/or frightening quality and life-threatening associations (see Naliwajek-Mazurek, 2018, p. 76). The experience of Nazi occupation and wartime still beats in her ears, an observation also made by Schmidt (2018, p. 51), who refers to people waking up screaming, with the "wartime experiences still hammering in their heads". This recalls a famous quotation by the German writer Wolfgang Borchert that reflects the effects of wartime on his later life: "For us, our sleep is filled with battle. Our night is filled with battle noise in its dream-death [...]. Who will write new laws of harmony for us? We no longer need well-tempered pianos. We ourselves are too dissonant. [...] We no longer need any still-lives. Our life is loud" (Borchert, 1973, p. 113 translated into English by Schmidt, 2018, p. 51). The experiences of deep anxiety and threat thus overwhelmed them to such an extent that it led to an ongoing struggle in the present triggered by hearing similar sounds (Birdsall, 2016, p. 124). As already mentioned, Karla Wolff's comment on one's ears "living their own lives" expresses the constant fear of hearing something. That impact extended beyond the past into the present: the fear of hearing someone "walking behind you" or "loud voices in the stairwell" still haunts her today (Wolff, 2012, pp. 107-108).

6. Conclusion

This analysis has aimed to interrogate the mechanisms of violence against the Jews and the staging of Nazi dominance, linking the auditory to identity and trauma by using the category of the "earwitness". The soundscape of the city of Breslau reveals power relations and social organization, indicating the connections between sound, identity, and exclusion during the 'Third Reich'. Although past sounds are mostly available to us via recordings, the diaries and autobiographies used in this study prove to be valuable auditory documents. Of course, the soundscape of Breslau between 1933 and 1945 as presented here cannot be complete, as only

³⁹ Other examples: the smell of a hundred children eating lemons (Arkwright, 2011, p. 39), the smell of the different servants in their villa (Arkwright, 2011, pp. 10-11), the smell of wine coming out of the destroyed wine shop during 'Reichskristallnacht' (Arkwright, 2011, p. 29). He also has some tactile memories: the way the coarse hand of his grandfather touched him (Arkwright, 2011, p. 16).

a limited selection of examples could be quoted. It also cannot be objective, since different listeners noted down different sounds and paid attention to different sonic elements. Certain testimonies were referred to more often than others because the analytical part of this article was structured according to specific sound elements: in certain documents, references to these elements simply occur more frequently. Nevertheless, the texts offer insights into the different meanings attributed to sound and its political nature under the ‘Third Reich’ and recreate a part of the sonic ambiance of the city. Moreover, they complement each other well: the diaries give a good overview of what could be heard day by day, and the autobiographies clearly show the influence on their current existence. The soundscape they evoke reflects the overall presence of the National Socialist Regime and the image of community, clearly indicating that the “[sensory] experience of city life”, as Renata Tańczuk and Sławomir Wiczorek (2018, p. 7) put it, underwent radical transformations. This could be achieved by using new technologies, such as radio and loudspeakers, that ensured the increasing presence of the Nazis in the city. These new media made it impossible to escape their ubiquitous presence and control of social interactions: daily life was interrupted and dominated by the sounds of the new nation. However, this pressure was not only exerted by technological innovations. On the contrary, the whole soundscape in the city changed and became suspicious, leading to an alienating experience of everyday life in which even silence was regarded as a treacherous phenomenon. Whereas Bijsterveld (2013) distinguishes four different types of sound – comforting, sensational, sinister and intrusive sounds – it is clearly the last of these that becomes inescapable and even overrides sounds of *Gemeinschaftsfremden*. For the Jews, this whole situation meant a rethinking of their identity, with only a few refuges left – e.g. the synagogue – where they could escape the national socialist mass hysteria and identify with centuries-old Jewish music. In the context of the ‘Third Reich’, the increase in sonic and visual references to National Socialism was accompanied by the disappearance of Jewish presence. Sounds were not only related to exclusion and identity, but also to trauma: the Jewish victims were influenced by the disrupting sounds long after the ‘Third Reich’. It is believed that they are still haunted by certain sounds. The key phrase of Karla Wolff “our ears lived their own life” can thus be transformed into “our ears still live their own life”.

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