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## LANDSCAPE AND SENSORIAL IMMERSION INTO THE IRAQI DESERT IN *THE WALL*<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract:** In this article I analyze Doug Liman's film *The Wall* (2017), set during the Iraq War, by focusing on the role of corporeal senses and particularly the soundscape of the desert in terms of representing the problematics of contemporary warfare. The two main characters, an American soldier trapped behind a partially destroyed wall and an Iraqi sniper hidden in the landscape, unveil the changing face of today's warfare as the paradigms of heroism and invulnerability are subverted in their verbal communication through the radio. The experience of an intimate aural relationship between the American soldier and the Iraqi sniper foregrounds connections regarding corporeality and the environment of war: a constant struggle between embodied combat and remote fighting. By exchanging ideas through the radio, the characters involve their entire bodies in a sensorial manner as the sounds vibrate in the landscape in echoes and wave format. These same sounds are implicated in the formation of thoughts and impressions about issues such as terrorism, occupation, and power abuse. I associate the voice of the Iraqi sniper through the radio to Michel Chion's notion of *acousmêtre*, with its ability to see and know everything, signaling a character construction that departs from the traditional expressionless profile of locals in war films. Space and sound articulate a complex relationship of power struggle between the characters who present different viewpoints about the experience and meaning of war, especially regarding the position of occupier and occupied.

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Landscape has long served as a defining feature of the war film, shaping narrative interactions, determining sensory experiences, creating a distinct set of challenges for soldiers in combat, and providing a pictorial symbolism for the extreme conditions of war. Yet the critical analysis of war films has usually treated landscape as a mere backdrop to the action, a setting or location that can

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<sup>1</sup> This article is adapted from the author's unpublished PhD dissertation.

be pinpointed on a map, but that is void of an active role in the film. The portrayal of landscape in war is debated by authors, such as Fredric Jameson in “War and Representation” and Derek Gregory in “The Natures of War,” who have drawn references mostly from biographies, diaries and novels, but none have focused on the war film genre. In the context of contemporary warfare, with its lack of spatial restrictions and unending timeframe, the peculiarity of the terrains and the substantial presence of war technology remain as foundational elements of the depiction of conflicts in war films. The landscapes of the Afghanistan and Iraq wars, for instance, are usually portrayed in war films as unfamiliar, “other” spaces that remain a challenge for visual and narrative representation. The war zones depicted in these films are experienced as foreign, hostile sites that present a combination of intricate and unknown elements, both geographically and culturally. Such constructions situate the current wars in the Middle East in a longstanding tradition of domination and subordination expressed through spatial conquest and control, offering portrayals of ethnic intolerance as well as an obsession with violence and dominance.

In this article, I discuss how the war film *The Wall* (Doug Liman 2017), set in the deserts of Iraq, presents the process of navigating landscape through the sensuous experiences, particularly through the sense of hearing, becoming a vital survival mechanism mediated by the technology of radio communication. The film contrasts the embodiment of the American soldier, who is pinned down behind a wall by an expert Iraqi sniper, and the disembodied voice of the Iraqi character to portray the changing face of contemporary war. On the one hand, the Iraqi voice becomes a symbolic mechanism for the all-around threat of today’s warfare while also signifying a war fought from a distance. On the other hand, the American soldier’s experience is connected to the intense corporeality of combat and the use of senses to navigate the battle zone. The paradigms of heroism and invulnerability are subverted in the film through the verbal exchanges on the radio between the characters, who also discuss ideas related to invasion and power abuse. The figure of the expert sniper serves as a witness to the past violence inflicted on the country and its people: his voice dominates the narrative. Michel Chion argues that a voice without source in film, called an “*acousmètre*,” can possess a striking sense of power in “the situation in which we don’t see the person we hear” (9). In the film, the traditional notion of indestructibility of the American soldier-hero is subverted by the intellectual and tactical expertise of the *acousmètre*, but most importantly, by the soldier’s own behavioral pathologies.

The experience of an intimate aural relationship between the American soldier and the Iraqi sniper in *The Wall* foregrounds connections regarding corporeality and the environment of war. J. Martin Daughtry observes that “listening is an intentional act, involving the near-simultaneous activation of our skin, our ears, and our brains in reaction to sounds that vibrate through us and the surroundings we share with others; it is mental, physical, *and* social” (190). By exchanging ideas through the radio, the characters involve their entire bodies in a sensorial manner as the sounds vibrate in the landscape in echoes and wave format. These same sounds are implicated in the formation of thoughts and impressions about issues such as terrorism, occupation, and power abuse. The act of listening activates not only sensuous responses, but also psychological reactions localized in the particular environment of the deteriorated wall. Space and sound articulate a complex relationship of power struggle between the characters who present different viewpoints about the experience and meaning of war, especially regarding the position of occupier and occupied. In this article, I use Michel Chion’s definition of the *acousmêtre* to analyze selected scenes from the film and further delve into the representation of power in the Iraqi voice without a body and its unknown and menacing presence to the American military.

*The Wall* takes place during the Iraq War in the last months of 2007, after five years of protracted combat in the country. The historical conflict started with the brutal “shock and awe” campaign that raided Baghdad and continued with the occupation of Iraq with “Operation Iraqi Freedom” in a collection of abusive and violent landmarks in its continuum, such as the destructive clashing with insurgency forces, the maltreatment of detainees in Abu Ghraib prison, and the failure to locate weapons of massive destruction. Long years of warfare brought reverberations to those who were involved, particularly to Iraqi civilians, as the high number of casualties and massive destruction reshaped the country in political and economic ways, leaving scars yet to be settled. Although *The Wall* takes place in a remote and claustrophobic setting involving mainly two characters, the echoes of the larger context infiltrate the story, especially through the war traumas associated with the figure of the Iraqi sniper and the demolished landscape of the deserts, a result of warfare interactions. The isolation of the deserts in *The Wall*, in contrast with the usually recognizable urban portrayal of the Iraq War, and the loss of the highly technological military apparatus of the U.S. forces construct the film as an unusual depiction of the conflict within the war film genre. Films such as *Good Kill* (Andrew Niccol 2014) and *Eye in the Sky* (Gavin Hood 2015) bring to the surface a decorporealized warfare that strays away from the focus on the body

and highlight the effects of technological tools to engage in contemporary conflict such as long-range weaponry and drones. *The Wall* brings the corporeal consequences back as the center of attention, being in line with movies such as *The Hurt Locker* (Kathryn Bigelow 2008) that attempt to emphasize the significance of the body of the participants in order to show the horrors and discrepancies of war. The choice of *The Wall* for this article is based on this attempt to centralize the effects of contemporary war on human beings as well as the deconstruction of the heroic parameters of the U.S. soldier in filmic representations.

