

The right to silence

Fighting noise in the early twentieth century*

By Herman Simissen

The twentieth century may well be termed the Age of Noise.

Julia Barnett Rice

Complaints about noise are timeless. The Roman poet Juvenal (ca. 60 – 140), for instance, whined about the noise in Rome in his days:

Many an invalid dies from insomnia here, though the illness
Itself is caused by partially digested food, that clings tight
To the fevered stomach; for, where can you lodge and enjoy
A good night's sleep? You have to be filthy rich to find rest
In Rome. That's the source of our sickness. The endless traffic
In narrow twisting streets, and the swearing at stranded cattle,
Would deprive a Claudius of sleep, or the seals on the shore.¹

But even if people in antiquity already complained about noise, there is no doubt that the number of complaints about noise and clamor considerably increased in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, especially in the Western world. This is related to the complex processes of change in this part of the world throughout these centuries, processes that can be summarized with two concepts: industrialization and urbanization.

These processes took off, in particular in Great Britain, already in the last quarter of the eighteenth century, but intensified in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, not only there, but on the European continent and in the United States as well. Characteristic for the industrialization was that products were no longer made at home but in factories, with manual work increasingly being replaced by machines. These machines were driven by hydropower or steam, and this enabled production on a much larger scale. This new organization of production demanded that big groups of laborers worked at the same spot – with as its eventual effect the aforementioned urbanization. Big groups of laborers were housed in special suburbs in, sometimes even newly built, cities in the vicinity of the factories where they worked. The example of Great Britain is indicative: at the start of the nineteenth century about 17% of the population lived in a city or

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town; at the end of that century about 54%. Thus, the industrialization initiated a worldwide pull to cities and towns that continues even today in the twenty-first century.

The increasing concentration of big groups of people in cities and towns had several effects. As a result of long deficient facilities – for instance, often there was no public sewer – there were big problems with public health. Diseases like tuberculosis and cholera felled many victims. Another effect of the urbanization was the rise in the number of complaints about noise. Quite a number of people started to get annoyed with the infringement of their peace that resulted from the aggregation of many people in a small area. Complaints about noise and clamor were famously made by, for example, the German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860), the Scottish historian Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881), and the English social critic and essayist John Ruskin (1819-1900). In the Netherlands, the author Multatuli (penname of Edward Douwes Dekker, 1820-1887) groaned in his *Minnebrieven* (1861, 'Love letters'), because of the nuisance of the noise in his house: "I'm going out, to seek some rest on the choppy street. Maybe I'll steal a watch, to claim some rest, in a prison cell."²

Around the turn from the nineteenth to the twentieth century, as a reaction to the increasing number of complaints about noise pollution, the first protest groups arose that started an organized battle against noise and clamor.

Julia Rice: 'the life work to which I have pledged myself'

In December 1909, the Dutch newspaper *De Telegraaf* published a contribution entitled "Diary by an Amsterdammer" in which the author pointed out that in the Dutch capital, other than in most big cities in Europe, carolers were not permitted to march the streets singing Christmas songs. But other, far more disturbing forms of noise pollution – if singing can be called noise pollution at all – were, however, tolerated. The author mentions the closing valves of baker's carts, yelling tugs, and "fluke-elf-fishwives and radish-girls with a lump in the throat." Can nothing be done about this? It can, the author claims: "Found an anti-noise league!" and he points at the example of Germany which has "its *Anti-Lärmverein* with a stylish monthly."³ In its turn, this German *Anti-Lärmverein* was inspired by an American example. Around the turn of the year from 1906 to 1907 – the first steps were made in 1906, the founding meeting was in January 1907 – the *Society for the Suppression of Unnecessary Noise* was founded in New York at the behest of Julia Barnett Rice (1860-1929).

