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# POETICAL THANATOSONICS – FROM VIBRATING BODIES TO DOCUMENTARY POEMS: ON THE GROUNDS OF POLISH WARTIME VERSE

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## *1 Introduction*

Wartime audition staged in the documentary verse by first-hand witnesses proves to be a multidimensional, entangled phenomenon. The scope of my article is to map this phenomenon's possible variants, which will be gathered under the banner of "poetical thanatosonics". The term "thanatosonics" – coined by J. Martin Daughtry (2014) – represents the unity of potentially lethal violence (Gk *thanato*-) and sounds (Latin *sonus*) and underscores the omnidirectional, democratic character of intrusive wartime acoustic stimuli. Daughtry develops his theory on the basis of accounts by participants of the Iraqi war. Such retrospective primal testimonies recruit cultural templates rendering audial perception to evoke the experience of bodies vibrating with thanatosonic violence. In the scrutiny of representative excerpts from an abundant collection of Polish poetry created during World War II, I will argue that these verse-arranged instantaneous responses of witnesses are likewise dependent on both material and cultural aspects of sound. The notion of "poetical thanatosonics", however, is not limited to the study of this very archive. Thereupon, before I analyze Polish poetic testimonies, I present this concept in a broad context as a heuristic tool applicable to diverse examples of the verse meant to stage bodily resonances with wartime noise. Since the physical facet is the point of departure, first, I will discuss the impact of sounds of war on those personally involved in it (I will call them "earwitnesses" after R. Murray Schafer [1977]). Next, I will concentrate on the affordances of poetic texts that convey experiences connected with wartime noises. These two theoretical sections form the necessary basis and provide the vocabulary for analyzing particular poems.

*2 Zones of in(audition) and sonic affectivity*

Over the centuries, a host of acoustic phenomena to which people were accustomed went through many radical shifts. One of the most dramatic changes resulted from large-scale military conflicts (Bailey, 2004) hence the excessive loudness of twentieth- and twenty-first-century warfare poses special challenges for all researchers interested in sound, both in its material and symbolic dimension. The overwhelming array of diverse wartime audial phenomena requires an adequate conceptual framework based on interdisciplinary methods of analysis. Such a comprehensive model of "belliphonics" (sounds of war) is delivered by J. Martin Daughtry in his work *Listening to War* (2015). He argues that the experience and knowledge presented by war earwitnesses depend on their positionality, which also influences the narrative patterns they tend to use. He develops a concentric four-zone spatial model of wartime (in)audition correlated with the gradable vulnerability of the listeners – both those passively subjugated to the physical violence and those responsible for the active propagation of excessively loud military sounds (Daughtry, 2015, 76–102). What can serve as a paradigmatic instantiation of those noises is a powerful explosion. Its impact turns out to be double-edged to some extent, for it affects every person placed in the range of audibility, including the weapon's operators.

The innermost zone in Daughtry's model is given the name of "the trauma zone". It indicates the lethally dangerous closeness to the source of sonic violence and the maximal vulnerability of the earwitnesses. People who find themselves in this circle are either killed or wounded (the traumatic brain injury must be counted among common "sound wounds"). They may escape seemingly intact but often lose their hearing, usually only for a moment. The crude deaf-or-dead alternative is hence inextricably linked with framing this potentially traumatizing experience connected firstly with physical pain and secondly with persisting psychological symptoms, such as "echoic auditory haunting" (pp. 7, 271, 273). The second zone is tagged as "tactical" because people positioned within it are forced to make quick decisions to survive (and to fight effectively, in the case of the military men). The further from the center of violence distribution, the safer it is; therefore, the next circle called "the narrational zone" encompasses the relatively secure circumstances under which the hermeneutic elaboration of the witnessed (rather heard than seen) events becomes possible. To render the meaning of the noises, the auscultators who create "audionarratives" about not so distant and still quite clearly audible occurrences often piece together the acoustic layer with cultural and social patterns, also those newly acquired in the role of the local war culture's participants. Their narratives can take into account such issues as agency, expediency or emotional and ethical background. Theoretically, those issues may be also addressed by people situated in the outermost sphere included in Daughtry's model. However, it depends on their attitude; safe and remote earwitnesses situated in "the audible inaudible zone" can alternately concentrate with empathy on almost imperceptible wartime noises or temporarily ignore them to feel as if there was no war, no violence and no human suffering. Daughtry argues that within a combat area, the unpredictability and rapid changeability of wartime events instantly shift the borders of zones of

audition and vulnerability. Hence, even distant (in)auditors often become burdened with unsettling hyperacusis (the hypervigilance considering the acoustic phenomena) and constantly assess the possibility of being sucked into the center of the warzone.

While applying his spatial model to the analysis of earwitness oral testimonies, Daughtry recurrently points toward the linkage between listening to wartime sounds and "extreme affective states of intensity and vulnerability, stimulation and abjection, aggression and fear" (Daughtry, 2014, 25) or "the affective hermeneutic dance" of earwitnesses moving across the zones (Daughtry 2015, 101). However, he does not elaborate on this problem. The possibility of encircling the affective zones interconnected with spatial zones of audition deserves broader development because it proves extremely useful in analyzing audionarratives of literary character. Of course, neither auditory nor affective zones are clear-cut because they belong to fluctuating continuums, yet pinpointing several model reactions would be of high heuristic value. First and foremost, what becomes evident here is the need for a resilient concept of affect that would echo the different facets of sound ranging from an external, invasive force, through the embodied phenomenon that becomes perceived also through the filter of cognitive representations and cultural auditory practices, to stabilized and crystalized narrative templates.

Sonic affectivity has become a recurrent idea within sound studies since the turn of the century (e.g., Connor 1997; 2004). Such interrogations have been usually based on the neo-Spinozian theory of affect defined as a "virtual" and pre-individual pressing force that influences also non-human beings (Massumi, 2002; see also Deleuze and Guattari, 1988). The reason for this patronage is quite obvious. The Massumian characteristic of affect perfectly mirrors the specificity of sound when it is regarded apart from the faculty of hearing. Undoubtedly, the polemical reservations against Massumi's overestimation of the extra-subjective, unrepresentable and pre-social nature of affect have to be taken into account (e.g. Whetherell, 2012, 53–67). Yet the peculiar pressure of excessively violent and sudden wartime acoustic phenomena perfectly fits the very specific case of externally triggered, desubjectifying liminal experiences which are connected with split-second non-conscious reactions primarily reduced to physiological arousal (Goodman, 2010, 69–73). In this instance, only after the initial shock can the participants subjectively process the sudden sounds and powerful bursts of affect. It is worth noting that sound's eventual dissipation into nothing (in purely acoustical terms) corresponds with the cooling down of affective investments or even turning them off. What emerges from these statements is the possibility of creating a model of temporalized sonic affectivity divided into line-ordered stages. Admittedly, in this way, I equalize the spatial distance extending between the central and the outermost zone in Daughtry's model with temporal distance, but such a conversion appears to be a useful approach towards a fine-grain parsing of the otherwise seamless affective flux.

Commencing with the central zone of wartime audition, we come across a case of "perception attack", which Massumi directly addresses in his paper underscoring a mode of the pure affective

reaction of shocked participants. He explains that in such dreadful situations "the off-beat time of the event disallows any one-to-one correlation between perception and memory" (Massumi, 2010). By all means, this observation resonates with the notion of trauma as a breach in consciousness originating from an ungraspable, displaced experience (Caruth, 2013). Some features of the Massumian affect may be recalled in this context: for example, bodily intensity, unqualified character, autonomy and virtuality – all connected with "something that happens too quickly to have happened" (Massumi, 2002, 30).

