ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis: CONSISTENT SOUNDS OF WAR IN MODERN IRAQ: IRAQI SOUNDSCAPES 1979-2006

Natalie Salive, Master of Arts, 2024

Thesis Directed By: Professor Peter Wien, History

This thesis explores the evolution of the Iraqi soundscape from the rise of Saddam Hussein in 1979 to the aftermath of the 2003 invasion, focusing on how sound has been employed as a tool of power, control, and resistance. Chapter One introduces the concept of sonic history, with a specific focus on Iraq's unique soundscapes during the Ba'athist regime. It examines the role of sound as an instrument of warfare and propaganda, delving into how Saddam's regime utilized sonic environments to cultivate a pervasive cult of personality and how changing technologies altered Iraq’s auditory experience. The second chapter provides a detailed analysis of the Ba'athi soundscapes, establishing the sonic contexts within which the regime operated. It discusses the sounds associated with sites of violence like Abu Ghraib, the regime's strategies of censorship, and the pervasive sounds of terror that became normalized during the Iran-Iraq War. The chapter also previews the sounds that foreshadowed the "Shock and Awe" campaign during the 1991 Gulf War.

Chapter 3 continues the narrative into the 2003 invasion and its aftermath, examining how the invasion perpetuated and transformed the existing aural environments. The chapter highlights the sounds of military vehicles, weapons, and civilian life, contrasting the propagandistic "sounds of freedom" with the persistent terror experienced by the Iraqi populace. The chapter also revisits themes of censorship and the complex auditory experience of "freedom" in wartime. Finally, Chapter 4 concludes the study by reflecting on the continuity and change in Iraq’s soundscape across these pivotal historical moments, underscoring the role of sound in shaping Iraq’s modern history. This research contributes to a deeper understanding of how sound operates within contexts of violence and power, particularly within the framework of modern irregular warfare.

CONSISTENT SOUNDS OF WAR IN MODERN IRAQ: IRAQI SOUNDSCAPES 1979-2006

by

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Introduction

"I was just going to sleep when the war started. The sky went brilliant red pierced by bright streaks of light. Aircraft noise came crashing through the night. I cannot explain to you the sound of the bombing blasts. It was like the end of the world. I switched on the radio and heard Saddam broadcasting a speech. 'The Americans are attacking us…' No one could believe what was happening. Even Saddam Husain did not believe it. When he broadcast to the public, his voice was faint and it sounded like he had just had a rod crammed down his throat."—Habeeb*, Cruelty and Silence.* Pg 76.

The 20th anniversary of Operation Iraqi Freedom echoes loudly in the collective consciousness of Iraqis and has added to the pool of remembrances of life under Saddam Hussein and Western military occupation. The most vivid recollections from this traumatic period center on the sights, sounds, smells, and even tastes of life in Iraq. Archaeologists, historians and media studies scholars have become interested in senses, the sensory, sensescapes. How are sensory experiences constructed and remembered? Doing sensory History allows new dimension to imbue scholarship. The study of sound is particularly suited to understanding times of rapid technological changes, so by listening to the sonic environments of Iraq from 1970 to 2006, this project investigates how auditory regimes—systems of sound control—were employed by both Hussein's Ba'ath Party and the U.S.-led coalition to enforce fear and subjugation. The soundscape, defined as all the sounds in a given place, is, like its visual or ocular counterpart—the landscape—subjective and constructivist.

Sonic histories of the Iraq War beginning in 2003 generally focus on western soldiers. This thesis uses Iraqi memoirs, blogs, and other English-language textual sources to reconstruct the soundscape of modern Iraq from 1970-2006, when the execution of Sadam Hussein definitively ended his control of the country's

soundscape. By doing so, it highlights the continuities in sensory violence—such as censorship, propaganda, and psychological operations—employed by both regimes to control the body and mind.