In an interview with *The Sun*, a New York newspaper and at the time with the *New York Times* one of the leading newspapers in the United States, Julia Rice explained what brought her to

fight noise pollution. From 1903, with her husband Isaac Rice (1850-1915)⁴ and their six children, she lived in *Villa Julia*, named after her, on Riverside Drive in Manhattan on the Hudson. They built the villa after Isaac Rice bought the plot in 1899. In the summer of 1905 they noticed that their night's rest was almost daily disturbed by a "new" sound, the whistling and honking of the tugboat's horns on the Hudson. Initially, they blamed their extraordinary developed, hypersensitive hearing, given their shared background in classical music, but Julia Rice nevertheless decided to find out what was in fact going on.⁵

Julia Rice employed a number of students from *Columbia Law School* to help her with her inquiries – *Columbia University* is only a few blocks away from *Villa Julia*, and Isaac Rice for some time taught at the *Law School*. For several nights, she posted these students on different spots along the river, to identify as precisely as possible what sounds there were, and what caused them. Some nights, the ship's horns sounded over three thousand times – sometimes in such rapid succession that the students could not manage to keep notes accurately. Another group of students talked with inhabitants and policemen in neighborhoods close to the Hudson, and asked for their experiences with noise pollution during the night. Julia Rice herself talked with several captains of tugs, to find out why the ship's horns sounded so very often, and indeed far more than previously. The answer was astonishing. The largest part of the signals had nothing at all to do with the course of ship's traffic, and was in fact not necessary at all. It concerned the exchange of greetings between captains, or signals to members of the crew who were still somewhere in a bar but had to report for duty, or even messages to the lovers of crew members who lived close to the river. On the basis of her inquiries, Julia Rice compiled a report of thirty-three pages, that she offered to the *New York City Department of Health*. This was the start of her battle against the noise and clamor of tugs that, as she said, "kill sleep and thus threaten health." The New York authorities stated that they were not in charge: according to them, the Hudson had to be considered as a national river which was the responsibility of federal authorities. This answer did not stop Julia Rice: on the contrary, she sought – and found – more support, for example with the boards of hospitals in New York, and subsequently brought the problem to the attention of federal authorities. She managed to find support from several Members of Congress, and as a result new legislation was written. Unnecessarily whistling and honking was forbidden, under penalty of large fines, in the so-called *Bennett Act of 1907*, named after William S. Bennett (1870-1962), the Member of Congress who submitted the bill.⁶

Supported by this success, Julia Rice decided to continue her activities, and to widen them into a battle against unnecessary noise in general – as she declared in the aforementioned interview in *The Sun*, now that her children were big enough, she wanted, in her words, "to devote myself to

a serious undertaking – the life work to which I have pledged myself.”⁷ With a number of like-minded people that she got acquainted with during her battle against the noise of the tugs, she proceeded to found the *Society for the Suppression of Unnecessary Noise*. “The idea of forming the Society occurred to me a few months ago, just about the time that the tug-whistle fight was terminated,” she wrote.⁸ And in an interview with the *New York Tribune* she explained the founding of the *Society* in more detail:

I have long felt that there has been an urgent need for such a society, but as nobody else appeared willing to take the initiative in the matter I have finally had to do so myself. The noise question grows more important every year in this city, and it has become more aggravated of late than some people imagine. It is an evil which in most cases is entirely unnecessary and therefore the more objectionable. This is not an anti-noise society, but only against unnecessary noises.⁹

During the founding meeting, which was held at her home, she was chosen unanimously – only one vote did not go to her: hers – as president of the new society. To underline its necessity, Julia Rice used the newest technology, allowing the attendees to listen to unnecessary noise in New York recorded on a graphophone.¹⁰ One could hear “the whirr and bang of flat-wheeled surface cars, the shriek and rumble of the elevated expresses, the honk of the automobile, and the various discordant street cries, tooting of whistles, yells of street vendors, etc..”¹¹

Julia Rice published an article, entitled “*Our Most Abused Sense – the Sense of Hearing*,” in her own journal *The Forum*, in which she once more explained the necessity of protection against noise pollution.¹² Disapprovingly, she quoted “a New York daily” that claimed that “noise is an organic function of a living city; and a growing municipality, like a growing boy, must scream or take to evil ways.” As counterbalance she quoted statements and reports by physicians, who claimed that continuous exposure to noise may lead to all kinds of medical – physical as well as psychic – problems, including deteriorating hearing, disturbances of the ability to concentrate, chronic sleeplessness, exhaustion, hypertension, general nervousness, and a decreasing performance. Moreover, she identified the most disturbing kinds of noises. She mentioned the blowing of whistles on factories, trains, and boats; the clanging of bells on trains and trolley cars; the ringing of bells on churches and clock towers; street-venders with cries; noises of traffic due to badly paved streets; cries and street brawls.¹³ Almost all of these noises, Julia Rice claimed, are unnecessary – they are not good for anything, and they can be prevented without much trouble. Now this is exactly what the *Society for the Suppression of Unnecessary Noise* strived for! In her article

she finally pointed out that the new society had an advisory committee in which all kinds of prominent Americans participated, especially politicians and physicians. The membership of the board was impressive as well. Nevertheless, the *Society for the Suppression of Unnecessary Noise*, with everything it undertook, was first and foremost the work of Julia Rice herself. The society explicitly did not fight all noise and clamor: sometimes noise and clamor simply were unavoidable. But it did fight *unnecessary* noise pollution. In doing this, it chose, very pragmatically, objectives that could be realized indeed.