Throughout decades the genre of war film has demonstrated a flexible capacity of transformation, mirroring societal conditions and new forms of warfare. From the monumental scale of Second World War combat in *The Longest Day* (Darryl F. Zanuck prod. 1962) to moments of intimate embodiment of violence in *Saving Private Ryan* (Steven Spielberg 1998) as well as a technological approach to war in *Drone* (Jason Bourque 2017), the genre signals a fluidity regarding the ever-changing face of today's world and warfare state. A significant engagement of the war films with political and social issues is observed by the film critic David LaRocca when he comments that "the genre itself has become a remarkable site of critical and imaginative encounter with the meaning of war and its near-perpetual presence or fragmented manifestations" (14). War films, documentaries, and miniseries have "hybridized, found variants and versions" (LaRocca 14) borrowing elements from other genres to compose a more layered representation of the experience of war on the ground.

More particularly related to *The Wall* is the impact of the Western genre in the construction of landscape and the figure of the other. Michael K. Johnson et al. explain that the Western "is a genre obsessed with the violence necessary to police the borders of white American masculinity as those borders grind against gender and racial identities, cultural and social identities, Native American frontiers and national borderlands, and imaginary lines between civilization and savagery, freedom and conquest" (4). Many of these issues, particularly the attempt to keep a masculinized façade and the figure of the civilized versus savage, appear in *The Wall* where the landscape is once again, as seen in many Westerns, a blank canvas ready to be taken but that still poses an unknown threat. Jane Tompkins brings the idea that in the Western genre landscape is generally "defined by absence: of trees, of greenery, of houses, of the signs of civilization, above all, absence of water and shade" (71). As she observes, the land speaks for itself as it signals the hardships to be suffered in "an environment inimical to human beings, where a person is exposed,

the sun beats down, and there is no place to hide” (71). The Iraqi desert in *The Wall* fits this description in an overall portrayal that highlights the otherness and difference between the two characters and their sets of cultural beliefs. Since the beginning of the film, the representation of the local landscape carries the genre memory of the Western as an empty and intractable place of danger where the two characters face off in an updated duel by using radio communication and long-distance weaponry.

### **Looking Closely at the Wall**

The narrative begins as a reconnaissance mission to figure out who is responsible for killing all the contractors that were working in a pipeline construction site. It later concentrates on the verbal interaction through the radio between the American soldier Sergeant Allen Isaac (Aaron Taylor-Johnson) and the voice of the Iraqi sniper called Juba (Laith Nakli). *The Wall* immerses Isaac in the Iraqi desert with its blinding sandstorms and burning heat, but unlike the traditional combat film, grounds him to one location for the majority of the narrative. There is a claustrophobic sense of being attached to one position in the middle of an open desert. The film lacks explosions and heroic sacrifices and focuses on vocal details of the soundscape generated by their conversation and the themes that are approached in their verbal confrontation. Isaac’s body and Juba’s disembodiment become sensorial reference points in the discussion of issues such as survival, the meaning and aftermath of war, and power dominance.

One of the most important observational tools portrayed in the film, the use of senses, has an active role in constructing perceptions of space and structuring an understanding of a world based on previous experiences and expectations. Gregory’s notion of corpography emphasizes how soldiers rely on the senses “in order to apprehend and navigate the field of battle” (“The Natures of War” 14). Sight, hearing, smell, and touch become tools to intimately apprehend the combat zone and adapt to its geographical and tactical particularities. Of all the five senses, two of them stand out as being critical for tactics and survival in *The Wall*: sight and hearing. Through these two senses, the characters immerse themselves and navigate the space of war with the aid of technology, whether by the use of gunsights, scopes or radios. Paul Rodaway explains that “the sensuous—the experience of the senses—is the ground base on which a wider geographical understanding can be constructed” (3). He observes that perception through senses is done based on the sense organs of the body in active connection with “mental preconceptions (individual training, cultural conditioning)” (11). To interact in an environment by using one’s senses is more

than just an experience of activating the physical abilities of, for instance, seeing and hearing, but a process of bringing forth cultural perceptions that leads to conclusions about the surroundings. As Rodaway points out, “we see, hear, smell, taste and touch the world through mediation, the filter or lens, of our social milieu, the context within which we have become socialised, educated and familiarised” (23). This will prove itself true as the characters in the film filter the information gathered by the senses through their own cultural and social background.

The experience on the battlefield is the focus of Gregory’s work as he explains that the disorientation of the senses during the First World War caused soldiers to experience mud, one of the iconic elements of the Great War, as “possessing a diabolical agency” (“The Natures of War” 12) that both confused the senses and took lives altogether. Soldiers during the Vietnam War contemplated the notion that “their intimate, intensely corporeal violation by the jungle itself” (“The Natures of War” 61) was one of the greatest opposing forces that clouded their senses and understanding of the surroundings. The sensorial immersion into an intense natural environment prompts the formation of the body into a unique instrument in combat. In *The Wall*, the heat of the Iraqi desert, its dry atmosphere and sheer remoteness are often causes of physical weariness and psychological disorientation, constructing nature as a space of sensorial malfunction.

The first image of *The Wall* foregrounds sight as one of the major senses to be explored in the film. The point-of-view (POV) shot through the gunsight calmly lingers on an object in the distance, and remains steady for approximately twenty seconds, as if watching it with commitment. The image in the crosshairs shows a partially destroyed wall, in which there seems to be a doorway, but no further dimension of the structure is visible. In the beginning of the film, the sight of the wall carries no other meaning but a shattered rock facade in the middle of the desert. Silence prevails until a subtle sigh and the words “nothing, hit and run”<sup>2</sup> introduce a character’s voice but not his physical image. The disembodied voice soon receives its visual reference in the following shot. Hidden in the middle of the dry vegetation, Staff Sergeant Shane Matthews (John Cena) is immobile behind his rifle. Isaac, on the other hand, is introduced in the opposite way, his silent figure pops up from the vegetation and his voice is only heard after a few seconds. By alternately concealing and disclosing sights and sounds in the initial part of the narrative, *The Wall* introduces a perception of the environment through a sensorial navigation of the space of war.

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<sup>2</sup> The transcriptions of the characters’ lines for this article were taken from the film *The Wall* (Doug Liman 2017).