Hussein and the Ba'athists came to power in a 1968 coup, for which Hussein led ground operations at the behest of the man who preceded him as president, Ahmed Hassan al-Bakr. As Iraqis remembered from earlier coups, the Ba'ath party seized control of the means of communication—cutting telephone lines and taking over television and radio stations. Throughout the 1970s, the Ba'ath Party membership grew under violent, spectacular threats, and in 1979 Saddam Hussein, then-vice president, claimed the presidency and carried out one of his most iconic purges, live on television. By the time the US-led coalition arrived in 2003, 'de-ba'athification' was high on their list of things to do.[1]

Sound, listening, and indeed the human body were governed by the Ba'ath system and by the US-led coalition forces using similar mechanisms— psychological operations, media control, and [sonic] bombardment both by policy and training, and unofficially. Both governments used auditory methods to create a subjugated populace by creating nearly inescapable fear, and there are striking continuities to be found in their shared strategies which included sensory deprivation and overload, surveillance, and spectacular violence. For a war which John Keegan declared over in 2004, with no prisoners, research on soundscapes puts the power back in the hands of the people: civilians who Keegan dismissed as a "spectacle of dead fathers or

[1] Aaron M. Faust, *The Ba'thification of Iraq : Saddam Hussein's Totalitarianism.* (New York: University of Texas Press, 2016), 191; Charles. Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge. UK ; Cambridge University Press, 2007), chap. 7.

slaughtered children in bullet-riddled cars skewed across the roadway."[2] By analyzing these soundscapes, this project illuminates the shared tactics of auditory domination used by both the Ba'athists and the U.S., and how these experiences contributed to the ongoing trauma of Iraqi civilians. In doing so, it restores the focus to those often rendered voiceless—ordinary Iraqis—and reclaims their narratives from the overwhelming din of war.

The first chapter introduces the inter-related scholarship of sensory studies, sonic history, and conflict studies—examining their role in Middle East studies. Theoretically, it builds on concepts including sonic history, embodiment and soundscapes. Upon this foundation it introduces basic sources concerning Hussein's Iraq and develops the basic soundscape of the cult of Saddam. Putting this research in dialogue with existing research on the sounds of wars such as Vietnam and WWII emphasizes the importance of this work.

The second chapter uses memoirs, primary source compilations, and secondary sources to establish the sonic context that President Saddam Hussein and his Ba'ath Party created which worked to infuse Iraq with fear and violence.

The first section establishes Abu Ghraib and other prisons and camps as sites of sonic torture under Hussein's Ba'ath government. It is evident in memoirs and accounts of imprisonment in Abu Ghraib that the physical and psychological tactics used there involved sounds that resonated with survivors. The chapter also examines media silences created by censorship, surveillance, and promotion of Hussein's voice and personality. A final section studies the sounds of armed conflict: the Iran-Iraq

[2] John Keegan, *The Iraq War*, 1st American ed. (New York: A.A. Knopf, 2004), 200.

War, the Anfal (Kurdish Genocide), the 1991 First Gulf War, and subsequent Shi'a and Kurdish uprisings. Collectively, they demonstrate the visceral influence of violence and terror that Iraqis experienced through their soundscapes under the Ba'ath Party. Sonic trauma can create long term effects like hearing loss, tinnitus, and has been shown to create decreased neurogenesis in rats.[3]

In the third chapter, Iraqi blogs and videos underpin a historical reconstruction of the soundscape of the Second Gulf War from 2003 – 2006, — the initial stages of one of the first conflicts of the Internet Age. The chapter follows the same structure as the chapter on Hussein's rule—it starts by discussing the auditory techniques US forces used at Abu Ghraib, then deals with censorship in the form of US and insurgent forces' targeting of Iraqi civilians for violence based on the music they listened to.

The chapter concludes with sounds of violence during the 2003 invasion, organized categorically. Collectively, these examples tracing how familiar sounds—bombers breaking the sound barrier, loudspeakers blaring psychological operations—melded with new technologies to create an auditory regime that echoed Hussein's. Given the tight media control asserted by all parties in these wars, illuminating the auditory similarities of both governments reveals some realities of ongoing trauma in Iraq, beginning with the state of the field of sonic history and its growing role in conflict studies and Middle East history.

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[3] K.S. Kraus et al., "Noise Trauma Impairs Neurogenesis in the Rat Hippocampus," *Neuroscience* 167, no. 4 (June 2010): 1216–26.