A first objective the *Society for the Suppression of Unnecessary Noise* aimed for was creating quiet zones around hospitals. After all, in the interest of their recovery, rest is of the utmost importance for patients. Supported by representatives from the medical sector, using a clever publicity campaign and entering into an extensive correspondence with municipal authorities, transport companies and other stake holders, the society succeeded in creating such quiet zones in quite a number of big American cities. A special problem in this respect was the noise made by children playing – they can be quite noisy indeed. It was not very easy to keep them away from hospitals. But Julia Rice developed an exemplary solution to this problem: she established a ‘Children’s Hospital Branch’ for her society, with the author Mark Twain (1835-1910) as honorary president; at the time, his books *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876) and *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1885) were very popular with American youth. Children who joined the ‘Children’s Hospital Branch’ promised not to play close to hospitals, and to behave quietly when they were near hospitals. A badge with the word “Humanity” was put on their clothes, to show that they had joined the society. This approach proved to be surprisingly successful: it was not patronizing adults imposing a ban on children’s behavior, but children themselves swearing an oath. Thus, they felt responsible, monitored each other, and recruited members among their peers.

Whereas the *Society for the Suppression of Unnecessary Noise* succeeded surprisingly well and quickly in creating quiet zones around hospitals and, later, schools, a second purpose proved to be less easy to realize. This concerned decreasing the noise on the Fourth of July. Traditionally, the celebration of this day was coupled with lots of noise: yelling, public drunkenness, fireworks, even firing guns and pistols out of joy. In articles like “*Our Barbarous Fourth*,” “*For a Safe and Ssane Fourth*,” and “*The Child and the Fourth*”¹⁴ Julia Rice advocated a less noisy and more civilized way to celebrate independence. In *Our Barbarous Fourth*, she pointed out that “during the celebration of five national birthdays, from 1903 to 1907 inclusive, eleven hundred and fifty-three persons were killed, and twenty-one thousand five-hundred and twenty were injured! Of the injured, eighty-eight suffered total, and three-hundred, eighty-nine partial, blindness; three hundred and eight persons lost arms, legs, or hands, and one thousand and sixty-seven lost one or more fingers.”¹⁵ Apart from this,

there was a lot of noise. But this initiative was not very successful, the noisy tradition of celebrating the *Fourth of July* was that strong that it was hardly possible to change it.

Julia Rice regularly made the headlines with her fight against unnecessary noise in the years around 1910, not only in the United States, but in several European countries as well. Thus, the French daily *Le Figaro* published an interview with her in August 1907. In this interview she pointed out the dangers of noise pollution:

Our worst enemy, the most daunting one, is noise!...

Yes [...] epidemic outbreaks that happen all too often in large conglomerations of people make many victims. Cholera, typhoid, diphtheria are disturbing plagues; but noise is one as well, and even the most terrible one.

Yes, alcohol upsets the stomach, causes drowsiness even with the strongest health, and is even worse for the less strong; but noise drives us crazy.

Noise has a daughter whose destruction makes itself heard from a distance: neurasthenia.¹⁶

In the summer of 1908, Julia Rice traveled to Europe, on the one hand to study the local state of affairs regarding noise and clamor, on the other hand to meet like-minded people in Paris and London to assess whether there were possibilities for international cooperation in the fight against noise pollution. But not only in France and England, but elsewhere in Europe as well people felt the need to fight noise pollution, for example in Germany, where the philosopher Theodor Lessing (1872-1933) had published, in January of that very same year, “a polemic against the noises in our life” entitled *Der Lärm* (“Noise”).¹⁷