Furthermore, the most suitable term to encompass the typical affective investments in the tactical zone would be "emotion". However, preliminarily, I will define it not after Massumi – as an owned and qualified opposite of affect, but after psychobiologists – as a not necessarily conscious developed somatic response which is directly connected with preset survival skills. In the case of fear, the activation of particular emotional circuits in the brain (e.g., the amygdala) entails such bodily symptoms as higher blood pressure, accelerated heartbeat, sweating and fast breathing. When those symptoms become subjectively recognized, the term "feeling the emotion" becomes applicable (Damasio, 1999). Such feelings may be non-consciously represented because they are connected with nerve pathways bypassing the cortex (LeDoux, 1996). According to Damasio, the subsequent nexus in affective flux is the "state of knowing the feeling", and this state is the most liable to be equated with Massumian "emotion". Presumably, the moment of advanced acknowledgment may involve moving towards the narrational zone because it enables expression. Nevertheless, we have to remember that a reduction of responses within the tactical zone to the purely automatic ones is not obvious at all. Daughtry argues that soldiers and civilians who repeatedly went through extreme experiences adapted to "auditory regimes" of war (Daughtry 2015, 130). Hence, they developed not only a kind of "competent" or even "virtuosic audition" but they also became able to settle down the adrenaline- and cortisol-infused behaviors and act rationally beyond the mere fulfillment of the fight, flight or freeze scenario, which includes innate reactions (see Roelofs, 2017). In other words, on the learned basis, they were instantaneously entering the stage of knowing the feeling, or rather – given the lack of time for reflection – of knowing what to do. But only earwitnesses for whom both the spatial distance from the center of vulnerability and a sufficient temporal distance from the moment of being subjected to sonic violence are granted may build developed cognitive representations and turn them into a conscious naming and linking with intersubjective templates, which propel a specific "cultural politics of emotions" (Ahmed, 2014). This is the moment when the recent rapid affective flows can be worded (save the peculiar case of ineffability connected with traumatic repression, which may, in turn, cause involuntary repetitions in the aftermath of the event). Also the outermost zone of "audible/ inaudible" should be enclosed in the model of sonic affectivity. A distant listener may affectively amplify the almost imperceptible sounds and embark on the role of the "implicated subject" (Rothberg, 2019) or refuse to do this, consequently denying solidarity, culpability or responsibility.

*3 The literary text as an earwitness testimony*

Having presented zones of wartime (in)audition and sonic affectivity, I can define poetical thanatosonics more precisely. This term encompasses the diverse affordances of verbal (strictly speaking, verse-arranged and often artistically crafted) expressions that stage earwitnesses' involvements connected with their positionality and wartime sonic affectivity. Of course, the range of poetical thanatosonics could be broadened to include "proxy-witnessing" texts (see Gubar, 2003, 23, 146): imaginative works by the empathizing descendants who feel a bond with past extraneous experiences and speak on behalf of direct witnesses. There are probably no purely formal methods of differentiating these poems from the actual wartime verse, especially when it was also created from imagination rather than from personal background. In both instances, the selfsame topoi may be employed. Nonetheless, to highlight the most essential features of poetical thanatosonics I will focus on the first-hand wartime testimonies that can be called "documentary verse" (Gubar) and prove to be anchored in a synchronic resonance with the source of sonic violence. As a rule, the testimonial character of these poems and the inscribed positionality are verified because the circumstances of their creation are well known and often safeguarded by paratextual elements such as titles, epigraphs and captions indicating date and place. The recent painful experience of one's "body affected by the possibility of its death" (Richardson, 2016, 144) often permeates this type of condensed and usually brief works. Moreover, the authors may be still in great danger. Even though they have found their temporary "narrational asylum" within the war area, their bodies may still resonate with omnipresent "sonic warfare". Writing, then, becomes a personal act of resistance against the envisioned death (literally, death felt in the gut), voice loss and oblivion. Poetical thanatosonics can function locally, within particular sound-centered phrases, lines or stanzas, yet, in some cases, a whole poem is driven by an attempt at staging wartime noise and sonic affectivity. Such instances deserve to be called "thanatosonic poems".

Let us go back to the idea of stretching Daughtry's spatial schema in a line-ordered sequence, which resulted in a model of gradual transition from passively vibrating bodies of "traumatic inauditors" placed at the heart of warzone, through more active tactical, affective and cognitive reactions of listeners, to detailed audionarratives. "The narrational zone" in this constellation labels a moment when a retrospective wording of belliphonic experiences becomes feasible. The interviews gathered by Daughtry attest that the later stage delivers information about the earlier ones because witnesses often vividly emulate the acoustic profile of wartime sounds, name somatic reactions, such as unintentional cries and hearing loss, or reveal symptoms of other subsequent conditions connected with sonic violence, such as tinnitus and PTSD. They also highlight practices typical for auditory regimes of troops members and civilians (like the American soldiers' hypermasculine "staying cool under the fire" or comforting terrified children by Iraqi women). Moreover, earwitness testimonies may also refer to large-scale patterns connected to the cultural politics of emotion. The analysis of verbalized "sound wounds" thus requires an interdisciplinary approach informed in acoustics, medicine, audiology, psychology,

technology, social sciences, history and cultural studies. So multifaceted is Daughtry's study and thus should also be the analysis of poetical thanatosonics. However, two important questions arise: is it possible to transpose all the mentioned facets in verse and how to bridge the gap between the preverbal and the verbal?

What serves as a foundation in such poetic undertakings is usually the "phonographic" layer of emulating, or only alluding to, the acoustic phenomena, and – even more importantly – the ways of perceiving them. Printed accounts, including examples of literary output, have been repeatedly presented as trustworthy sources of information since the moment of publishing the pioneering work by R. Murray Schafer (1977). Many representatives of aural history have followed in his footsteps (e.g. Picker, 2003; Corbin, 2018). In this vein, researchers trace the multitude of "auditory topoi" (Bijsterveld, 2013) along with social and cultural practices of listening transferred through descriptions, aural metaphors, similes and onomatopoeia. All these elements are involved in poetical thanatosonics. Additionally, the inventive character of many poetic war audionarratives makes one remember that the phonographic facet of the verbalized sound is irreducible to a purely mimetic framework.

With this in mind, I will apply Philipp Schweighauser's non-mimetic idea of literary acoustics, which considers two areas. The first is "an internal production of sound and noise" – in other words, "the staging of acoustic world within the confines of literary texts" (Schweighauser, 2015, 483). Schweighauser points to the unrepresentability of noise; hence, he uses the notion of staging, which underscores the performative and creative power of literature. The second area examined within literary acoustics is labelled as external production of "noise in culture". From this angle, when noise as excess is inscribed in a literary work, the text becomes a "sounding object" by itself (p. 476), often clamorous and path-breaking. It is worth recalling that Marinetti originally experimented with the *parole in libertá* form to evoke the excessive loudness and dynamics of the battle of Adrianopolis; hence, "Zang tumb tuuum" is a poetic war reportage (Kahn, 2004: 39), designed to perform an outstanding phenomenon through the means of a revolutionary, largely onomatopeic form.

Noise, however, is only the first item on the list of preverbal phenomena involved in poetical thanatosonics, which are said to be unrepresentable. According to the often-repeated conclusion, what resists wording is also affect, pain and trauma. Through the prism of many theoretical approaches towards affect and pain, the notion of embodied experience may constitute a common platform for analyzing both phenomena. Debora Kapchan defines "sound body" as "a material body that resonates (with) its environment, creating and conducting affect" (Kapchan, 2015, 41). This concept proves connected with her idea of sound writing as "listening to and translating sound through embodied experience" (Kapchan, 2017, 12) in which a major role is played by the metaphor because it "performs affective and aesthetic understanding, transmitting sound knowledge" (p. 7). Interestingly, here, again, the word "representation" is superseded by a different term – "performance". By the same token, when

Michael Richardson addresses the conditions of the possibility of expressing pain and affect in literature, he coins the notion of gestural testimony (Richardson, 2016, 157–161). He claims that such a testimony functions beyond the representation or resemblance mode and can also be defined as a "textual embodiment" (p. 159). Following these theories, I can treat the thanatosonic verse as sound writing underpinned by embodied experience.

Also, the therapeutic value of writing in the context of trauma cannot be overlooked. The representatives of trauma studies have notably highlighted it, based on the analogy with Sigmund Freud and Josef Breuer's idea of the talking cure (Hartmann, 2003: 259). Richardson's theory of gestural testimony echoes the main lines of this reasoning. The point of departure for his argument is Elaine Scarry's idea that pain unmakes body and self (Scarry, 1985). Consequently, the level of mere survival may mean numbness (Richardson, 2016, 106–107) or the "wordless cry" of a traumatized survivor (p. 135). Writing becomes so important in this regard because it means reversal or contestation, "making the self and the world". Poetry seems a privileged means for this process. Shoshana Felman distinguishes it as a "precocious testimony" of yet inaccessible trauma (Felman, 1992, 21). The gaps and ruptures of the survivor's (such as Paul Celan's) poetic testimonies function as preliminary traces of the displaced experience, revealed only "through obscurity, through darkness, and through fragmentation, without quite grasping the full scope and meaning of its implications […]" (p. 24). It is a kind of condensed testimony that proves based on "acting out" the yet undistinguished trauma in the poetic structures and situates itself before any attempt of working through the trauma. Felman underscores the unique affective potential of the free-line scheme, addressing the "accident of verse" in Baudelaire's poetry (pp. 18–23). Again, the non-traditional, disrupted poetics is at stake, which can be paralleled with involuntary flashbacks and nightmares.