The Ba'athist regime implemented a deeply troubling auditory system characterized by systematic surveillance, which involved listening to countless Iraqis, and utilized propaganda and violence during conflicts such as the Iran-Iraq War, the Anfal campaign, and the 1991 Gulf War. The U.S. Coalition brought its contractors and war machinery into this sonic context, this preexisting soundscape, and though perhaps their military jets were updated, many of the sounds and sonic tactics were familiar to Iraqis.

Chapter 1: Sensory History and Scholarship of the Iraqi Soundscape

In order to situate this study among discourses of sound, embodiment, and the historiography of Modern Iraq, the upcoming chapter delves into sonic history, theories of embodiment, definitions of soundscape, and listening/auditing/earwitnessing. The chapter also addresses the key sounds of Hussein and his Ba'athist regime, while engaging with discourses about sound, technology, and modernity.

Intro to Sonic History

Scholarship on sensory experience and conflict, violence, and wartime, is a new and growing field. It could be perceived as a response to the increasing abstraction of military studies as it expands into strategic studies. *Modern Conflict and the Senses* is a cutting-edge volume which references military vehicles "mounted with loudspeakers that hurled insults in Arabic at enemy forces" from the 2003 invasion of Iraq on its first page, is joined in military sensory studies by Mary Louise Roberts' *Sheer Misery*, a set of essays about soldiers' miserable experiences at the front during final two years of World War II in Europe.[4] Volumes dealing with senses and occupation are also relevant, as the 2003 conflict included a subsequent occupation period (for 'democratization'). Ann Laura Stoler tackles sense and occupation in her monograph *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the*

[4] Mary Louise Roberts, *Sheer Misery : Soldiers in Battle in WWII* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2021), 15; Nicholas J. Saunders and Paul Cornish, *Modern Conflict and the Senses : Killer Instincts?* (Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon ; Routledge, 2017).

Intimate in Colonial Rule,[5] and editors Russell P. Skelchy and Jeremy E. Taylor focus in on the aural in their volume *Sonic Histories of Occupation: Experiencing Sound and Empire in a Global Context,* which provides important comparison work set in the Philippines.[6]

Military violence and torture are sensory experiences that go beyond the auditory alone, since "the sense we make of any one sense is always mixed with and mediated by that of others."[7]

This paper also builds on Ziad Fahmy's work on twentieth century Cairo, establishing a sonic counternarrative to the state and Western official stories which engage with, under Hussein, fascist imagery and discourse, and under the US, the US Master war narrative. Fahmy points out that "in critical ways, listening in to the sources, and examining what is happening down in the streets on an intimate sensory level, can counterbalance the distant, almost entirely visual plans and descriptions drawn up by state and colonial planners."[8] In other words, focusing on audio gives the power back to the people. But Hussein and the US coalition were certainly partial to the visual plan or the strategic analysis—look at the importance Hussein placed on his portrait, his drawings for the Martyrs' Monument, and the coalition's own focus on image, including taking down statues and portraits of Hussein.

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[5] Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (University of California Press, 2010).

[6] Russell P. Skelchy and Jeremy E. Taylor, eds., *Sonic Histories of Occupation : Experiencing Sound and Empire in a Global Context* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2021).

[7]Connor cited in Ziad (Ziad Adel) Fahmy, *Street Sounds: Listening to Everyday Life in Modern Egypt* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2020), 14.

[8] Fahmy, 13.

The soundscape, a concept first theorized by R. Murray Schafer,[9] has engendered much discourse, both theoretical and inquiry-based. J. Martin Daughtry, whose book *Listening to War: Sound, Music, Trauma, and Survival in Wartime Iraq* (2015) works to reattach soundscapes to the body and the act of listening.[10] Beyond all the sounds available to the ear, soundscapes, like landscapes, are culturally constituted, as the listeners are. Daughtry's focus on the sounds of war, or the "belliphonic",[11] as he terms it, does not cover civilian/cultural sounds outside of war sounds in depth. However, the sounds of war were a tool of domination of both the auditory regime of Saddam Hussein, and that of the United States. Daughtry states that violence interrupts the auditory regime, but this thesis argues that the constant violence in Iraq created an auditory regime that remained constant as the political regime changed. Daughtry's categories of belliphonic sounds-- weapons, vehicular, communication, and civilian -- prove to be closely blended in Iraqi memoirs—these can be useful as categories in scholarly research, but reality is not so black and white.