*Theodor Lessing: “non clamor, sed amor”*¹⁸

In his polemic, Lessing quoted “a newspaper from New York” in which Julia Rice was praised because of her pragmatic approach in the fight against noise. After all, she did not turn against noise and clamor as such, but aimed for concrete, limited targets that she tried to reach – and indeed did reach – step by step. This shows, according to Lessing, “which blessings a single energetic, high-minded personality can achieve in the fight against public racket.”¹⁹ Lessing’s involvement in fighting noise as well resulted from personal experiences: from 1895 until his marriage in 1900, he lived in digs in a street in Munich’s entertainment district, where at times it was that noisy that he could not sleep for entire nights. Out of compassion with his elderly

landlady, however, he only left when he got married.²⁰ His first publications on the subject date from this time.²¹ Already in these first publications, he describes noise as a result of urban overpopulation and industrial pollution, for their part symptoms of the, in his view, detrimental way Western civilization developed. Julia Rice usually did not make this kind of connections: she fought unnecessary noise, whereas for Lessing the fight against noise and clamor was part of a more comprehensive criticism of contemporary culture and society.

Lessing wrote *Der Lärm* as a first step toward founding a German counterpart of Julia Rice's *Society for the Suppression of Unnecessary Noise*. This organization was indeed founded, and later in October, 1908, Lessing published an essay in the journal *Dokumente des Fortschritts* ("Documents of Progress") in which he drew attention to his recently published book, summarizing some of its main arguments, but also pointed out that in the meantime, an important start had been made with the establishment of a German movement for protection against noise. He expressed the hope that "also Mrs. I.L. Rice, the leader of the American movement against noise"²² might attend the founding meeting. Lessing even asked her to become president of the German organization – an offer she declined, to his disappointment, because it was not compatible with the obligations she had in New York.²³ This was, however, not to the detriment of their personal relations; they continued consulting each other on fighting noise,²⁴ and Lessing also published his German translation of a selection of poems by Muriel Rice (1888–1926), the eldest daughter of Isaac and Julia Rice, entitled *Von zwei Ufer* (1909). Julia Rice gave financial support to Lessing's organization.²⁵ As motto for his organization, Lessing chose "*non clamor, sed amor*."

Both Lessing's polemic and his essay in *Dokumente des Fortschritts* reveal two major differences between his approach and Julia Rice's. Where she chose a selective approach, with concrete and limited objectives, Lessing targeted noise pollution in general, all kinds of noise and clamor – from cracking whips of coachmen to the roaring of cars and motorbikes; from the ringing of church bells to the whistling of tugs and factories; from barking dogs to shrieking parrots; from carpet-beating to playing the piano with open windows by well-meaning but unskilled amateurs; from the cries of street-vendors to screams by drunks. But all this was less easy to translate into concrete targets, one of the reasons that while Lessing's *Lärmschutzverein* initially got a lot of attention in the press, it was not always positive. Indeed, sometimes his campaign for the right to silence was mocked, and eventually achieved less in the field.

This most certainly was related to a second difference between his approach and Rice's. Lessing characterized noise pollution as first and foremost the problem of those people he described as "geistig Schaffenden" ("creative minds") – literary authors, poets, philosophers, composers. According to Lessing, "all creative minds, productive natures, men and women, have

bitterly suffered from the plethora of sounds that day-by-day affects us; we do not really recognize its harmfulness just like we got used to its poison, just like the clockmaker gets used to the ringing of his clocks, the miller to the run of the mill.”²⁶ But the fact that complaints about noise were particularly made by a specific group of people does not imply that it does not concern everybody, he claims. He was convinced that if no action is taken, “the hell of noise and clamor in which we have to live and work, eventually will bring about a slow degeneration of mankind.”²⁷ In other words, the experiences of “creative minds” are a harbinger of what will be generally experienced if no measures against continuous noise and clamor are taken. But this special attention to the “creative minds” did the cause of his *Lärmschutzverein* no good: it gave critics the option to mock “neurotics” with their oversensitive hearing, and to dismiss claims of the right to silence as an infringement on the right of others to spend their free time as they want, be it by making music, be it by having pets. In this respect as well, Julia Rice’s approach – she just spoke about public health in general – was more effective than Lessing’s.