As Matthews and Isaac watch through their scopes the pipeline construction site in which the bodies of the dead contractors are scattered, the film depicts both their intimate connection with the equipment in close-ups and their POV. The constant editing between the act of looking through the scopes and the detailed viewpoint image demonstrates that technology is not only an additional tool in the film but a vital element. Due to the remoteness of their location, long-distance radio communications are necessary. Throughout the film, their intimacy with technological equipment plays an important role, and malfunction or loss of such tools correspond to life threatening situations. In the close-up shots, the expressions on the faces of the characters convey fatigue and their battered skin illustrates the effects of long exposure to sun and dust in the desert. The unforgiving hot weather weighs in the tactical and survival decisions.

It is during their conversation that the construction of the character Juba takes shape as a powerful figure. Due to the swiftness with which the construction workers were killed at the site, most of them with headshots, the two soldiers wonder whether the sniper responsible for the deaths is a professional. Matthews asks Isaac, “We’re dealing with Juba now?”<sup>3</sup>, making reference to the sniper who became famous in the Iraq War for his expertise and elusiveness. Rory Carroll in the online edition of *The Guardian* describes the legendary figure: “Juba is the nickname given by American forces to an insurgent sniper operating in southern Baghdad. They do not know his appearance, nationality or real name, but they know and fear his skill.” Carroll’s article mentions that when talking about Juba, American soldiers describe him with phrases such as “he’s good,” “he’s a serious threat to us,” and “he’s very well trained and very patient.” Juba is not necessarily one person, but a concept. He represents the ultimate threat for the American soldiers as a source of uneasiness since his professional skill set resembles that of a soldier in the Special Forces in terms of abilities, strength, and swiftness.

The mysterious figure of the sniper Juba is introduced in the film alongside other equally enigmatic elements, such as the wall as a cursed site and the possession of the scope as a sign of bad luck. The sensorial geography that Gregory describes is extended to a kind of extrasensory perception as another way to navigate the combat zone. Through intuition, Isaac confesses, “I’m just saying, that wall’s cursed. . . . I’m scared of what’s behind it.” As if in a foretelling of his own fate, Isaac ascribes a sense of doom to the site of the wall although he does not see or hear anything

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<sup>3</sup> All the characters’ lines quoted in the article are transcriptions from the film *The Wall*.

coming from that direction. This is the beginning of the construction of the wall as a place of sorrow, not only for the soldier, but for the past history of that location as the narrative further reveals that it used to be a school. Another instance of supernatural attribution to an object is when Matthews comments on the bad feeling regarding Isaac's use of his deceased teammate's scope during the mission. By acknowledging the possibility of an object being haunted by a bad aura, *The Wall* transcends the use of the five senses during wartime and adds a layer of intuition to the perception of the soldiers. As in Gregory's notion of corpography, the soldiers re-map the geographical experience of the combat zone in a series of "improvisational, learned accommodations to military violence" ("Corpographies" 33), making use of what sensorial ability more appropriately guides them in each particular situation.

Until this moment in the narrative, Juba inhabits a hypothetical realm, with no voice or body to verify his existence. Even though he does not appear through auditory or visual means, his haunting presence can be felt in the choice of shots depicting the landscape of the construction site and the soldiers. Initially, as Matthews decides to go down to the construction site, two shots represent a static point of view that silently watches the soldier arrive. In a military state of mind that considers danger coming from all directions, every object and corner may conceal a threat. The first image is an extreme long shot from the top of a pipe structure that stretches towards the horizon on the left side of the screen. Matthews, a small figure on the right side, walks in the direction of the location. The vastness of the desert landscape combined with the eerie absence of local sound can be connected to the remoteness of the location and the vulnerability of the soldiers. The second image echoes this feeling, but from under the pipeline as Matthews slowly walks toward the site enveloped in dust. The shots highlight the corporeal vulnerability of the Marines while constructing a sense of an unknown and intimidating presence that patiently observes their movements, as if waiting for the soldiers to leave their safe position of camouflage up the hill and disclose themselves in open air.

In opposition to the static shots and steady camera movements used to portray Matthews' arrival in the construction site, the camera style becomes more erratic and unsteady as soon as the soldier realizes that all the deadly wounds are unquestionably headshots. This fact had already been established by Isaac up in the hill, but Matthews' immersion in the eerie space stirs up a greater feeling of uneasiness. The construction site that once used to be active is now relinquished to the function of a cemetery ground, with all the scattered bodies creating a somber environment.

The handheld camera encircles Matthews' figure in a 360-degree movement. A menacing presence is much more prominent in this sequence, as the tense atmosphere of being watched is translated by the circular motion of the camera. Matthews nervously exclaims "something's not right" and looks around in a clear depiction of his spatial disorientation. When Isaac asks him through the radio if he can tell where the shots came from, Matthews freezes, unable to figure out the direction. Matthews then gets shot and lies on the sand in a position similar to one of the bodies he had previously encountered on the site. The surrounding space of the wall as a place of sorrow echoes not only through the already dead bodies of the contractors, but in the similar fate of the two Marines at the mercy of an unfamiliar deadly force that so far has been bodyless and voiceless.

The battlefield in *The Wall* can be perceived as an uncanny space, a site where the strangeness of combat is highlighted. The term "Battlefield Gothic," coined by Samuel Hynes, encompasses this eerie atmosphere that relies on sensory perception of grotesque sights during war (26). According to Hynes, "the presence of death and the ways it is present" in soldiers' testimonies of combat possess an element of strangeness that blends the physicality of the devastating sights and the perception of horror (19). In the film, Juba's menacing and hidden presence associated with a vast terrain punctuated with dead bodies construct a general feeling of strangeness. Both American soldiers are arrested by the strange environment and consequently struggle to navigate the warspace. Their attempts of "seeing and smelling and feeling war" (Hynes 27) demonstrate a sensorial immersion into the eerie atmosphere that perfuses their experience during the film.

As Isaac goes down the hill to help his teammate, he is shot at several times from an unknown source. Two of them hit the equipment on Isaac's back and another one wounds his leg, around the knee area. In pain and disoriented, Isaac manages to limp his way to the wall and throw himself over it, where he remains cornered for the majority of the film. That is when the communication with Juba starts through the radio. From this moment on in the narrative, sounds become essential to the interaction and the smallest detail in such an exchange makes the difference in building a perception of the situation. Rodaway uses the term "auditory geographies" to refer to "the sensuous experience of sounds in the environment and the acoustic properties of that environment through the employment of the auditory perceptual system" (84). In *The Wall*, the stillness of the desert causes the radio communication to be centered on understanding space through hearing. Therefore, sound and space are foregrounded as elements that not only provide

means for tactical communication but enable the characters to involve one another in a battle of cultural and social viewpoints regarding issues of domination, superiority, and violence.