Earwitnessing first appears as a method of analysis for accounts of the Second World War, works which exist at the same intersection as the current project. In his foundational work *The Tuning of the World*, composer R. Murray Schafer "described his own efforts to systematically catalog "earwitness" testimony in published works, which would offer insights into historical soundscapes and contemporary attitudes. Schafer defined the ideal earwitness as an author who lived in the past and who can

[9] R. Murray. Schafer, *The Tuning of the World*, 1st ed. (New York: Knopf, 1977).
[10] J. Martin Daughtry, *Listening to War: Sound, Music, Trauma and Survival in Wartime Iraq* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 122.
[11] Daughtry, 3.

be trusted “when writing about sounds directly experienced and intimately known.”[12] The sounds recounted by Iraqi memoirists were certainly directly experienced. Earwitnessing was particularly central to Hussein’s control mechanisms. The threat of a dissenting comment being overheard and reported to any number of secret police kept millions of Iraqis in line. They knew that the process of investigating these reports concluded with the person who made the comment either tortured or dead. It did not matter if the torture and death were real or simply rumor (and most were real) the effect was the same. Hussein and his torturers would occasionally commit these heinous acts publicly, a reminder to citizens to stay in line.[13]

Embodiment and Sound as Warfare

> *“To me, questions of violence are not possible to consider without an account of the important role of embodiment: body is present always in infliction of violence and suffering from it.”*[14]

Daughtry links embodiment to location, emplacement, because “sound as a phenomenon and listening as a practice are both co-located in the environment.”[15] Daughtry explains the violent physical effects of belliphonic sound, ranging from explosions to [loudspeakers]: they are “uniquely invasive, comprising small scale assaults” that can “violently displace air and tissues within the body, and these movements can in turn result in profound corporeal damage.” In other words, auditors

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[12] Schafer cited in Birdsall, *Nazi Soundscapes*, 11.
[13] Kanan Makiya, *Republic of Fear: The Politics of Modern Iraq, Updated Edition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), chap. 2.
[14] Palmer in Jeremy Wisnewski, *Torture, Terrorism, and the Use of Violence*, Review Journal of Political Philosophy, v. 6, pt. 2 (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2008), 19.
[15] Daughtry, *Listening to War*, 189.

have a hearing body, and are hearing (and seeing and smelling) in a location, often one that Hussein or his party had a hand in crafting.

Scholarship about music as a weapon in military action has been going on since 1945, when a Musical America article was published describing the morale and psychological effects of radio broadcasts in World War II in Italy (Radio Bari) and Luxembourg (Radio Luxembourg).[16] In 2003 Iraq, radio was used once again as it was in Afghanistan and numerous previous conflicts.[17] Music plays a role in the lives of soldiers, civilian populations of warring countries, during and after. In contexts like Abu Ghraib and other Psychological Operations as documented by Daughtry, music was weaponized against Iraqis, and in the wake of the US withdrawal it has become criminalized in parts of Iraq under growing Islamism.

Histories of the use of music as a weapon by the United States usually pinpoint Operation Just Cause, in Panama, as one of, if not the, earliest instances of this practice, which was then perfected by military police and contractors from Abu Ghraib to Guantanamo. Music was also used to disorient in WWII and Vietnam, distinct from its function as unifier or motivator. One of the earliest episodes of music being used as an assault weapon that came to the attention of the public was Operation Just Cause in Panama, where the US troops blasted hard rock outside the home of then-dictator Manuel Noriega's hideout.[18] The radio-based psychological

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[16] Frances Eaton, "Music as Weapon," *Musical America*, February 1945.
[17] Brian Whitaker, "US Starts Subversive and Radio War against Saddam," *The Irish Times*, February 23, 2003, https://www.irishtimes.com/news/us-starts-subversive-and-radio-war-against-saddam-1.350062.
[18] Suzanne G. Cusick, "Music as Torture / Music as Weapon," in *The Auditory Culture Reader*, ed. Michael Bull and Les Back, 1st ed. (Routledge, 2020), 379; Nuha Radi, *Baghdad Diaries: A Woman's Chronicle of War and Exile* (New York: Vintage Books, 2003), 36.