The baselines of the above argument can be represented in the form of the continuous spectrum of poetical thanatosonics: from opening "sound wounds" to healing them. It begins with non-representational textual devices struggling with inexpressibility of noise, pain, affect and trauma. On the edge of silence, there is a rarely used "zero" level of only signalizing the unaccountable painful content. Dotted lines, ellipses and series of hyphens are conventionalized nonverbal signals of such gaps. The next group of poetic devices is connected with attempts at staying as close as possible to the singular here-and-now of experience with the entanglement of acoustic phenomena, somatic reactions and affective responses. It often results in choosing the first-person forms and the *praesens historicum* mode. In the context of experiences from the trauma zone, opening the "sound wound" may mean inventing a new, original language, broken syntax or designing a path-breaking form. Interestingly, in the context of unrepresentability of wartime clangor and the liminal somatic and psychic conditions, the above-listed authors highlight the unique expressive potential of such disrupted poetry. Yet, even similar extreme war experiences can be staged in a different manner, including more temperate forms and non-avant-garde conventions, for example a rhythmical, stanzaic poem or a cooled-down quasi-reportage

form. The latter proves typical of many soldier poems connected to the tactical zone. In addition, many figures of speech used within poetical thanatosonics stem from "structural metaphors" (Lakoff & Johnson 1980: 61) evoking established auditory practices, along with the inscribed cultural politics of emotions. Employing these structural metaphors may be interpreted as a belated attempt at assimilation or familiarization of the new and transgressive. In the context of literary metaphors that musicalize the noise of war, Martin Kaltenecker states, "A metaphor […], is a means to protect oneself from what is unknown and fighting to tame the uncanny" (2016, 25). This variant means approaching the opposite pole of the scale, that is healing the "sound wounds" with all the symbolic and somehow escapist closures engendering distance from thanatosonic violence. It is a domain of comforting recourse to the shared reservoir of ready-made clichés and poetic conventions that cover, or even replace, all the twists and turns of individual experience.

Apart from the large span of available poetics, the genetic impulse that underlies the thanatosonic verse can be jointly conceived as a powerful need for verbalizing the extremely moving experiences. Many times this urge manifests itself in a more developed, intersubjectively addressed form – as a need for witnessing.

*4 Poetical thanatosonics in Polish wartime verse (1939-1945)*

Undoubtedly, the powerful need for witnessing drove many professional and amateur authors who created immediate poetic responses to tragic events of World War II and correlated sonic violence. Czesław Miłosz, a wartime poet himself, tried to explain the sudden, unprecedented boom of verse testimonies written in Polish at that time. He underscored not only the practical aspect (the condensed form facilitates circulation in print as well as in oral or songlike forms) but also the documentary efficiency of these accounts:

> […]what occurred in Poland was an encounter of a European poet with the hell of the twentieth century, not hell's first circle, but a much deeper one. This situation is something of a laboratory, in other words: it allows us to examine what happens to modern poetry in certain historical conditions. […] people's attitude toward the language also changes. It recovers its simplest function and is again an instrument serving a purpose; no one doubts that the language must name reality, which exists objectively, massive, tangible, and terrifying in its concreteness. (Miłosz, 1983, 79–80)

Miłosz formulated the above diagnosis after having read a 1912-page anthology *Poetry of Fighting Poland 1939–1945* (*Poezja Polski walczącej 1939–1945)* edited by Jan Szczawiej (1974), which may

serve as compelling evidence of the extraordinary abundance of Polish wartime verse. Szczawiej's collection, along with many other anthologies and individual volumes, constitutes a valuable source material for analysis of first-hand testimonies permeated, locally or in full, by poetical thanatosonics. This textual corpus contains works written by persons engaged in war events in different roles connected with specific ideological involvements. The list of typical positions that are worth distinguishing includes such roles as a Polish soldier of the regular army fighting in Poland during the 1939 September Campaign or in the following years in exile, a potential civilian victim within a combat zone, a citizen of occupied Poland, an inmate (for example, in a concentration or a labour camp), a Jew in the ghetto, a person trying to avoid arrest, an underground soldier, a partisan or an insurgent in 1944. Poetry of that period indeed can be regarded as "a laboratory" of thanatosonics. Not only does the application of Daughtry's concept support precise mapping of this manifold field, but it also enhances the comparative analysis of the otherwise under-recognized aspect of sonic affectivity.

In the further part of my article, I will present practical applications of the notion of poetical thanatosonics both as a full-scale profile of the selected Polish pieces and as a local phenomenon. Therefore, interpretations of thanatosonic poems quoted at full length will interweave with the analyses of shorter excerpts and contextual passages assembling comparable, perfectly echoing phrases extracted from different sources.

*5 The trauma and tactical zones in soldier poetry*

Both civilians and soldiers created poems related to experiences of close war sounds of the highest decibel level, namely powerful blasts within the trauma zone. However, in the Polish wartime verse, the respective civilian output proves rather meager in number. A representative example is "Warecka Street", signed with the pseudonym "Witness" and created by Jan Janiczek before 1941. To stage the here-and-now experience of Varsovians targeted during an air-raid in September 1939, "when sirens shrieked", the author deploys onomatopoeic exclamations, which locally explode in this rhythmical poem as samples of "noise in culture". In addition, Janiczek's poem vividly evokes sound-triggered fear and automatic bodily responses, such as acceleration of breath and heartbeat, as well as an involuntary cry:

> When foul birds hovered, their filth on the city to scatter…
> Whoo-oo! Zee-ee! Crash! Came rubble and ruin a-spatter.
>
> Dashing the breath from the breast, making the heart miss a beat,
> With glass flying, the din and the roar, and death in Warecka Street.

"Ah-ah-ah-ah-ah!" One cried with a whimper and groan:
Out of depths came a scream, the piercing and terrible moan,

Of one being skinned alive, beseeching our Maker on high,
"God, O God, Thou that lookest on us from the sky!" (*A Call from Warsaw*, 1944, 6, trans. Albert Mackie)

More typically, an analogous host of thanatosonic elements is used by soldier-poets in the context of their battlefield experiences. Military men often created their testimonies very soon after the moment of exposure to sonic violence. Such was the case with numerous poems accompanied by a precise date and location "m.p." (military post). Thus, we can picture these authors as using pen and weapon interchangeably, writing in short breaks between military actions, with wartime noise clearly perceptible in the background. The anthology of poems created by soldiers engaged in the Battle of Monte Cassino (Kunert, 2007) provides many examples of this kind. What is often recalled in trench poetry is comrades' death and individual somatic responses to sonic violence, within the trauma and tactical zones. As a result, proofs of military virtuosic audition intertwine with signals of rupture in perception, such as hearing loss.

Such a situation is staged in "R 24" (Szczawiej 1974, I 713–714), a poem by Wacław Knoll – a member of the Polish Rifle Division allied with the French army in 1939–1940. This genuinely thanatosonic text retrospectively renders the here-and-now perception of a soldier at the battlefield who is able to recognize the type of weapon the enemy uses on the basis of its sound. In a quasi-reportage manner, the following excerpt registers the fast course of events, with the sudden death of an operator of the radiotelephone No. 24 (the title R 24). Meaningfully, on the textual level, this most tragic occurrence is signalized only by a hyphen, and noted *post factum* through a euphemistic image of the unnatural position of the dead companion. Then, the poem swiftly shifts to the prompt moment when the speaker finds himself in the center of vulnerability and experiences a breathtaking shock:

I was sitting in the trenches, R twenty four

Crackled quietly amid the bullets whizzing past,

And the Mausers resounded again.

Suddenly – the telephonist's head and helmet hanging down.

[…]

A whistle – a boom – and the fountains of earth.

We were hit by a hail of gravel and wet clay.

It's the Flak 38. With my mouth dry

I draw breath. (p. 713)[1]

The further stanzas report that the speaker unhesitatingly takes over the deceased comrade's duties and competently navigates a successful artillery counterattack. This poetic passage about a temporary stay outside the range of enemy fire and taking on the active role proves typical for the tactical zone. The quoted orders and scraps of radiotelephone communication function as audial indices of this circle. Yet soon, due to the changeability of the war events, the speaker is dragged back again into the trauma zone. What stages the rapid "perception attack" in the finale of Knoll's poem is an enumeration of seemingly disconnected phenomena (separated from one another by dashes), which name deafening acoustic stimuli and split-second somatic reactions:

Another whistle. I hid behind the apparatus,

A terrible bang – a blow – black spots before my eyes.

A moment later, I came round. A grenade splinter

Has stopped my apparatus […] (p. 714)

Interestingly, the locally introduced disconnected syntax mirrors the ungraspable experiences from the middle of the trauma zone, when the deafened speaker is in mortal danger.