The initial contact between Isaac and Juba is portrayed in the film through the use of the radio earpiece. As Isaac is passed out, leaning against the wall, a voice that “wander[s] the surface of the screen” (Chion 4) can be heard coming from his earpiece. The voice is distant and has a military radio sound effect. Its source and identity are unknown, but it already demonstrates its power by waking Isaac up. A close-up shot depicts the moment in which the voice reaches Isaac, as the earpiece is featured in the foreground while Isaac opens his eyes in the background, awakened by the voice. Sound coming from the radio symbolizes hope, the construction of an unseen bridge that can possibly lead to survival. It is when Isaac properly puts the earpiece on, in order to better hear the communication, that Juba’s voice floods the screen.

The presence of Juba’s disembodied voice in the film can be linked to what Chion calls the *acousmêtre*. According to Chion, an acousmatic sound is one that can be heard but its source cannot be identified, therefore “when the acousmatic presence is a voice, and especially when this voice has not yet been visualized—that is, when we cannot yet connect it to a face—we get a special being, a kind of talking and acting shadow to which we attach the name *acousmêtre*” (21). The presence of the *acousmêtre* is surrounded by a mysterious atmosphere since “he must haunt the borderlands that are neither the interior of the filmic stage nor the proscenium—a place that has no name” (24). Chion explains that one of the main characteristics of such disembodied voice that has no fixed spatial position in the film is to bring unbalance and strain to the narrative, creating situations where the characters are faced with personal dilemmas and intense feelings (24). In *The Wall*, Juba fits the necessary properties of an *acousmêtre*, a voice who has the power to orchestrate the characters’ fates and direct the narrative towards the desire to witness the revelation of his existence.

The beginning of their conversation has a very different tone from the rest of the film since at first Isaac believes that the voice in his radio is from an American soldier who displays perfect command of military knowledge. A combination of military protocol breach and a glitch in Juba’s accent are the causes for the disclosure of the true identity of the *acousmêtre*. In an attempt to spot Isaac’s exact location, the voice asks him to stand and fire his gun into the air. The soldier scoffs at the untoward order and exclaims that it is not protocol. By stepping outside the military set of rules, Juba creates an environment of distrust, a breach in soldierly conduct. When Juba

pronounces the word “sergeant,” particularly the sound of the letter “r,” Isaac notices that the voice’s accent is not necessarily American, enhancing the atmosphere of suspicion. *The Wall* focuses on fine sonic details to construct the narrative in the space of the desert through the medium of the radio. According to R. Murray Schafer, the remote sonic environment of the desert can be seen as a “hi-fi soundscape” where “discrete sounds can be heard clearly because of the low ambient noise level” (43). In the film, sonic specificities in the conversation between the characters, such as accent, intonation, time of response, and background noises are significant in the construction of the unseen figure on each end of the radio transmission.

Another power that Chion associates with the *acousmêtre* is the ability to see everything or, as he calls it, panopticism. The author explains that “the one who is not in the visual field is in the best position to see everything that is happening. The one you don’t see is in the best position to see you—at least this is the power you attribute to him” (24). When Juba speaks in his own Arabic accent, “you have seen through my camouflage. . . . I’m talking about hiding behind words. Like you are hiding behind that wall,” his power to have a full vision of the surroundings becomes evident to Isaac since the soldier had not mentioned the existence of the wall in the radio communication. Juba camouflages his voice by reproducing an American accent, similar, in some ways to camouflage adopted by Isaac and Matthews in the beginning of the film, with tree branches and leaves attached to their uniform. Trying to blend in with the surroundings by either merging with nature or impersonating someone represents warfare as a game in which the ability to transform and adapt are essential tools for survival.

In order to better determine Juba’s position, Isaac uses a sniper technique called “crack-bang” that combines sound, space, and time. According to John L. Plaster, it is possible to calculate the time between the moment the bullet travels by, the “crack,” and when the sound from the gun muzzle reaches the person, the “bang,” arriving at an estimated notion of the shooter’s distance (463). By paying attention to the different sounds coming from Juba’s rifle, Isaac is capable of roughly estimating the sniper’s location. The sense of hearing, applied together with a military technique, provides a tool that enhances the soldiers’ chance of survival in the narrative. To put crack-bang into practice, Isaac sits with his legs spread apart and uses the sand on the ground as a makeshift board for his calculations. As he erases his markings, the contours of the floor of the destroyed house begin to appear. The hexagon stone tiles that were once covered by the ruins’ dust now begin to appear as if summoned by the idea of intellectual work. By bearing in

mind that the structure used to be a school, there is a ghostly reminder of the act of learning when Isaac works on his mathematical sums. It is a bittersweet memory of a place that had as its essence the dissemination of education, but that no longer exists for such purpose.

Although Isaac manages to calculate a probable distance between himself and Juba, giving him a tactical advantage, the voice still claims a better knowledge of the soldier's situation. Juba's omniscience comes across in his conversation as he stuns Isaac by saying, "[Matthews] is your second loss. First Dean, now Matthews." When Juba mentions Dean, a deceased teammate, Isaac reacts as if the voice became "invested with magical powers" (Chion 23). In a state of astonishment, he asks how Juba knows about Dean's existence and the voice answers with further information, "you carry his scope around. What was it your sergeant said? 'A dead man's scope'." This information reveals that the source of his omniscient power is actually the technological ability to hear the local radio transmissions between the American soldiers and the intelligence to interpret what he hears. Technology, both in terms of radio range and long-distance sight through scopes, enables Juba to have the upper hand in most situations.