operations described from WWII are distinct from the practices begun in Panama, as is music's use as a motivator and unifier of soldiers, though they are all tools of nationalism. Battlefield band music reinforced a soldier's patriotism, while Radio Tikrit and Kurdish radio stations supported subversive nationalist movements. Music or noise as a weapon is not intended to promote any type of unity, although prisoners may have created some nonetheless.[19]

Psychological torture is inherently embodied—after all, the brain resides within the body. Under Saddam Hussein's rule, fear was manifested not only through intangible tactics like media censorship, public hangings, and the infamous 1979 purge but also through physical objects: buildings, paintings, photographs, and the ever-present figures of Ba'ath party members and Mukhabarat agents, the party's intelligence arm. As Vivian Sobchack observes, "our experiences are mediated and qualified not only through the various transformative technologies of perception and expression, but also by historical and cultural systems that constrain both the inner limits of our perception and the outer limits of our world." [20] For four decades, Saddam shaped the sensory reality within Iraq's borders, embedding fear into the very fabric of daily life. This carefully constructed reality was violently disrupted when the U.S.-led coalition invaded, introducing their own forms of sensory violence. Tactics such as psychological operations used loudspeakers to destabilize civilians, while advanced bombers like the B-1 shattered the sound barrier, bombarding Iraqis aurally and intensifying the trauma.[21]

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[19] Mike Tucker, *Hell Is Over: Voices of the Kurds After Saddam* (Guilford, Conn.: Lyons Press, 2006), 81.
[20] Vivian Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts : Embodiment and Moving Image Culture*, ACLS Humanities E-Book (Series) (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 4.
[21] Daughtry, *Listening to War*, sec. Introduction.

A common tactic used by the United States in both Operation Desert Storm and the 2003 occupation was using high powered jets to break the sound barrier in Iraqi airspace, often near cities and inhabited areas. Sonic booms and the explicit 'shock-and-awe' tactics of the US and its allies are identical to NATO's strategies identified as sonic warfare by Serbian musicologist Srđan Atanasovski, who discusses these strategies as methods of governance.[22] The somatic effects Atanasovski links to NATO's 'sonic bombs' are echoed in Ian E.J. Hill's important article about sonic torture, though in the case of torture there is a more explicit power dynamic. Hill describes the effects of sonic torture:

> "In terms of physical harm, loudness damages hearing with prolonged exposure over about 100 decibels. All noise can produce headaches, nausea, impotence, hypertension, slowed digestion, reduced bodily functions, altered diction and intellectual capacities, as well as disorientation, anxiety, fear, and terror. Loud noise signals danger. It even alters the behaviors of interrogators, feeding their anxiety and aggression toward prisoners. Sonic torture thus relies on incessant loudness to motivate specific prisoner behaviors; it ''uses'' ears to coerce compliance by vibrating entire bodies. The type of sound matters little: in prison, Beethoven tortures as well as Metallica, and white noise as well as ''horrible ghost laughter.''[23]

Sensory violence committed by Ba'athi and US coalition forces was so traumatic, their victims have varied memories, across the spectrum of remembering every sensation, and losing memories or blocking it out. The scholars behind *Modern Conflict and the Senses* describe war as being sensorially activated at three instances, and the third is in its remembrance, something Hussein takes advantage of by

[22] Srđan Atanasovski, "'The Song Has Kept Us': Soundscape of Belgrade during the NATO Bombing," *Comparative Southeast European Studies* 64, no. 4 (December 1, 2016): 482–99.
[23] Ian E. J. Hill, "Not Quite Bleeding from the Ears: Amplifying Sonic Torture," *Western Journal of Communication* 76, no. 3 (May 1, 2012): 218. The in-text citations have been omitted from this quote for clarity.

building several monuments, and establishing holidays. Experiences in the wake of a martyred family member are also ritualistic and embodied—the soundscape of a funeral, and the wailing of female relatives, for example.[24] Bodies are sites of memory, but so is the media, and neither of them are infallible sources of 100% truth.