The traumatizing character of comparable occurrences at a battlefield is revealed in Lech Piwowar's disrupted, avant-garde poem "Soldier that is kneeling" dated "20 Nov. 1939" (Piwowar, no date). Even though this ambiguous text is not formulated with broken or disconnected syntax, the poetics of flashback, reinforced by the present tense, indicates the literal return of the liminal situation – the opening of the wound. Taking the autobiographical background into account is indispensable in this instance since, before being detained in the Starobielsk camp and murdered by Soviet soldiers in the mass execution of Polish officers, Piwowar had served as an infantry lieutenant during the September Campaign. His poems, written in captivity on tiny scraps of cigarette paper, recall many haunting flashbacks from the battles of the 1939 defensive war. These works were miraculously saved because one of the few survivors, the painter Józef Czapski, managed to keep them despite repeated personal revisions (see Czapski 2022, 28–29). Quite typically for symptoms of PTSD such as repetition compulsion, the mentioned poem juxtaposes two temporal sets. The first one refers to the silent, night-time camp barrack with the speaker suddenly awakened from a nightmare (because, as we read, " the

plane drove its whirr into my dreams!"). The second set pictures the past combat, which is summarized in advance with the passage, "we all then saw fear strike treacherously!". This moment still haunts the speaker, who realizes the detrimental impact of the flashbacks, which force him to relive the closeness of death (he confesses, "I should have left it forever under a dead eyelid […]"). This part suddenly switches to present tense and evokes an image of terrified soldiers who wade through "the sea of fire" caused by airborne explosions. In the final stanza, the speaker's attention empathetically concentrates on a single comrade paralyzed with fear and pain, probably suffering from emergent symptoms of shell shock (cf. Loughran, 2012):

> In the middle of this sea is a grey shell of pain;
>
> amid the company, which accreted to green furrows,
>
> is a soldier kneeling and spreading his hands.
>
> His body screaming, he hugs the earth with all his fervour.
>
> I don't know which word to take out of his black mouth.
>
> I am a tree, and I fall silent in torment. (Piwowar)

Surprisingly, in contrast to the figure of the sufferer's self-contained, "screaming" body, the scene remains soundless as if the action were frozen in a film still. This enigmatic poetic vision may be viewed through the lens of Scarry's notion of unmaking the world and the self in language-destroying pain (Scarry, 1985, 4–6). The soldier's words are muted, and the speaker presents himself as turned in a numbed tree, which first reminds one of the myth of Daphne and then signals the affective community not only with fellow soldiers,[2] but with the whole trembling, tortured wartime nature. In turn, this facet of pre-individual "pressing potential" could be seized in Massumian terms as being captured by affect. Undoubtedly, Piwowar does not tend to encapsulate what seems desubjectifying and ungraspable in ready-made costumes. Through the means of fragmentary poetics, he rather tries to re-enact the astonishing experience from the trauma zone with its tendency to overflow.

A similar extrapolation of a singular experience can be noted in a quasi-reportage poem "The Ballad of the First Batallion" (1943) by Lucjan Szenwald (a member of the First Army, which remained loyal to the USRR). It unfolds in the context of picturing a powerful blast produced by a great number of cannons during the Battle of Lenino:

> The blast of half a thousand mortars and howitzers,
>
> And the day has gone dumbstruck and deaf. (Szczawiej 1974, I 601)

The employed metonymy significantly substitutes the individual perception, to be expressed with the first-person forms, with the temporal designation. On the one hand, it may refer to a day-long symptom of hearing loss and disorientation; on the other hand, it symbolically engulfs the thanatosonic experience of all people positioned within the battlefield, regardless of their affiliation to one of the warring parties. Even more, through the prism of this trope, also the whole non-human setting may be regarded as dumbed and seized by painful and overwhelming sonic affectivity.

Poems connected to the trauma zone often attest to the moment of losing control over one's body. In the same long poem, followed by the caption "Front line, October 1943", Szenwald uses an intriguing somatic metaphor: "The tangles of blasts have jerked, and HMGs / Cracked through the brain like whips" (p. 600). It is one of many passages in soldier poetry that convey the auto-perception of combatants, who present their bodies as uncontrollable acoustic territories in the form of closed *rotundas* where sounds circulate and induce painful resonances (see Daughtry 2015, 207–208). Also, the above-cited image by Piwowar of a soldier's body as "a grey shell of pain" can be regarded from this angle. "Near a Battery" by Wojciech Żukrowski (artillery lieutenant who served during the 1939 September Campaign) contains an analogous passage: "Then all the trees were already full of thunder, / and grenades sang in me, above my helmet and under" (Szczawiej 1974, I 91). Yet here, the musical metaphor of a singing grenade is tuned almost affirmatively. How to explain it?

In the case of poems designed to stage the here-and-now of military men's experiences, the assumed distance from the center of vulnerability plays a major role. Accounts that convey the trembling of targeted bodies in the trauma zone vastly differ from texts underpinned by the involvements connected with the more distant, tactical zone. This discrepancy is observable in sudden position shifts in the first example I addressed – "R 24" by Wacław Knoll. The circle of tactical wartime audition is to be associated with powerful appeals of bodily emotions that are connected with survival skills. Daughtry argues that in the case of entrained auscultators, who follow the auditory regime, even such overwhelming affective states should be manageable. Accordingly, a substantial fraction of soldiers' poetic testimonies refer to states of "staying cool under fire". In Knoll's poem, the fact that the speaker spontaneously substitutes his dead fellow proves his ability to cool the emotions. According to Daughtry, another symptom of fitting into the entrained auditory regime is "feeling the rush". Such a positive arousal permeates many soldier poems and results from the sense of agency and the ability to fight back. Probably, this would be the case with the musical metaphor by Żukrowski. Feeling the specific boost of energy may even evolve into bravado despite an apparently hopeless situation, like in another Żukrowski's 1939 poem under the significant title "A Retreat":

> In the tanks growling through the fallow land, the doom is coming towards us
>
> we welcome you with contempt

and the whistle of a rifle bullet. (Szczawiej 1974, I 145)

Military training means attunement to shared ideals; hence, fixed templates perform as their counterpart on the textual level. Thus in numerous Polish wartime poems, the intersubjective affectations of combatants are literally signaled by first-person plural forms and a commonplace motif of an accelerated yet disciplined heart-beat. Sometimes hearts of the whole division are presented as rhythmically synchronized in the audible "affirmative resonance" (see Birdsall, 2012, 31–63), for example in "Before the Battle" by Aleksander Szkuta, dated "At the radio switchboard in Monte Cassino, [around] 10 May 1944".

Can you hear

A stronger

Beating of hearts?

Contact has been established!

Attack!... Let's go,

Beloved

Homeland. (Kunert, 2007, 24)

Paradoxically, Szkuta coupled the highly conventionalized, exalted phrases – which praise the camaraderie of Polish soldiers and underscore the re-established "radiophonic" affective unity of the whole dispersed nation – with avant-garde line-breaks. What seems to run the dynamic, "adrenaline-infused" character of these short, even one-word-long lines, is the positive arousal of the soldier, his "hearing forward" to the burst of warfare. The poem, just like excited soldiers, seems short of breath. Since the necessity of making quick, life-saving decisions is characteristic of the tactical zone, every textual technique that engenders the impression of a speedy, hectic move is in place.

Similarly, Vladimir Mayakovsky's staircase form[3] is used to stage the detailed course of events in Maria Castellatti's "Reprisal" that functioned also under the title "23 October 1943" (see Szczawiej 1974, II 423). The alternative title echoes the date of the reprisal organized in Warsaw by communist clandestine soldiers who wanted to avenge the victims of Nazi mass executions. A member of the People's Guard, Castellatti took part in the bomb attack at the "Nur für SS und Polizei" office, which resulted in 16 German casualties. Her turbulent poem stages the cascades of rapid affective shifts along with a unique practice of simultaneously running away and giving an ear to the din of explosives and screams of the Germans. All these involvements found their expression in the animated, broken line-contour of the poem:

At last, a thunderclap and you have dropped dead,

oh, you villains, you scoundrels and scumbags!

The hand on the door handle.

Close the door,

may it get battered by the howl of Hilfe!

washed down by the wave of thick blood

and drowned by a scream.

Until it is still

The swish of bullets by the ear.

The gate,

the corner.

the street

the roadway

the square

the avenues. (Szczawiej 1974, I 611–12)

Everything seems to happen so fast that there is no time to ponder one's feelings, and probably that is why the subject-naming pronouns are omitted. Yet these impersonal affective states are quite clarified and appealing. Right after the satisfaction of revenge and the subsiding of physical arousal there comes a moment of distress while an instrument of street propaganda reminds one of the tragic cause of the action:

The megaphone—the black, bitter crowd.
(the wind rocks the lighthouse as if it were a bell).