One of Lessing’s most important activities as driving force of the *Lärmschutzverein* was editing the association’s magazine that was published between 1908 and 1911, initially entitled *Der Anti-Rüpel* (“The Anti-Bully”), later *Das Recht auf Stille* (“The Right to Silence”). Lessing largely wrote the columns of the monthly single-handedly, with various contemplations on the general need for silence and the importance of fighting noise and clamor. Apart from this, the journal contained many endorsements, especially from “creative minds” like literary authors, poets, and philosophers who suffered from noise. A regular part of the *Anti-Rüpel* were, moreover, examples from both Germany and Austria: descriptions of cases of noise pollution, and of the way they were treated by local authorities.

Both in *Der Lärm* and in the association’s magazine there was extensive attention paid to the legal aspects of the fight against noise. What legal protection against noise and clamor did exist? Lessing pointed out that, even if noise pollution has to be seen as one of the most serious infringements of private life, neither the penal code nor the civil law was satisfactory when fighting noise and clamor. One could for example invoke the legal provision on “serious infringement of public order,” but when doing so, one was heavily dependent on the subjective evaluation of the serving judge. One judge would indeed tackle noise and clamor on the basis of this provision, another one would, however, be lenient. Hence, Lessing advocated specific legislation regarding noise and clamor: the existing legislation is, he argued, “arbitrary, undefined, useless in practice.”²⁸ However, his plea for new laws and regulations on this matter had hardly any effect.

Conclusion

Altogether, Theodor Lessing's *Lärmschutzverein* was considerably less successful than Julia Rice's *Society for the Suppression of Unnecessary Noise*. His approach was less pragmatic: Lessing fought noise and clamor in general and advocated completely new legislation, whereas Rice addressed specific problems – the disruption by honking tugs, silent zones around hospitals – and advocated fitting, targeted measures. When Lessing proposed a concrete measure, it usually was not accepted. He suggested, for instance, to outsource carpet-beating to little companies that collected the carpets in the morning, did the carpet-beating in a central location, and returned the carpets later in the day. The suggestion was never tried, and the question is whether it testifies to a sufficient sense of reality.

Remarkably enough, in international discussions on fighting noise and clamor Lessing did come up with a practical suggestion that was not only welcomed with general approvement, but proved to be highly successful as well. On August 14th 1909 there was an international conference of organizations that fought noise pollution. Actually, it very much looks like that what was called in the press “an international conference” was in fact no more than a rather informal meeting²⁹ between Julia Rice, Theodor Lessing and Thomas Bowden Green (1846-1916). The latter was secretary to the *Street Noise Abatement Committee*, a subsection of the *Betterment of London Association* that was established in 1902. Its president was the painter Sir William Blake Richmond (1842-1921), who previously participated in the *Coal Smoke Abatement Society*, an association that fought air pollution by coal.³⁰ During the meeting with Rice and Bowden Green, Lessing suggested drawing up a so-called “Blue List”, a list of hotels and guest houses where one was guaranteed that one could enjoy a stay there in complete peace and quiet, and that there was neither piano nor parrot.³¹

The successes of Lessing's *Lärmschutzverein* were limited, and from 1911 – in that year he passed on the responsibilities for the *Verein* to others – it gradually and quietly disappeared. Lessing retired because the *Lärmschutzverein* threatened to take all of his time; he faced the choice between dropping all his other activities, or relinquishing his part in the struggle against noise and clamor. He chose the latter, as he felt it was his life's mission to write the philosophical system of his own that he devised but had not yet put to paper.³² And, of course, three years later, complaints on noise and clamor were completely drowned out by the sound of guns...

Unfortunately, Julia Rice's *Society for the Suppression of Unnecessary*, after its successful start, also lost its importance and influence. In the obituary published after her death in 1929 by the *New York Times*, it was claimed that the quick rise of the car was to blame for the decline of her

movement: it completely changed the experience of sound in the city, and hence, in its later years, the *Society for the Suppression of Unnecessary Noise* was fighting a rearguard action.³³ This explanation seems plausible; an additional problem – even if of lesser importance – for Julia Rice was that the behavior of members of her own family somewhat undermined the credibility of her crusade against noise and clamor. Her husband Isaac Rice, by some accounts, was the first automobile driver in New York. Similarly, their second daughter Dorothy (1889-1960) was the first female motorcyclist in New York and did not move quietly around the city.³⁴ When she had to appear in court for speeding, the judge asked her what her mother, as president of the “Anti-Noise League,” thought of the fact that her daughter rushed through the city on a motorbike. Dorothy Rice, nineteen at the time, did deny that her motorbike was noisy, but apparently she was not completely comfortable with the question. She asked the attending reporters not to write about the case, because she did not like the idea of her mother reading about it in a newspaper...³⁵