Soundscapes in Warfare

The volume *Sonic Histories of Occupation* contains several studies on the US Occupation of the Philippines which engage directly with Daughtry and other sonic material on US soldiers in Iraq, on the 'loud city-quiet base' dichotomy at the US Naval base at Subic Bay, and on auditory and spatial regimes in Baguio. Sites like the Philippines and Vietnam provide important points of comparison for US behavior as an occupying power during and after conflict. Subic Bay provides an example of the US use of control of sound as a mechanism of its occupation, and the sources indicate that the loud city-quiet base narrative was "a false polarity, born of US colonial governance and reinforced by later generations of Americans serving in the Navy."[25] While the United States was occupying Baguio, Russel P. Skelchy describes how the the America occupiers 'smoothed out' "Baguio's rough and rocky terrain," a transformation which "involved complex layers of re-engineering of sonic and spatial architecture that prefigured a wider infrastructural strategy that would replicate across the Philippine archipelago under US colonial rule."[26]

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[24] Dina Rizk Khoury, *Iraq in Wartime: Soldiering, Martyrdom, and Remembrance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 237.
[25] Skelchy and Taylor, *Sonic Histories of Occupation*, chap. 5.
[26] Russell P. Skelchy, "Auditory and Spatial Regimes of United States Colonial Rule in Baguio, Philippines," *Sound Studies* 7, no. 2 (July 3, 2021): 200–201.

When discussing media and war, naturally Vietnam bears mention as the true origin of wartime TV coverage. The guerrilla nature of the Vietcong also makes Vietnam a conflict rife for aural analysis, some of which Philip K. Jason carries out in his article "”The Noise is Always in My Head:" Auditory images in the literature of the Vietnam war." Jason identifies the sound of the propellers on the helicopter known as the 'Huey' as the signature sound of the Vietnam War. He concludes by observing "the literature reminds us of lingering disease in the aftermath of our nation's longest war."[27] The sounds of Vietnam literally echo in the brains of veterans of that war, a phenomenon which began with WWI and continues to the present day—see Gulf War Syndrome, etc.

Discourse on sounds in Vietnam naturally includes the soundtrack—what were soldiers listening to,[28] and Vietnam's effect on film soundscapes,[29] as well as the role of media in the conflict and on the home front in the US. Indeed, the developments which enabled technological portability (that enabled the democratization of media and the bloggers of the Aughts), began in Vietnam, when, among other things, soldiers sent audio letters home via tape and amongst themselves. Beyond the reel-to-reel recorder, super 8mm film and Kodak slides enabled further personal chronicling and sharing, as well as reification of their experiences, as Matthew Campbell asserts in his dissertation.[30]

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[27] Philip K Jason, "'The Noise Is Always in My Head': Auditory Images in the Literature of the Vietnam War," *The Midwest Quarterly* 37, no. 3 (Spring 1996): 243.
[28] Doug Bradley and Craig Werner, *We Gotta Get Out of This Place : The Soundtrack of the Vietnam War*, Culture, Politics, and the Cold War (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2015).
[29] Todd Decker, *Hymns for the Fallen : Combat Movie Music and Sound After Vietnam* (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2017).
[30] Matthew Alan Campbell, "Reel-to-Real: Intimate Audio Epistolarity During the Vietnam War" (Ph.D., United States -- Ohio, The Ohio State University, 2019).

Listening to the Cult of Saddam

During his life, Saddam Hussein compared himself and was compared to both Adolf Hitler and Josef Stalin. Hussein's affinity with these notable dictators can be useful in terms of scholarship—there have been several sound studies concerned with the Nazi Regime. *Nazi Soundscapes* brings up the idea of the culturally constituted soundscape, while referring to scholars like Josephine Dolan and Mark M. Smith, who describe the necessity of textual sources in listening and understanding the cultural contexts of certain sounds.[31] Hitler's shouting voice over the radio has been identified as a 'sonic icon,' something thought to be emblematic of the Nazi regime yet not actually a commonly heard sound.[32] Hussein's voice, on the other hand, was replayed over and over on the radio, and radio was heavily censored and very common in Iraq during his presidency. Saddam Hussein's public persona was carefully curated, and so were his countless castles, and ultimately the landscape and soundscape of Iraq.