The stone-hard voice descends—
—today
a hundred
Poles

were

shot. (p. 612)

This time the staircase form mirrors the slow pace of the weighty announcement and the "descending" direction of its propagation. It also gradually builds the tension and delays the news till the final moment of lowering the mood and burdening with grief. However, this moment of being affectively dominated by enemy sounds is not representative of soldier poems connected with the tactical zone. What is emblematic of this circle is affirmative attunement to "a thunderclap", which functions as a climax of "Reprisal". This metaphor for the sound of revenge is repeated in the outraged final lines:

> Oh, you villains, you scoundrels and scumbags,
> Hence the thunderclap, hence you have dropped dead!

Castellatti turned her individual experience of the active propagation of lethal and clamorous violence into a poetic form that sounds aggressive and may serve as an example of "noise in culture".

*6 The non-combatant tactical zone of audition in prisons, camps and occupied cities*

Whereas the affective investments from the tactical zone seen through the prism of soldier poetry are dominated by mobilization and a sense of agency, experiences connected with the very same spatial circle that are described in poetry originating from camps, ghettos or prisons, or even those written by unarmed hapless civilians under the Soviet or German occupation, seem very different. Although it is possible to indicate the common affective attunement of hypervigilance and the presentiment of close death, places of detention, sequestered Jewish districts and other non-combatant sites are evidently associated with passivity and subordination, and the prevailing inability to fight back or run away. This influences the local auditory practices and the correlated emotional states, along with the approach to one's own sound production. What may serve as an epitome of the sonic affectivity typical of this circle is the piercing and unsettling audial assemblage connected with the excruciating activity of earwitnessing an execution (it is enough to say that Szczawiej's anthology alone includes nine poems whose titles begin with the word "execution"). The fully thanatosonic poem "On Learning of the Latest Transport" by Henia Karmel (a Jewish prisoner of Nazi camps in Skarżysko-Kamienna, Płaszów and Bucehnwald) can serve as a representative example here. Although the sonic indices of new victims' death are rather distant, the perceived noises powerfully affect the frightened earwitnesses, whose excessively loud heartbeat mutes the gunfire. Even disguising the noise with musical metaphors does not weaken the terrifying character of shots. Notably, the position of witnesses is still far from safety, so every gunshot is taken as an individual threat:

That barrel pointed at our heads

won't point the other way.

The latest transport has been reported

by a symphony of gunfire.

The music is funereal, horrible.

Locked up in ghostly, dismal, secret cells,
wild, final, futile, treacherous,

still we the people

want to escape! To live!

We despaired when we heard
all that racket. Some of it was our heart thumping.

This thumping even muted the volume
of the gunfire.

At the same time each heartbeat seemed pathetic

indicating a secret hope

beyond our terror.

Next thing, we heard sobbing. (Karmel, 2007, 30, trans. Arie A. Galles)

What is important, the diffuse and not excessively noisy audiosphere of a camp, ghetto or prison (or even of the everyday terror of an occupied city) does not fulfill the criteria of the four-zone spatial model. While the combat zone represents a "lo-fi soundscape" with its mixture of simultaneous, hard-to-read audial phenomena, the above-mentioned areas instantiate "the hi-fi soundscape" (Schafer, 1977, 43–44). It means that the figure-ground distinction becomes applicable in their case because in sinister silence every sound seems to be amplified. As to the poems connected with places of detention, the repertoire of attention-attracting noises includes mostly short-range and not very loud sounds, such as the sonic symptoms of someone else being injured, executed or tortured (like in Karmel's poem), bursts of violence exercised often through the means of sounds, for example terrorizing screams of sentries, the whistle of the whip and dogs' barking in the Nazi camps (see Zych, 2011) and such signals as the

whistle announcing roll-call time. The latter was interestingly documented by Zofia Karpińska, a Polish prisoner, who evoked the simultaneity of writing and tactical listening in her camp poem composed in Velten in 1943, whose title – "I Am Sad, My Lord" – echoes the iconic nostalgic phrase by the Romantic emigrant poet Juliusz Słowacki:

Is it the whistle already? First… second… third…

Those who write poems can miss the moment,

I am sad, my Lord. (Strzelewicz, 1984, 134)

The deadly dangerous facet of this situation was connected with a strict ban on writing in the camp and the severest penalties in case of being caught. Approaching footsteps and sentries' voices, in this context, might have been listened to by inmates as attentively as the sounds of explosions in the case of soldiers at the battlefield or civilians during air-raids.

The diffuse occupation violence is commensurate, in this respect, with such analogous noises as the sounds of approaching vehicles, of banging on the door or of the doorbell. The physical arousal as a response to sonic triggers, or even sonic hallucinations, is a recurrent motif in poems that stem from this circle; e.g., "And you don't know anymore if it's a police officer pounding at your door / Or your heart, betraying you and your will […]" – in the anonymous poem "Clouds Lowered the Sky" (Szczawiej 1974, I 231); "Some steps up the stairs, banging on the door, / torn scraps of thoughts, the heart beating violently… / It's a dream… / I'm not done for yet…" in Janina Kunicka's "Liaison Officer" (p. 780); "The sound of keys is heard and someone's footsteps! He's approaching. Has he stopped? No – he's passed us. / Today only ten convictions have come through..." in Zofia Pienkiewicz-Malanowska's prison poem "The Night on Serbia" dated "Pawiak, July 1944" (p. 914).

Another acoustic jeopardy often recalled in the civilian context is connected with the ineffective controlling of their own sound production by people who stay in hiding or devote themselves to forbidden activities. For example, after the curfew hour, the highest precaution proved indispensable, especially in the case of the ghetto dwellers who could be shot by sentries even without a reason. The deadly serious consequences of insufficient prudence are described in "On That Day" by Władysław Szlengel, the poetic chronicler of the life in Warsaw Ghetto who wrote down his poetic accounts between July and September 1942, before being killed in the 1943 uprising. He depicts the night-time situation when one of the conversing friends gets shot right after having warned his talkative mates:

… Please…

give me a moment of peace… I can hear footsteps,

and he tiptoed sideways to the window –

The heavy clatter of shoes outside the window

the police officer marked his way at night

and shot at a poorly darkened window […] (Szlengel, 2004)

In the context of everyday terror on the "Aryan side", the correspondent sound that must not leak outside the "perforated space" (see Hock, 2020) of the apartment was the radio broadcast because it was not allowed to have a private set under the Nazi occupation, and the severest penalties were ascribed to violators. For example, the anonymous poem "Quietly Sleep the Radio Sets" pictures the sound-related phobia of secret listeners:

All of a sudden, footsteps will pound on the stairs.

The speechless heart will stop beating for a moment.

They will burst into the top floor in the dark at night

And slam Prussian heels against the wide white door. (Szczawiej, 1974, I 259)

Analogously, noises produced by secret printing houses are presented as a threat that ought to be muffled. Otherwise, the predictable scenario would unfold according to the description included by Witold Benedyktowicz in "Printhouse":

The screech of the car at the gate... and steps on the stairs...

Have they come for us – the police? Nobody dares to move. (Szczawiej, 1974, I 705)

The presented excerpts demonstrate that wartime hyperacusis and bursts of emotions supported the accommodated survival skills of subjugated civilians. What confirms the vital role of this sonic affectivity mode is an ample array of respective sound motifs gathered in the above condensed overview.

*7 Auditory topoi of the distant zones*

The already employed figure/ground opposition may be successfully applied to draw a heuristic boundary between the audial profiles of the tactical and narrational zone in poetical thanatosonics. While the first zone is connected with a concentration on a specific, frightening, and often approaching sound that emerges from the indistinct framework of pregnant silence or lo-fi noises, the second one renders sonic violence as belonging only to the background and, optionally, encompasses closer figures of a different kind. Translating this into Karin Bijsterveld's concept of auditory topoi, the tactical zone would be bound to close and "intrusive sounds", whereas the narrational zone would be linked with unclear, enigmatic "sinister sounds" (Bijsterveld, 2013, 19). It is possible to extract some structural metaphors that, in compliance with the second type, present warfare sounds as abstractive yet disconcerting and

conflate the noise of weaponry with other antipathetic vociferous phenomena. For example, the distant thunderous storm as a metonymy for wartime din tends to be repeatedly recalled in Polish wartime verse. This trope additionally reveals the immunization to the routine audiosphere of terror. The *tertium comparationis* is quite obvious: a single earwitness has the power to stop neither natural atmospheric phenomena nor the omnipresent sounds of war. Seweryn Pollak's poem "From Cycle 3" provides us with a representative excerpt:

> And again the rain, the distant thunder again,
>
> storm sounds: a formless cannonade
>
> and a steady splash – the weary step of the infantry,
>
> the iron crunch of grass under the tank: rain is falling. (Szczawiej, 1974, I 324).