Even if the influence of both the *Society for the Suppression of Unnecessary Noise* and of the *Lärmschutzverein* was limited in the long run, Theodor Lessing concluded his last contribution to the *Anti-Rüpel* with prophetic words:

*Our case came too early, but it will demand attention over and over again, and it will win.*³⁶

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¹ Juvenal, *Satires*, quoted from the translation by A. S. Kline © 2011, https://web.ics.purdue.edu/~rauhn/Hist_416/hist420/JuvenalSatirespdf.pdf. The emperor Claudius had a reputation for dozing off, even during public ceremonies or dinners.

² Multatuli, *Minnebrieven* (Amsterdam: Querido 1984 [first edition 1861]), 43-44. Translation mine.

³ “Dagboek van een Amsterdammer,” *De Telegraaf*, Sunday 23 December 1909. Translation mine.

⁴ Isaac Rice was as remarkable as his wife. He was born in Germany; his parents emigrated with him to the United States when he was six years old. He turned out to be a brilliant pupil, and he was only sixteen when he left for Paris to study literature and music. Two years later, he also became foreign correspondent in Paris for the *Evening Bulletin*, a newspaper from Philadelphia. Having finished his studies he worked for some time as a piano teacher, initially in London, later in New York. Moreover, he composed music, and published articles and two books on music. For some time, he was a professional chess player – he developed a new opening, named after him (the Rice-Gambit), which brought him some success, but which eventually proved to be too risky. To promote “his” opening, for some time he organized chess tournaments in which the first moves of his opening had to be played. The prizes he provided were that high that the best chess players in the world participated in these tournaments. In 1880, Rice decided to study law, out of interest. In 1885 he married Julia Barnett, who like him had followed a professional education in music, and subsequently studied medicine, thus becoming one of the first female physicians in the United States. As a wedding present to his wife, Isaac Rice founded the periodical *The Forum*, which until 1910 they presided over together. Apart from that, Rice practiced as a lawyer, and he was a businessman. He made his fortune by buying distressed companies,

especially railway companies and shipping companies, restructuring them and selling them on. In 1899 he founded the *Electric Boat Company* that later on did build submarines for the American and the British navy.

⁵ "Europe too wants quiet," *The Sun*, Sunday 18 October 1908, 8.

⁶ The inquiries by Julia Rice are extensively discussed in George Prochnik, *In Pursuit of Silence. Listening for Meaning in a World of Noise* (New York: Anchor Books 2011 [first edition: 2010]), 208 ff.

⁷ "Europe too wants quiet," loc.cit..

⁸ Mrs. Isaac L. Rice, "Our most abused sense – the sense of hearing," in: *The Forum* XXXVIII (1906-1907), 559-572, quote on 567. Julia Rice signed her publications with "Mrs. Isaac L. Rice."

⁹ "Crusade on noises," *The New York Tribune*, 4 December 1906.

¹⁰ The graphophone was a device to record and replay sound, invented in 1885.

¹¹ "Mrs. Rice put at head of anti-noise society," *The New York Times*, 15 January 1907. The recording of the noises seems to be lost.

¹² Rice, "Our most abused sense," *passim*.

¹³ O.c., 561.

¹⁴ Mrs. Isaac L. Rice, "Our Barbarous Fourth," *The Century Magazine*, June 1908, 219-225; "For a safe and sane Fourth," *The Forum*, March 1910, 217-237; and "The Child and the Fourth," in: *The Forum*, July 1913, 37-47.

¹⁵ Rice, "Our Barbarous Fourth," 220.

¹⁶ "La vie hors Paris. Contre le bruit," *Le Figaro*, 8 August 1907. Translation mine.

¹⁷ Theodor Lessing, *Der Lärm. Eine Kampfschrift gegen die Geräusche unseres Lebens* (Wiesbaden 1908).

¹⁸ "Make love, not noise." For an overview, see: Lawrence Baron, "Noise and Degeneration: Theodor Lessing's Crusade for Quiet," *Journal of Contemporary History* 17 (1982), 165-178; Matthias Lentz, "'Ruhe ist die erste Bürgerpflicht.' Lärm, Großstadt und Nervosität im Spiegel von Theodor Lessing's 'Antilärmverein,'" *Medizin, Gesellschaft und Geschichte* 13 (1994), 81-105; and John Goodyear, "Viel Lärm um Theodor Lessing," *Angermion* 4 (2011), 95-112.