Hussein's personal brand of khakis, cigars, Chivas Regal, and his mustache, were all imitated by the Iraqi people, and so too were his voice and mannerisms.[33] The hyper-masculine stereotype Hussein embodied was embraced by cadres of young Iraqi men. Makiya describes 'the Leader' archetype quite well, explaining that the Iraqi public lost their identities and self-confidence due to the "pervasive fear and insecurity" which was instantiated "in the physical appearance of a large number of Iraqi men, in their mannerisms, dress, mustache styles, and even some of their

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[31] Birdsall, *Nazi Soundscapes*, 13.
[32] Birdsall, 13.
[33] Makiya, *Republic of Fear*, 117.

acquired character traits."[34] His residences, the numerous castles he built throughout the country, had decor that aligns with Makiya's assessment of Hussein's style as kitschy—empty rooms with comically large desks, hallways to nowhere, unnecessary ornateness.[35]

The ubiquity of Saddam Hussein's voice fits into this image of the omnipresent dictator, and the testimonies in Makiya's works provide important evidence. Yet Makiya's politics also belie a further agenda. Along with Ahmad Chalabi, as part of the Iraqi National Congress, Makiya supported and encouraged the U.S. coalition's 2003 occupation and was instrumental in the removal of millions of pages of Iraqi archival documents from the country.[36] Though these documents remain unredacted, Makiya's personal papers, also at the Hoover Institution (apparently accidentally), have been fully processed with records deemed 'sensitive, compromising, or potentially classified,' removed.[37] It is arguable that Makiya thus became a part of the dictator's self-fashioning project himself.

Technological Development and Iraq's Changing Soundscape

In the early twentieth century, Baghdad went through many of the same modernizing changes that Ziad Fahmy documents in Egypt in *Street Sounds*—changes which emphasize the influence of the built environment on the sounds of the

[34] Makiya, 116–17.

[35] Paul William Roberts, *The Demonic Comedy: Some Detours in the Baghdad of Saddam Hussein* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1998); Zainab Salbi, *Between Two Worlds : Escape From Tyranny : Growing Up in the Shadow of Saddam*, trans. Laurie Becklund, 2005.

[36] Bruce P. Montgomery, "Saddam Hussein's Records of Atrocity: Seizure, Removal, and Restitution," *The American Archivist* 75, no. 2 (2012): 326–70.

[37] Wisam H. Alshaibi, "The Anatomy of Regime Change: Transnational Political Opposition and Domestic Foreign Policy Elites in the Making of US Foreign Policy on Iraq," *American Journal of Sociology* 130, no. 3 (November 1, 2024): sec. Sources and Methods.

city. These changes included increased light, more vehicles (cars, buses, trams). The brief British occupation of Iraq furthered modernization efforts begun by the Ottomans. The nightlife ultimately patronized by Hussein's son Uday likely originated in these early to mid-twentieth century years.[38] In the 1950s, the Iraq Development Board, which was funded by both oil and western money, "oversaw the construction of dams, irrigation and drainage systems, bridges, roads, factories, power plants, housing, schools, hospitals, and public buildings."[39]

Audio-visual technology was developing alongside society in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[40] Radios became common fixtures for community listening in cafes across the Middle East. After sound reproduction came audiovisual reproduction and transmission, functions which became easier each decade closer to the end of the twentieth century, as gadgets like digital cameras, cellphones, and the development and expansion of the internet enabled increased accessibility to recording and transmission technologies. Although not the only contributing factor, in the 1990s this expansion of access to information (some might call it democratization) disempowered Hussein and the Ba'athists' censorship, which in turn changed the soundscape in Iraq.

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[38] Jabra cited in Stacy E. Holden, *A Documentary History of Modern Iraq* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2012), 139.
[39] Panayiota Pyla, "Back to the Future: Doxiadis's Plans for Baghdad," *Journal of Planning History* 7, no. 1 (February 1, 2008): 5, https://doi.org/10.1177/1538513207304697.
[40] Jonathan Sterne, *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction* (Duke University Press, 2003).