In the same vein, Marta Reszczyńska designed an original figure of a "rumbling mill" heard in the safety of a private bedroom ("Mill" – pp. 244–245). She also employed one of the most common structural metaphors of wartime soundscape, which is an image of a rotunda-like container with the low ceiling of the droning sky, the floor of vibrating ground and a ring-shaped wall of sonic violence ("Oh, the earth is groaning, the sky is trembling, / I can hear this rumble even here […]" – p. 244). It is noteworthy that the both above-cited examples present abstractive violence beyond culpability because they do not name the nationality of victims or perpetrators. The reader of Reszczyńska's poem would only learn that the speaker assumes the affective community with other auditors for two traditional topoi are engaged: the bell sound as a fear-imposing warning in case of war or fire ("[…] the groans of burning cities jerk / with petrified bells…" – p. 245) and the synchronized, even audible, accelerated heart-beat along with the anxious breathing of a community ("They are sounding the alarm with all their strength / millions of breathless hearts […]" – p. 245). It does not mean that national affiliations are absent in Polish wartime verse. On the contrary – such adjectives as "German", "Germanic", "Teutonic", "Prussian" or "crusaderlike" prove quite widespread yet rarely connected with aural metaphors. But some exceptions can be found, for example: "The regular Prussian step / still rings above our heads", in Andrzej Sikorski's "The Call" (p. 329). The social function of such associations can be explained within the frame of the cultural politic of emotions since enraged naming and renaming the dangerous sounds with anachronistic labels mobilizes the national affective rebellion against the "perennial" enemy (see Ahmed, 2014, 42–61).

Among the cultural clichés that were connected with aversive stimuli and drove the Polish war culture, two other associations are definitely worth attention – the rendering of German noise as hellish[4] or dehumanized. Both templates are explicitly staged in Tadeusz Chróścielewski's poem "The Street of Palms":

At the infernal hour,

houses are growling,

thresholds are howling,

intersections are being crossed

by deer steps.

[…]

Wolves sniffing their mouths at the ground,

at the hour of the butt, they are biting the door long and thoroughly. (Szczawiej, 1974, I 597–598)

The curfew hour in Chróścielewski's fairy-tale vision is equated with the "infernal" hour, which foreshadows terrible accidents. His vision may have been appealing for the compatriots (see Szczawiej, 1974, II 421) because it participated in the long cultural tradition of regarding noise as hellish, and war as a pandemonium. Both conventional metaphors proliferated in the Polish culture during the 1939–1945 period probably because such costumes not only guaranteed the intersubjectively agreeable closure but also deployed the favorable moral dyad: the innocent, silent preys versus the noisy messengers of hell. Through the lens of dehumanizing metaphors evoked in the cited lines of "The Street of Palms", this dyad morphs into the opposition of the unrightfully persecuted (implicitly, the Polish civilians and underground activists) and fierce wolves (German occupants). Likewise, wartime poems employ the metaphoric "acoustic profiles" (Schweighauser, 2006, 61–74) of the Germans picturing their speech as loud barking, snarling or a howl of predators such as wolves, dogs and jackals. The latter animal is recalled among others in Szlengel's poetic audionarrative ("Five to Twelve") about one of the *Aktions* in the Warsaw Ghetto:

[…] the siren's signal: Ge-Sta-Po!

Through gates, up stairwells, at doors, the loud rattle,

people in rat-holes, by black jackets haunted,

and the unstoppable, mournful O-O!

Screams, and the bark of the jackal. (Szlengel, 2012, 212, trans. Marcel Weyland)

The metaphoric layer of similar accounts enabled the Jewish authors to gain some distance from experiences in the zones of maximal vulnerability, which they knew too well. Moreover, animalizing

perpetrators allowed reestablishing the human dignity denied to the victims. The moral order was then symbolically reclaimed.

The scrutiny of the soundscape of World War II – the Holocaust, in particular – would remain incomplete without addressing the still vivid "sonic icon" (Bijserveld, 2013, 15) of the sinister rumble and whistle of trains which at that time played a strategic role.[5] Interestingly, this motif functioned in the Polish poetry created during the first years of the war as an unsettling aural index of German triumphant march through Europe. For instance, Henryk Rostworowski, who was imprisoned in the Woldenberg Oflag, referred to a "distant thunder" of night-time German transports of large military equipment to Western Europe in his poem "Quarry" written before 1941:

> Now inside a cage I fret,
>
> As the guns go on their way,
>
> […]
>
> Slowly drag the night hours past;
>
> But machines – machines go fast. (*A Call from Warsaw*, 1944, 14, trans. Albert Mackie)

As early as 1942–1943, the rumble of a locomotive started to perform as the nascent sonic icon of the Holocaust for the informed earwitnesses. In many poetic examples that can be ascribed either to the narrational or "the audible inaudible" zone, this sound is rendered from a far distance, almost at the very threshold of audibility. For example, Roman Bratny (a member of clandestine organizations in Warsaw) recalled the meaningful train sound in the poem "Ghetto", which staged the audial impressions of a distant, yet empathetic and clued, listener:

> They're packing despair alive.
>
> The blind whistle of the engine passed
>
> over the city frozen in horror.
>
> Glances like a roar
>
> were removed by the transport
>
> to an unknown grave. (Gillon, 1965, 37; trans. Adam Gillon)

Many inhabitants of ghettos joined the well-informed group quite early, for example, the above-mentioned Władysław Szlengel. He provided his volume *What I Read to the Dead* with an exceptional foreword in prose which reports the panic of people aware of the death sentence issued against them by

the Nazis. Szlengel comments on the activity of writing he is occupied with at the very moment: "the clicking of typewriter keys now reminds one of that last journey" (p. 219), and the implicit vehicle he refers to is the train transporting Jewish victims to Treblinka. Also, the survivor Izabela Gelbard, who had managed to escape from the Warsaw Ghetto, in December 1942 noted down a phrase that evoked a traumatic, compulsive persistence of train-related sonic memories: "The clatter of those trains is alive in the beating of the heart…" ("The Song of Iron Merchant Abram Gepner", Szczawiej, 1974, I 435).

The sound of trains was equally meaningful and terrifying for another Jewish poet – Mieczysław Jastrun, even though his wartime experience can be ascribed to the relatively safe narrational zone. Jastrun stayed in the area occupied by the Germans and was in hiding under a false identity. In his autobiographical 1943 poem "The Hand from Which Death Has Fled", the powerful "survivor's guilt" (see Niederland, 1981) unravels as the speaker presents himself as someone who "listened as these wagons / heavy from the heat at pale dawn / were carrying the condemned" (Borwicz, [1947] 2012, 102). The motif of obsessive listening to distant trains returns in the title poem from Jastrun's 1944 volume *A Curfew Hour*, which can, in its entirety, be interpreted through the lens of thanatosonics:

A silent night, when the hour bears a hard stamp
Of the police. If the shadow of a star were to come down
To earth, a soldier would shoot at it a vacant glance,
and then – a bullet. Look: his head in a helmet,

The mechanical sentry suddenly froze.
The dimmed lamp is turning blue. Deutsche Wehrmacht.
From track to track glides heavy iron and shines
The beak of the sombre bridge; it croaks!—ready for another prey!

As if they were undoing silk bandages, the wagons
of the ambulance train glide warily, steadily…
When other wagons carry vigorous human meat
That has been armoured and stamped for slaughter.

There are killing regulations, a method of steel—
Woe is me! Where am I? The ear keeps vigil, the eye doesn't dream.

I'm looking at death. I know, that window pane, like clear water,

Separates me from it. I may not finish my song. (Szczawiej, 1974, I 1070)

Interestingly enough, the sound of a train becomes directly connected not with the Holocaust but first with the German ambulance wagons and then with the enigmatic vehicle "stamped for slaughter". The latter refers, of course, to a train transporting soldiers to the front; nonetheless, it introduces a familiar anxiety, reinforced by the precedent aural metaphor that evokes the sinister scavenger's croaking. The accumulated fear bursts in the final stanza, and the presentiment of one's own death becomes explicitly expressed. Hereby, the speaker-absconder, burdened with hyperacusis and insomnia, confesses that he feels constantly endangered and emotionally attached to any sonic symptoms of the terrible Jewish fate. According to this spiritless forecast, if the sounds heralding death approach, he may not even finish his testimonial poetic gesture.