The peak of Isaac's discomfort at Juba's overwhelming knowledge is when the voice combines with his omniscient powers, military abilities, and predictions about the soldier's physical state. Firstly, Juba says, "You're dehydrated, I know that. That's why I aimed at your water bottle. . . . And your antenna." Isaac's answer is of distrust since no person could be that accurate from such a distance. What Isaac cannot dismiss is Juba's explanation of the reasons why he shot the soldier in the knee, "I know the popliteal vein in your leg carries enough blood that, no matter what kind of bandaging you have, you will still be sitting in a puddle of plasma. You're feeling fatigued, lightheaded. And you will bleed out before nightfall." While Juba details Isaac's physical condition in a very medical way, an over-the-shoulder shot confirms the description, showing his bandaged right knee standing in a pool of blood. Juba's almost super-human powers, combined with his precision as a sniper, his detailed knowledge of the human body, and his tactical awareness frighten Isaac. The voice's omniscience is particularly evident in his last two sentences when he predicts how Isaac feels, displaying a kind of knowledge that, as Chion notes, "has been assimilated into the capacity to see internally" (27). Juba is not only physically frustrating Isaac's movements, but also psychologically upsetting the soldier. In a paranoid reaction to the voice's silence over the radio, Isaac asks Juba if he is trying to circle around the wall. In the soldier's perception, Juba also possesses another power associated with the *acousmêtre*: ubiquity or "the

ability to be everywhere” (24). Since the “voice comes from an immaterial and non-localized body, and it seems that no obstacle can stop it” (24), Isaac cannot control Juba’s power to move around the landscape. In this new way of constructing the landscape, it becomes a form of agency, a psychologically unnerving hostile force. In *The Wall*, the opposing force to the American soldier possesses a characteristic that is very much connected to contemporary warfare: the elusive all-around threat of insurgency, that can appear from all sides at any time.

The sound texture of the *acousmêtre*’s voice is portrayed in different ways in the film, indicating varied distances in terms of levels of intimacy among the voice, Isaac, and the audience. The most intimate depiction of the distance between Juba’s voice and Isaac’s body is during close-up shots of the earpiece inserted in the soldier’s ear. These are moments in which Juba’s voice is farthest from the audience since the audio sounds as if the viewer was listening from outside the earpiece. The voice still has a military radio effect, but it seems like it ceases to float so freely in the filmic space and finds a more grounded place in Isaac’s body. Juba’s voice resonates inside the soldier’s ear cavity and the vibrations become part of his sensorial structure. There is a very strong impression of an intimate interweaving of thoughts and sensations between the two, particularly when Juba says, “so, now let’s be real. It’s just you and me out here.” Their technological link is transformed into a physical and personal connection though the two characters are far apart.

The intermediate level of intimacy between Juba’s voice and Isaac is featured predominantly throughout the film. By seeing Isaac from a distance with his earpiece on, the audience shares the same audio that is coming from the local radio, that is, Juba’s voice with a military radio effect. This is when the *acousmêtre* seems to be in its prime in terms of a display of powerful abilities and knowledge. Chion observes that when the voice comes through a technological device, such as a phone or in this case the radio, “it tends to suffuse the whole filmic space, and to take on terrifying powers” (63). The most meaningful conversations are done in this mode, and although it does not have the same effect of the earpiece close-ups, there is a strong level of intimacy attached to this arrangement. Isaac is still receiving the voice directly in his ear, “bring[ing] to the acousmatic situation a vocal intimacy that is rarely encountered in social life” (63).

The third intimacy level is between the audience and the voice when a point-of-view shot of Juba’s gunsight is portrayed in the film. Instances of his POV shots are scattered throughout the

narrative, but only a few times does Juba speak while his viewpoint is being depicted. In these moments, his voice is not mediated by the radio thus having an effect of being closer to the audience. It is as if the viewer was physically near Juba and his natural and raspy voice is a direct vibration that is perceived by their sense of hearing. He is no longer simply one of the sides of a radio transmission, but a more fully formed figure in the narrative since now the film gives access to his unmediated voice, similarly to how Isaac's voice is generally portrayed. For instance, one of Juba's POV shots demonstrates the source of his omniscient power, that is, how he can clearly see Matthews' position on the ground. Juba locks the soldier in the middle of his crosshairs and cruelly says, "I'm looking at him right now. It would be so easy to tear his face off." By presenting these two sentences with the audio of Juba's natural voice, there is an emphasis on constructing his figure as an omnipotent being, one whose visual source and technological tools allow him to decide the future of the characters according to his will.

The structure of the wall gains a fully symbolic level from the moment that Isaac appropriates the space as his own by saying "my wall." It triggers a discussion with Juba about the previous cultural and social meaning of the site in contrast with the current use of the remaining ruins. A long shot highlights the deteriorated condition of the wall, with its fragmented piles of stones and loose material scattered all over the sandy floor. On the other hand, the shot also evokes the historical past by depicting the intricacies of such construction, and the results of the careful labor and effort of matching similar shapes of the stacked rocks. The shot lingers for more than half a minute, allowing the eye to wander the surroundings, looking for details. Meanwhile, Juba exposes his point of view about the situation, "you say 'my wall.' The very wall your country came here to knock down you now try desperately to keep from falling. . . . You should know, the wall that you're hiding behind was actually part of a school. . . . You're hiding in the shadow of Islam." In this case, the *acousmètre* functions as a witness, the one who stays behind to remember the original purpose of the ruins. The significance of Juba specifically telling Isaac about the previous function of the wall that now gives him protection is to make sure that history is not forgotten and a reminder that actions have consequences. In 2007, the wall is being used by an American soldier to shelter himself from danger in the remote desert, but the primary essence of the wall survives in the memory of the Iraqis alongside a feeling of resentment for such devastation. The wall is both the material proof of the destruction caused by the military and Isaac's sanctuary since it protects his body from direct exposure to the threat posed by Juba.

Isaac reacts in an indifferent manner to the information that the site used to be a school, creating a pattern of similarly disinterested responses regarding the American intervention in Iraq. The soldier's involvement with topics of terrorism, military dominance, loss of Iraqi lives, and destruction of local constructions is characterized by indifference, with occasional displays of interest caused by ulterior motives of distracting Juba in order to perform some tactical move. His detachment in such conversations denotes a deep lack of critical engagement regarding the reasons and consequences of invading Iraq, leading to an absence of appreciation for the local history and culture. Although he does not acknowledge the background of the site as a significant element, the essence of the school seeps into his own actions while behind the wall. Once again, Isaac uses part of the wall to emulate a chalkboard in order to organize his mathematical calculations. In a high-angle shot, he uses a piece of rock as chalk to write on a partially destroyed part of the wall the number of shots fired by Juba. The ghosts of the past are undeniably present in the space of the wall whether Isaac regards them or not.