¹⁹ Lessing, *Der Lärm*, quoted from the re-edition by Mayer Verlag (Stuttgart 1999), 88. Lessing describes Julia Rice's activities as well in: Theodor Lessing, "Der Verein gegen Lärm," *Die Zukunft* 64 (1908), 437-442. By mistake, in this text he assumes that Julia Rice was William S. Bennett's daughter; her maiden name however was Barnett, not Bennett.

²⁰ Theodor Lessing, *Einmal und nie wieder. Lebenserinnerungen* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann 1969 [first edition: Prague 1935]), 290.

²¹ Theodor Lessing, "Über den Lärm," *Nord und Süd* 24 (1900/1901), 71-84; and Theodor Lessing, "Lärm," *Nord und Süd* 26 (1902/1903), 330-339.

²² Theodor Lessing, "Die Lärmschutzbewegung," *Dokumente des Fortschritts* 1 (1908), 954-961, quote on 961.

²³ "Europe too wants quiet," loc.cit..

²⁴ See *Das Recht auf Stille* 1 (1908-1909), nr. 9, 175; cfr. a report in *The Madisonian*, 6 May 1913, on the continuing consultations between Rice and Lessing on the fight against noise. It is, by the way, remarkable that this report was published in 1913. From July 1911, Lessing was less active by far in this fight. According to a report "Germans to War on Street Noises" in the *New York Times*, 9 August 1908, Lessing even visited Mrs. Rice ("The writer was shown through New York on his visit to that city, and noted the good results of Mrs. Rice's campaign"). I do not find this confirmed in Lessing's own publications, nor in literature on him. Moreover, in his "Der Verein gegen Lärm" he writes that he knows her organization from American newspapers.

²⁵ Goodyear, "Viel Lärm um Theodor Lessing," 101.

²⁶ Lessing, "Die Lärmschutzbewegung," 954.

²⁷ Idem.

²⁸ Lessing, *Der Lärm*, 125.

²⁹ Goodyear, "Viel Lärm um Theodor Lessing," 108.

³⁰ Cfr. For instance *The Lancet*, 19 April 1902, 1129, and 12 July 1902, 109.

³¹ "Less noise in Germany," *The New York Times*, 21 August 1909. Cfr. Theodor Lessing, "Die Londoner Antilärmkonferenz," *Das Recht auf Stille* 1 (1908-1909), nr. 11, 209-210.

³² Eventually, he never did, claiming the outbreak of the First World War prevented him from doing so. I tried to reconstruct his system in chapter 2 of my book *Theodor Lessing's Philosophy of History in its Time* (Boston / Leiden 2021).

³³ "Mrs. Isaac L. Rice, foe of noise, dies," *The New York Times*, 5 November 1929.

³⁴ Dorothy Rice was not only the first motorcyclist in New York, moreover she was one of the first American women with a pilot's license. In her at times hilarious autobiography *Curiouser and Curiouser, a Book in the Jugular Vein* (1940) she describes amongst other matters her rather unconventional upbringing. She left school at the age of twelve, for example, because she did not like "clogging my mind with things that everyone knew" – to the great pleasure of her father. Funny is the story about the acquisition of her first motorbike, a gift from her father. Having read a newspaper article on the death of a motorcyclist in an accident, he wanted to renounce his promise to buy her one: he thought it was too dangerous. She handed him a press cutting with the headline: "Man Dies in Theatre," and asked whether she was as well no longer allowed to visit the theatre. He gave in to this argument... (See: *The Bennington Evening Banner*, 17 March 1908). With her (second) husband P. Hal Sims Dorothy Rice later made a name for herself as bridge player.

³⁵ On Dorothy Rice as the first female motorcyclist in New York, see: “Motor Cycling Fad Strikes Fair Sex,” *The New York Times*, 15 January 1911; and on the case against her because of speeding, see: “Dorothy Rice fined \$ 10,” *The Sun*, 18 December 1908.

³⁶ Theodor Lessing, “Ausklang,” *Das Recht auf Stille* 3 (1911), nr. 6, 30.