What is noteworthy, the potentially centripetal ring (*rotunda*) of ominous sounds, which seems to enclose the poetic setting in Jastrun's imagery, belonged to the constant repertoire of many poets of the wartime period. Krzysztof Kamil Baczyński, the most famous young poet who died during the Warsaw Uprising, returned to this motif quite obsessively. The feeling of endangerment escalated in his poetry when this circle was regarded as approaching (e.g. "At night, I hear the circle tightening ,/ trembling and playing" – "With the Head on the Gun", Szczawiej, 1974, I 624). However, the opposite, relief-bringing direction is also noticeable in poems by his contemporaries. For example, Ignacy Fik (arrested for clandestine activities and executed in Cracow in October 1942) depicted vehicular war sounds as centrifugal in "The Price of Blood":

[…] the front line has moved behind the hills to the next village,

and the war could only be detected from trembling temples,

from the buzzing of airplanes, which have turned into mosquitoes […] (p. 156)

Soundscape perceived as an open *agora* (see Daughtry, 2015, 193) does not entail the feeling of entrapment. The analogical comforting shift within "the affective hermeneutic dance" between zones of wartime audition was unavailable for imprisoned people because the walls of their *rotundas* were not made of sounds but bricks and mortar. However, even though walls and grates could quite effectively hide many atrocities out of the sight of potential witnesses, they remained permeable to sounds. Thus, for example, Szlengel provocatively addressed the assumed Polish eavesdroppers to calamities taking place in the ghetto: "Our neighbors from over the wall/ who watched through the bars our slaughter […]" ("The Page from the Diary of 'Action'", Szlengel, 2012, 109, trans. Marcel Weyland). In the original Polish version, the speaker directly asks, "Do you hear, our neighbors […]?" (see Borwicz,

[1947] 2012, 178). The message he would so desperately like to deliver is the laudation of Janusz Korczak, who was deported with his orphan protégés to the Death Camp in Treblinka. Despite the germinal concept that eavesdroppers may function as morally obligated earwitnesses, Szlengel was rather convinced that Jewish deaths would remain silent and uncommemorated (see "Two Deaths", Szlengel, 2012, p. 175).

It is worth mentioning that the indifference of many citizens of "the Aryan part" of Warsaw became endowed with a memorable sonic icon: the music of a carousel that probably functioned in April 1943, during the uprising, in the Krasiński Garden right next to the ghetto wall. The poet who significantly contributed to the persistent literary career of this motif was Czesław Miłosz as the author of "Campo di Fiori" dated "Warsaw 1943", where he grasped the masking of the audial symptoms of the massacre: "The bright melody drowned / The salvos from the ghetto wall […]" (Miłosz, 1996, 29, trans. Louise Iribarne and David Brooks). Another of Miłosz's works from that time, "A Poor Christian Looks at the Ghetto" overtly stages the involvement of an empathetic listener who accepts the role of the "implicated subject" burdened with the thought that they may be counted "among the helpers of death" (p. 83, trans. Czesław Miłosz). Probably, to fashion a more adequate title, we should replace the phrase "looks at" with "listens to", as the witnesses in this situation were deprived of vision. The poem presents an act of reduced or acousmatic audition (Chion, 2012, 48–49) which concentrates on disquieting noises that come out from unrecognizable sources. Miłosz employs a host of metaphors based on unverifiable analogies:

> It has begun: the tearing, the trampling on silk,
>
> It has begun: the breaking of glass, wood, copper, nickel, silver, foam
>
> […]
>
> Poof! Phosphorescent fire […]
>
> The roof and the wall collapse in flame […]

Although the "poor Christian" does not know what has happened, it remains obvious that what is left after a prolonged and boisterous process of damaging is a dusty, bare and lifeless wasteland.

The role of the "implicated subject" was performed also by the speaker of Władysław Broniewski's 1943 poem "To Polish Jews", which was meant to honor the Warsaw ghetto insurgents. Yet this mournful text may be regarded as connected only with the inaudible zone because it was written when Broniewski served as a member of Anders' Army fighting in the Middle East. In fact, the inaudition becomes explicitly thematized in the opening lines: "From Polish towns and from shtetls no desperate cries reach the ears, / Like warriors, the last defenders of Warsaw ghetto lie fallen / In blood…" (Zych, 2011, 83, trans. Witold Lilienthal). But still, thanks to the circulation of horrifying news, the

imagined community extends despite the geographical dispersal, thus the sense of solidarity with the dying renders the imagined cries meaningful and powerfully affecting. Moreover, the poem is accompanied by the cryptic yet crucial information: "Dedicated to the memory of Szmul Zygielbojm". The poem's dedicatee was a Jewish member of the Polish National Council in exile who informed Western people about the Nazi mass killing. He committed suicide on 12 May 1943 in London (while the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising was being brutally stifled) to protest the inertia of the Allies. Thereupon, Broniewski's poem unfolds the far-reaching network of affective community based on compassion with the victims and their desolated, powerless advocates fighting against moral inaudition.

Horror, anxiety, anger, grief – these are but a few from the vast reservoir of cultural emotions staged in the already gathered poetic performances that give an ear to quite distant war events. These affective investments prove interwoven into the wartime network of social and ethical templates and could be often subsumed under the "awayness" – "towardness" dyad (Ahmed, 2014, 8) or the antipathy – sympathy opposition. But also the "zero" level of moral deafness must not be overlooked.

Additionally, in the zone of "audible inaudible", "turning a deaf ear" to the noise of war or misinterpreting it may function as a protective means, for example in the context of comforting terrified children and cooling affective investments. This practice is also transposed to wartime verse and functions as the healing the "sound wounds" (on the scale of thanatosonic conventions, this is the uttermost option of symbolic closures). The escapist character of such poems can be vividly illustrated by an excerpt from Jan Nagrabiecki's "Lullaby", which was popular in Vilnius in 1943: "These are not bombs, but the bass in the swinging anthem. / Sleep, little son, while the whole of Poland lives and breathes this anthem" (Szczawiej, 1974, I 728). This quotation presents the unique pacifying practice of wartime "listening-as-poiesis" (Daughtry, 2015, 277), interpreting frightening noises as musical sounds. Just like Nagrabiecki's piece, the other comforting poems often recall identity-building musical symbols (anthem, soldier songs) or even tend to be based on melopoetic conventions. Having in mind that Szczawiej's anthology offers only a selection from a more abundant area, a few statistics may prove instructive while 33 poem titles in the collection begin with the word "song", 25 with "prayer", 19 with "march", 10 with "carol", 3 with "epitaph", and another 3 with "elegy". These sublime closures were of undeniable propaganda value while they elaborated on collectively celebrated emotions of pride, solidarity, grief and drew on clichés of common mourning, the will to fight, and the anticipated liberation.

*8 Non-realistic shifts within avant-garde thanatosonic poems*

Among wartime poems, some radical artistic performances deliver many insightful audionarratives, which can be regarded as thanatosonic in their entirety even though it is not possible to link them with one particular zone of audition. When we acknowledge that, according to their authors' intentions, these

texts were to epitomize the first-hand individual and collective wartime experiences, their inexplicit documentary value becomes conspicuous. The avant-garde, metaphoric character of such poems was a struggle to stage what seemed shocking and unrepresentable, as theorists on trauma writing, sound writing and affective gestures of testimony would argue.

This is precisely the context in which Julian Przyboś's poem "While We Live" (Szczawiej, 1974, I 662) can be analyzed. Its title echoes the incipit of the Polish national anthem although the initial words are omitted. The original version is: "Poland is not yet lost while we live" (see Trochimczyk, 2000, 286). It is not difficult to define the historical circumstances to which the poem refers, even the caption, "September 1939", confirms the origin connected with the defeat of the Polish army in the defensive war. Although Poland was not "lost" then, many people had perished. Moreover, the government and numerous soldiers fled abroad; hence, the despair of the conquered nation was overburdening. Przyboś stages this affective attunement mostly through the means of sound-related images scattered throughout the whole text, which unfolds as follows:

The cannon bang has reached
the afterglow,
the sky crumbles with a snap.
Defenceless, pushed to the ground by shells,
I beg for a rifle like a convict pleading for mercy,
and I only shout – off target,
having risen from the wounded and the dead.
My gaze follows the bombs' trajectory, gets knocked into rubble
and fixes on Warsaw.

Until my fractured-in-two hearing,
is hit by the wailing of men – and their silence, like a shell.

At that moment, my brother died.