The location of the trash pile is given prominence in the film when Isaac figures out Juba's position through sonic cues in the radio transmission. Sight and sound are combined to disclose the point of origin of the *acousmêtre*. As Juba speaks in the radio, pausing between the words, the background noise of where he is located can be heard: a repetitive metal rattling. This detail, almost inaudible at first, catches Isaac's attention. The quiet environment of the desert provides the suitable conditions for such specific sonic detail to be heard, and as Schafer observes "in the quiet ambiance of the hi-fi soundscape even the slightest disturbance can communicate vital or interesting information" (43). The transition between sound and sight happens visually in the film as a close-up of Isaac's left eye is seen while he pays attention to the background noise of Juba's location. He immediately looks through the scope in the wall, scanning the surrounding structures and finding the sheet of metal on the trash pile. Technology has allowed Isaac to hear important details and see from a far distance, but the use of his senses is vital for the perception of the fine elements that compose his surroundings.

Even though the discovery of Juba's location is a major element in the narrative, this scene is also significant because of the issues that Juba raises in his conversation. While enticing the voice to speak for a longer time so that the background noise can be heard more clearly, Isaac superficially listens to Juba's thoughts on the different angles of perception during warfare. The soldier's focus is directed to his newfound geographical awareness as Juba explains his viewpoint:

JUBA. You Americans, you think you know it all. You think it's simple. That I am your enemy, but we are not so different, you and I.

ISAAC. Yeah, except that I ain't a fucking terrorist.

JUBA. And you think I am? You are the one who has come to another man's country. Camouflaged yourself in his land, in his soil. From where I'm sitting, you look very much like the terrorist.

The fact that it is through Juba's voice that subjects such as the complexities of war, the act of invasion, power abuse, and the multiple faces of terrorism are brought to the surface, adds a layer of agency to the portrayal of the Iraqi character. Juba criticizes the act of American invasion and possible links to economic profits as he mentions the instance of camouflaging in the country's soil, a reference to the pipeline construction site and oil extraction. The *acousmêtre* raises the issue of what it means to be a terrorist and what type of acts are considered terrorism during war. These are valuable questions when it comes to leaving behind the old-fashioned notion of warfare based on broad categories of good versus evil and focusing on the fine details of armed confrontation.

As Isaac starts facing his feelings about his own war experience, the inner heroic wall of the traditional fit and courageous soldier starts to crack. Physically debilitated and mentally exhausted, Isaac finally talks about Dean and his personal life to Juba. The two soldiers lived in the same neighborhood and knew each other's families. In an unguarded manner, Isaac rambles almost incoherently about his problems readjusting to civilian life. In what can be seen as a possible result of post-traumatic stress disorder, Isaac still holds back the full disclosure of the reasons why he carries Dean's scope and continually rejoins the tours to Iraq, escaping life back home. The way in which Isaac's body is lying on the sandy ground, with his torso in a hole, his knee bent upwards, and his face covered with a scarf, almost in a fetal position, shows he is defenseless, at the mercy of the voice that seems to have the power to guide his fate. Chion questions himself regarding the reasons why the *acousmêtre* encapsulates the powers of seeing and knowing all while also being everywhere. His answer is that "maybe because this *voice without a place* that belongs to the *acousmêtre* takes us back to an archaic, original state: of the first months of life or even before birth, during which the voice was everything and it was everywhere" (27). Isaac's covered face leads to the loss of visual input and complete immersion into the sensorial realm of hearing. This is when Juba's voice takes over the screen and predicts the soldier's future in a sadistic way, "Isaac, when this is over, the skin will be cut from your face. Your eyes will be gouged. . . . Your lying tongue will be stapled to your chest. . . . But I will let them find your body."

Juba's graphic description heavily relies on the prospect of mutilating the body parts that are directly connected to the senses through the haptic element of the skin, sight, and taste. Unlike the corporeal damage that he can inflict from afar with his bullets, such injuries are done in a very intimate corporeal entanglement, one that displays complete power over the body of the soldier.

Their conversation is also punctuated by literary references that disclose the *acousmètre's* knowledge of American culture as well as his critical stance in relation to the context of war. In the scene, due to Isaac's physical effort to retrieve the radio outside the wall, the earpiece falls from his ear and Juba's voice floats in the air. Unwilling to put the device back on, Isaac listens to the semi-distant grainy voice coming from the earpiece. Isaac's lack of response prompts Juba to say, "the radio you risked your life for, it's dead. Are you dead, too?" When the soldier answers him on the radio, they engage in a literary conversation:

JUBA. He speaks! Tear up the planks. Here, here. It is the beating of his hideous heart.

ISAAC. What's that, one of your gay-ass Hajji poems?

JUBA. American. "Tell-Tale Heart." Edgar Allan Poe.

Juba's reference to Edgar Allan Poe's short story "The Tell-Tale Heart" brings to the surface possible points of connection between the story and *The Wall*. Poe's story heavily relies on sensorial perception, especially sight and hearing, for instance, the threat of the "Evil Eye" that creates an authoritative atmosphere of surveillance, and several examples of sounds, such as "the groan of mortal terror" (93), "a low, dull, quick sound . . . It was the beating of the old man's heart" (94), and "a ringing in my ears" (95). All these detailed sounds are very revealing of their power to stun and enclose the narrator in a sonic environment that seems to be physically and psychologically draining. This is a point in common with Isaac in *The Wall* who is gradually enveloped by the sonic power of the *acousmètre* and his ability to be an all-around threat to the soldier.

Juba's choice of quote is very revealing of his personal objectives regarding the situation with Isaac and the wall. In Poe's story, the narrator describes killing an old man with an Evil Eye who used to live in the same house, dismembering him and hiding the body parts under the planks in one of the rooms. The source of the sound of the old man's beating heart reveals the location of the dead body to the police. According to Gita Rajan, through the killing, the narrator "step[s] into the old man's position of unchallenged power. The act of murder reveals the condensed expression of his desire to usurp the old man's place and authority" (45). The narrator's "effort to possess

ultimate power” (Rajan 45) can be compared to Juba’s attempt to categorically overpower Isaac in every possible sphere of interaction. For example, in terms of tactical and technological advantage, Juba possesses weapons and a working long-distance radio and is able to have a clear view of the space, which allows him to take the lives of those in the construction site. Also, he emotionally manipulates and tortures Isaac with scenarios and predictions of pain and death. As Juba quotes from Poe’s story, he compares himself to the narrator who craves power and Isaac’s voice to the beating of the old man’s heart as a reminder of the need to eliminate the soldier’s oppressive presence in the country. Hynes’ idea of the “Battlefield Gothic” (26) can be perceived here since there is an emphasis on the atmosphere of strangeness and psychological disruption evoked by the short story. Poe’s work alludes to sensorial perceptions and grotesque acts of dismembering, constructing an environment that singles out Juba and Isaac’s battlefield interaction as an uncanny experience.