Fare well, you who raise your head across the border
and run to reach the arms,

while here, in a shattered shelter,

I would perform, from the last breath

of the still living, our national anthem. (Szczawiej, 1974: I 662)

Interestingly, it is not possible to pinpoint the position of the speaker using the four-zone model, for the two sets are being constantly juxtaposed, in compliance with the figure of the "fractured-in-two hearing". Equally, it is not easy to treat Przyboś's explosive metaphors as realistic audionarratives. Yet, it remains obvious that – as a 1920 war veteran and a participant of the 1939 war culture – he elaborated on testimonial patterns rendering wartime audition. It is also evident that these thanatosonic templates may be roughly extracted from the poem. Firstly, the close artillery fire seems to cause the "perception attack" resulting in a temporary blackout of the defenseless speaker. He finds himself in a liminal state between being killed and being only wounded and deafened (because "fractured hearing" is also explicable in such terms). In addition to these elements, which perfectly fit into the frame of the trauma zone, Przyboś uses the motif of an unintentional vocal reaction to the nearby explosion. From the standpoint of war culture, the adequate, empowering men's reaction is to fight back. This is why the cry is also presented as an "off-target" and presumably shameful response, even though the victim is unarmed. As to the second set, the speaker listens to blasts and human voices in Warsaw as if he were in the distant, narrational zone, yet those audial elements seem to be surprisingly clear and recognizable, despite the former blackout and the acoustic aspect of sound's dissipation. This apparent bilocation of the speaker can be understood as resulting from the empathetic amplification of remote indices of violence. Notably, the encircled community is again hypermasculine. What painfully hits the hearing of the compassionate listener is first the sorrowful wailing of men (probably soldiers). Then their sudden muteness wounds him like a shell while it announces the defeat and death of a brother who can be viewed as a universalized figure of a masculine compatriot and vanquished defender. Only in the final stanza is the affective community more inclusive because it embraces all the Poles who can still breathe and have decided to stay in the country. Interestingly, their unsteady breathes would be harmonized in the performance of the anthem, joint in the essential sonic icon of Polishness. It is remarkable how rapidly does the avant-garde poet shift not only from one zone of audition to another but also from a primal cry, through language, to a musical symbol (see Truax, 1984, 30–51), instantaneously covering the path from the least organized sound to the most structured ones. Despite the unconventional character of the text, its affective and propaganda charge, along with the masterly transposed auditory practices, render it a valuable document of the wartime culture.

Another thanatosonic poem to which the compatriots could quite easily relate (in spite of its non-realistic character) was Wacław Bojarski's celebrated piece "Wounded by a Rose" (1942), published a year before his death resulting from wounds suffered in the resistance action. Just like Przyboś, Bojarski unequivocally blends different sets. The first one suspends the straightforward

verisimilitude, for it presents a miniaturized theatre performance that summarizes the course of war events in Poland to date. Another set seamlessly transgresses the frame of this little stage towards the cruel wartime reality with bombs that can cause authentic harm and demolish the city. Paradoxically then, the presence of ruins is acknowledged and at the same time negated while the surrealistic vision casts them as amateurish decorations at the very beginning of the poem (here quoted in its full length):

Ruins of a city?
Certainly not. It's the proscenium of a travelling crib,
fantastically and primitively cut out of reddish-gray cardboard.
In the middle, five "boys as pretty as a picture,"
a picture painted by green and despair.
Under their arm, each has a tiny stick, smoothly planed,
which could be used to move these figurines, stuffed half-and-half
with sawdust and music.
Shake, oh, shake white mandolins and kiss simple tunes
in the middle of a leaf, folded in two near the mouth.
Just a moment and music will blossom on the lips with
sprigs of rosemary.
How pretty and how melodious it is to keep asking
and to keep on not knowing:
"Little war, little war, what sort of lady are you?"
Now the wheels of passing cars will carry the tune
through a streak of rush.

The rain of a hundred drops is falling from the white sky.
It's too ordinary for us to be able to understand it.
The rain of bombs and a hundred drops from the black sky.
Oh, before it reaches the ground – sweep aside with eyebrows
that black sky from your eyes.

A terrible torrential rain will strike the mandolin's strings

with its drops – "the buds of white roses".

– – – –

– – – –

How it aches! – – (Szczawiej, 1974, I 313–314)

Interestingly, the crucial part of the show's depiction is based on quotations from the famous Polish recruit and soldier songs ("Little war, little war, what sort of lady are you / That you are followed, that you are followed / By boys as pretty as a picture."; "Blossom, oh my rosemary"; "The Buds of White Roses Were in Bloom") dating back to the Great War. Bojarski uses the form of "aural ellipsis", which encourages the reader to fill the gaps between "thought, language, and sensory experience" during the imaginative listening to the poem (Piombino, 1998, 62). The affective role of these excerpts must have been clear for the 1942 audience. Such faint echoes of national enthusiasm from the period of the September Campaign were reminiscent of the swift disillusionment; hence, the melodies are being indicatively smudged by the humming cars of the first September fugitives. Significantly, these reminiscences soon dissolve into subsequent vehicular wartime rumble, firstly rendered as similar to the rain, which resonates with the aforementioned popular wartime metaphor. Falling bombs of the unspecified air-raid are easy to identify as designating a historical event. Thus the undeniable horror and authentic damage supersede the phase of hopeful solidarity and a naïve faith in upcoming victory. This is why Bojarski stages the war prelude using the once-upon-a-time convention and separates it with two "speechless", dotted lines symbolizing the unbridgeable abyss. What remains is simply pain ("How it aches") and the constant endangerment at the center of vulnerability under the black sky.

Bojarski's short poem can be treated as a synopsis of sonic affectivity within emergent Polish World War II culture. And again, like in Przyboś's poem, the surprising shifts between a fairy-tale story with hidden musical emblems and a sheer complaint on the somatic pain grasp the affective hermeneutic dance between spatial zones of audition and between overlapping temporal sets. Moreover, the Orphic topos of a string instrument as a symbol of poetry and music undergoes a substantial transformation. First, it intertwines with the "simple tunes" of recruit songs but, right away, it converts into a vision somehow correspondent with the figure of the Aeolian harp. The mandolin is certainly not played by the wind, yet still, there is no human instrumentalist involved, and the strings are put in resonance by the "rain" of falling bombs. Therefore, Bojarski delivers a pertinent figure of thanatosonic poetry, whose origin bypasses the individual talent as a presumed source of creativity. Although the self and the word seem to be "unmade" in pain, war simply has to be worded, even if the output appears obscure.

*9 Conclusions*

From the standpoint of aftercomers, the said obscurity of avant-garde shifts may indeed prove a source of obstacles in communication. In Philipp Schweighauser's words, literary attempts at staging noise often turn into "noise in culture". Correspondingly, some of the above-analyzed poems which convey traces of somatic pain, trauma and excessive affect seem to undermine the efficiency of communication. Yet they also function as poignant gestural testimonies pointing toward the irreversibly lost experience. We have to remember that a poem permeated with trauma acts like "a letter in the bottle (Felman, 1992: 39), while "thanatosonics is a black box" (Daughtry, 2014, 27). In this paper, I have deliberately mentioned the circumstances of the deaths of many wartime poets. The point is that whereas the authors perished, their poems persisted, and they can be read as meaningful performances that allow access to the never fully graspable sonic affectivity in its manifold aspects.

However, only a fraction of thanatosonic poems written in Polish during World War II appear as "noise in culture". In the Dantesque hell-like laboratory, which Miłosz referred to, there are also many examples that resort to the comforting, familiar "music" of culture: lullabies, anthem, soldier songs *etc*. When we open the black box of poetical thanatosonics, we have to pose the question whether the motif of a bombardment or gunfire was meant to gesture towards a liminal experience of vibrating bodies of wartime (in)auditors or to function as a *pars-pro-toto* synecdoche of the unrightful attack or envisioned revenge. Yet both types of the wartime verse bear a documentary value.

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ENDNOTES

[1] If not attributed otherwise within an in-text reference, all translations from Polish wartime poems used in this article are by Wojciech Drąg, a researcher in the project "Poetical thanatosonics – on the grounds of Polish literature (1939–1945)".

[2] This kind of affective community within the trauma zone may be also regarded as "the traumatic intersubjectivity" (Daughtry, 2015, 208).

[3] The avant-garde staircase form *(lesenka*) invented by Mayakovsky uses lines of unequal length with gradually longer indents.

[4] Also, the costume of the Apocalypse was used very often to stage tragic and loud moments, especially in Holocaust poetry. For example, in Ilona Karmel's poem "To a Friend from a Strange Planet" (Karmel, 2007, 15–17, trans. Arie A. Galles).

[5] The motif of a train rumble is widespread in first-hand poetry by the exiled to Russia. It often epitomizes the prolonged journey to Siberia, which alone resulted in a high death toll of children and elderly people. Therefore, this sound proves connected with the trauma zone. Poems from this circle are not included in Szczawiej's anthology, issued in communist Poland when the subject of the deportation and Soviet labour camps was censored. For representative examples from this area, such as those by Jerzy Bazarewski, see Taylor-Terlecka, 2011.