Isaac’s reply concerning the source of the quote as one of Juba’s “gay-ass Hajji poems” is an opportunity for the *acousmètre* to initiate a cascade of excerpts from American literature. Besides the fact that Isaac’s derogatory comment contains traces of disrespect towards sexual diversity and ethnic identity, his lack of literary knowledge becomes an opening for Juba to demonstrate his power regarding the soldier’s own culture. The *acousmètre* recites parts of Poe’s “The Raven,” especially containing references to the bird’s sounds, such as “tapping” and “rapping” at the door. The figure of the raven has often been associated with supernatural qualities and “otherworldly influences” (Fisher 43-44), much like the myth of Juba, or as Isaac refers to him in the film, “the ghost.” The *acousmètre* then delivers a poem by Robert Frost entitled “A question,” calmly reciting a few lines over the radio: “A voice said, look me in the stars and tell me truly, men of earth, if all the soul-and-body scars were not too much to pay for birth.” One of the significant points in the poem is the presence of a powerful voice who has almost a divine reach over humankind and interrogates the idea of suffering during life. If applied to the context of the Iraq War in *The Wall*, the “soul-and-body scars” can possibly relate to the hardships imposed on a population who has been immersed in a five-year conflict. By reciting this poem, Juba questions the price that is being paid for an invasion that does not seem to be very justifiable to the Iraqi people. In an earlier scene, Isaac accuses Juba of killing the contractors who are building the pipelines to strengthen the Iraqi economy. Juba’s answer is, “Pipelines? For *our* economy?”

The *acousmètre*'s political stance comes across very strongly in his opinions and choices of literary quotes, highlighting his sense of revolt for the military intervention in the country.

As Matthews awakes and communicates with Isaac, there is a heroic surge in the soldiers' behavior as they see the possibility of shooting Juba as a real scenario. Chion observes that the phenomenon that reveals the figure of the *acousmètre* is called de-acousmatization, that is, "the unveiling of an image and at the same time a *place*, the human and mortal body where the voice will henceforth be lodged" (28). To kill Juba by correctly pinpointing his location is to disempower the mysterious figure and deconstruct the idea of a being with supreme knowledge of the situation. Juba's de-acousmatization would demonstrate his vulnerability by attaching a body made of flesh and blood to the omniscient and ubiquitous presence, one that can be located and harmed. No longer a floating voice and a threat, Juba would be silenced and neutralized. In this moment of possibility, Isaac firmly believes in the idea that he will be saved in the end, a concept that stems from his trust in the military system, even if Juba painstakingly describes the situation, "You're fading, Isaac. . . . You are not fantastic. You have no water. You're dehydrated. The sun is baking you. You're bleeding to death." The *acousmètre*'s knowledge of Isaac's physical situation does not stop the soldier from praising his commander, Captain Albright, and believing in his power of assistance. The element of rescue, and therefore a traditional happy ending for Isaac, is reinforced in this scene only to be slowly dismantled in the upcoming events.

Isaac's past reemerges in two instances, one in a decoy version of Dean's death, and the other in a confession of the actual details concerning Dean's death. These two contrasting accounts are very revealing of Isaac's conduct and his overall representation as a military member in the Iraq War, a figure who falls short of the heroic paradigm traditionally associated to soldiers. Isaac shares the first version of Dean's death as a negligence from his own part in unsuccessfully shooting a nearby sniper. The second and unmasked account of the story is provided in a daze of memories as Isaac confesses having killed Dean as an accident in the battlefield. The hero's wall and the image of a loyal and truthful soldier come crashing down in this confession, highlighting a disguised facet of Isaac's personality and a problematic personification of a soldier. By fabricating a different version of the story and concealing his level of involvement and responsibility in Dean's death, Isaac distances himself from the status of honor and bravery that are traditionally associated with the military.

Isaac's confession is the last instance in the film in which the two characters engage in a conversation, although the radio is still used by Isaac and Juba, but this time in a long-range mode capable of reaching other military units located far away from the construction site. Isaac manages to communicate with Captain Albright but Juba's transmission overpowers Isaac's voice and takes over the radio interaction. The *acousmètre* possesses the soldier's power of expression and identity, personifying his accent and way of speaking. Juba emulates the expressions in English that he learned from his conversation with Isaac even using the derogatory term "hajji". The source of the *acousmètre*'s vast knowledge of the situation lies in Juba's ability to acquire new information and go through a sonic mutation to reach his specific goals. The disposition of the bodies on the construction site indicates that it is not the first time that a situation similar to Isaac's has happened. The constant repetition of this scenario allows Juba to intensely interact and learn new information. It reveals a portrayal of an Iraqi character who is cruel, but also resourceful and resilient. His power does not rely only on the technological impact of his instruments and weaponry, but in the combination of these tools with a perceptive state of mind capable of formulating a strategy that outsmarts the opposing forces.

The efforts to figure out Juba's location and stop his cyclical tactics occupy the final scenes of the film. As Chion observes, "everything can boil down to a quest to bring the *acousmètre* into the light" (23-24). Isaac knocks down the wall and Juba shoots directly at him which prompts the soldier to shoot back in an attempt to expose Juba's location to the extraction team in the helicopters. The Iraqi sniper then becomes inactive and silent, no bullets or radio transmission are heard. In this moment, the noise of the helicopter blades becomes the sonic focus as they land in order to evacuate Isaac and Matthews. Throughout the film, the *acousmètre* has made use of periods of silence on the radio to implement parts of his plan and has refrained from shooting in order to patiently wait for an opportunity in which his shot causes greater physical or emotional damage. As Isaac is being carried away on a stretcher, a medium close-up shows his physical fatigue as well as his attempt to indicate Juba's position. His hoarse voice puts together a barely audible sentence, "he's in the trash," information that is not picked up by the other soldiers. Isaac does not use the past tense as he refers to Juba, an indication that the *acousmètre*'s presence still haunts a scenario of possibilities in the soldier's mind.

The aerial view of the construction site territory is the focus as the soldiers take off in the helicopters, and the engine sound becomes a critical element for the creation of the upcoming

atmosphere of disaster. From inside one of the helicopters, a high angle shot of the wall area demonstrates the structural format of the place as a traditional configuration of a house, in this particular case, a school. Soldiers with rifles are on the right and left sides of the screen, as a frame for the destruction seen below. The front wall that used to hide Isaac is now completely dismantled, an evidence that adds one more event to the territory's catalogue of wreckage. Still inside the helicopter, Isaac receives medical attention while flying over the site. His body is on the helicopter floor and the ground below is visible through the open door. It is when they circle the trash pile that Juba's signature shot reappears. One of the medics receives a headshot, an act that is immediately recognized by Isaac who desperately tries to warn the remaining soldiers that the shooter is in the trash. In a very claustrophobic scene from inside the aircraft, the soldiers continue receiving fire which causes the helicopter to increasingly lose balance. The engine sound changes from a stable noise of the blades to a chaotic malfunction sound alongside the blasting of an alarm. The sonic turbulence is accompanied by an unsteady medium shot from inside the helicopter that shows Isaac lying down while the ground below spins around. The soldiers shout "mayday" and "brace," and Isaac puts his hands on his head in a desperate act as he realizes the materialization of a nightmare. The critical sound of the helicopter malfunction accentuates the impending fate of the passengers.

Image gives way to sound as the screen turns black and only the noise of the crash can be heard. The sonic details of the helicopter impact on the ground, the blades rotating out of control, and the sounds of shattering glass and metal being contorted dominate the screen. For a few seconds, sound completely dictates the narrative. By avoiding the graphic particularities of the characters' deaths, *The Wall* offers a sonic experience that focuses on a personal and sensorial connection of the audience with the events that now belong to the individual imagination. Isaac's body disappears from the screen and is reconstructed in the mind of the spectator who carries a filmic and real-life inventory of lifeless bodies belonging to soldiers. The next shot is a silent image of the sun, the mark of a new cycle of tactics in the desert. A female voice on the radio inquires after the whereabouts of the two helicopters, "Helo Bulldog 1-7. Helo Bulldog 3-5. This is Baghdad command. How copy?". The voice is accompanied by the image of the flat surface of the desert and the blinding sun on top. The remoteness of the space enables communication loopholes, where precise information about the soldiers' status is hard to acquire, which leads to the unawareness demonstrated by the military command. The last sound that can be heard in the film

is the *acousmètre* confidently answering the radio, “This is Bulldog 1-7. Reading you, Lima Charlie. Over.” The image that is shown alongside his voice is one of the helicopters turned upside down, a POV shot of his gunsight. Juba’s cyclical operation of camouflage has a new beginning as the film closes its narrative, highlighting the endless series of violent events.

The unconventional ending of *The Wall* relies on the avoidance of a predictable successful fate for Isaac, one that would focus on him being rescued by the extraction team after killing Juba. The fact that Juba survives and once again outsmarts the military consolidates his status as an all-around threat, a character who embodies the qualities of an elusive enemy responsible for the death of American soldiers. He represents the element of mind games during warfare while also portraying the contemporary aspect of war fought with long-range weaponry and technology. In addition, Juba is an unusual depiction of an Iraqi character in war films. His voice commands the events in the narrative and his expertise surpasses the ones displayed by the American soldiers. He is a powerful and intelligent figure who possesses knowledge and means to put it into tactical practice. Juba is a witness, an echoing voice of the country’s mournful past and present. His entanglement in a cycle of brutality demonstrates the complexity of the impact of warfare in the personality and life goals of the Iraqi population.

Although the majority of the scenes in the film focus on Isaac’s reactions and emotions, he is a character who lacks agency in the claustrophobic world of the construction site. Territorially stranded, Isaac struggles to take control of his life and overcome the powerful grip of Juba’s provocative voice. All his attempts to break free from the *acousmètre*’s scheme are unsuccessful at some point, for instance, when he initially tries to discover Juba’s location by lifting the rifle with his jacket and helmet over the wall, luring the sniper to shoot, but the helmet falls down, prompting the voice to laugh. Most of the times when Isaac attempts to distract Juba by having a more personal conversation are ineffective. The pivotal effort to stand up and reveal the voice’s position at the end of the film also falls short as Juba survives and manages to shoot the helicopters down afterwards. Isaac does not have a moment of success and bravery in the film in order to redeem himself from the past events that characterize him as a flawed soldier. By the end of the narrative, he is not an example of a contemporary super soldier whose physical fitness, brotherhood bonds, and moral compass ideally follow the military rules of conduct. *The Wall* features a military figure in what at first seems like a portrayal of an average soldier in an

inconsequential mission, but eventually unfolds into an exploration of the motives, personality, and moral choices made during the strained context of warfare.

The film's use of Juba as the *acousmètre* adds a larger dimension to how warfare can be understood in films since the offscreen space is also a space of war. The events that are not seen on screen are as important in contextual terms as the ones that are featured in the scenes. The *Wall* subtly brings the past and present dimensions of Iraqi history into the portrayal of a landscape that might seem remote and threatening to the military but has a social significance to the locals that only the material ruins and the memory of the witnesses can recall. As Juba's mysterious figure remains hidden through a floating voice on the screen, his powers range from having knowledge that seems impossible to obtain, to being everywhere and seeing everything. The *acousmètre* is represented as a resourceful character from a position of racial, geographic, and other difference therefore questioning the usual portrayal of powerless Iraqi locals and repositioning the leverage in contemporary warfare away from U.S. supremacy. The unseen forces at work mystify Isaac to the point in which both his physical and psychological states are shaken. The location of the wall is framed as a place of agony not only for the soldier who attempts to resist the voice's overpowering reach, but also regarding the memory of the original purpose of the ruins as a school. Landscape is constructed in a new way that displays agency as a psychologically disconcerting and antagonistic force.

The technological communication through the radio enables Isaac and Juba to be involved in conversations that bring to the surface social and political issues as well as personal and emotional matters that are part of the way both characters construct their worldview. Juba's opinions on the American invasion in Iraq, the distinct understandings of the definition of terrorism, and economical gains in warfare demonstrate some of his critical views on significant subjects that contrast with Isaac's inattentive state of mind. The *acousmètre's* quest to have complete power over the soldier's body and mind is noticeable in the voice's flaunting display of literary knowledge that once again skillfully demonstrates his viewpoints and personal history. Isaac's confession of Dean's death helps reveal some of his dysfunctional characteristics and subverts the traditional portrayal of the American soldier. Juba's camouflage is depicted in a recurring manner as his voice becomes the vehicle through which a different persona can be created and tactically used for destructive purposes. The auditory geography of *The Wall* constructs the experience of war as an acutely sensorial space where hearing and sight are

highlighted through technological means, but also demonstrates how the embodied sensations of each character allied with their cultural perceptions remain central elements to the navigation in the physical and psychological details of warfare.

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