Histories of radio and television in Iraq and in Kurdish regions illustrate their Andersonian ability to unite imagined communities.[41] These histories also highlight the state use of media beginning with the British occupation of the 1920s, which engendered radio use. In 1956 television came on the scene, and within two years had broadcast the 1958 coup against the Hashemite monarchy, proclaiming the birth of the Republic of Iraq. One viewer recalled the audio-visual spectacle: "the 'television announcer read off a long list of Army and Air Force officers who had been retired;' […] and the subsequent regime aired the trials of the Crown's officials, [whose] proceedings were as popular and as theatrical as soap opera serials." Some people "described them as a comedy or a circus.".[42] Born in 1937, Saddam Hussein, grew up with state use of radio and TV, meaning that during his reign, he deftly manipulated television and radio. There are clear echoes of the 1958 coup in his own assumption of the presidency in 1979, when he had the names of supposed "conspirators" read aloud on television in his purge of the Ba'ath Party. Many of the accused were then forced to execute their peers in publicly circulated recordings.[43]

Even before Hussein forced his way into the presidency, his all-encompassing hold on the Ba'th Party and Iraqi society was clear as early as 1969, when the first party purge took place. In 1979, Hussein famously purged even more so-called spies, as Muhyi Abdul-Hussein confessed to being part of the Syria-loyal fifth columnists and began listing the names of his conspirators, who were taken out of the assembly

[41] Jon E. Bullock, "Broadcasting the Nation: The Importance of Radio in Kurdish Music History," *The World of Music* 11, no. 2 (2022): 74; Sara Farhan, "'Huna Baghdad': Competing Visions in Television Programming in Monarchic Iraq," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 47, no. 2 (May 2020): 284.
[42] Farhan, "'Huna Baghdad,'" 300–301.
[43] Amir Zaki cited in Farhan, 301.

and executed by a firing squad made up of other ministers.[44] Hussein had the whole event broadcast on live television repeatedly.[45]

Theories of spectacle and ritual violence can inform this comparison of two aurally violent regimes—Marie Ann Tetreault argues that the photos of prisoner torture at Abu Ghraib under the Americans were part of a one-off vigilante incident, which is at odds with the systematic atrocities of the Husseini Ba'ath regime.[46] Tetreault refers to Rene Girard and W. Fitzhugh Brundage's thoughts on the unifying power of ritual violence, which ultimately just needs the ritual, without the violence, to still be legitimate.[47] The rituals of Hussein's Ba'ath Party evolve accordingly. Makiya documents the evolution from the public hangings to state parades which served surveillance functions and involved Iraqis of all ages.[48] Hussein replaying his purge on the national television channels is another example of a ritual, and arguably, so were the nightly bombings and sonic boom-inducing flyovers that the US coalition carried out in the First Gulf War.

Indeed, it is important that the reader note that the west exerted control over its narratives as well, often under the guise of protecting national security. The United States Joint Chiefs of Staff exerted considerable control over the media during both Gulf Wars, allegedly for operational security, continuing to operate a media pool

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[44] Makiya, *Republic of Fear*, 72. Makiya notably describes this twist as so inimitably cruel that neither Stalin nor Hitler had done such a thing.

[45] Salbi, *Between Two Worlds*, 17.

[46] Mary Ann Tétreault, "The Sexual Politics of Abu Ghraib: Hegemony, Spectacle, and the Global War on Terror," *NWSA Journal* 18, no. 3 (2006): 33–50.

[47] Tétreault, 39.

[48] Makiya, *Republic of Fear*, chap. 2.

model and screening their reports.[49] Western news narratives often rely upon assumptions of liveness to drive their message home, and indeed in the era of social media, 'witnessing' carries powerful activist connotations. Yet media studies scholars have documented the common patriotic frames of the post 9/11 era, and shown that just because something is shown live, does not mean it is an unbiased chronicle of events.[50] In some ways, the internet amplified (and continues to amplify) these sometimes-harmful assumptions about liveness—there are things behind camera, out of frame, and left unwritten in a blog or tweet.

Historiography of Saddam's Iraq

The truth of living under the Ba'ath came to the West slowly, and then with the Kurdish Genocide, all at once. Many of these firsthand accounts are filtered through anonymized identities and familial intermediaries. Nonetheless, the accounts that scholars like Kanan Makiya (an architect by training, a historian by necessity) compiled comprise much of the basis of this work. This section introduces a few of them, as well as other important bases like literature, memoir, and sources in translation.

One of the earliest works to come out on the authoritarian tactics of Hussein and his Ba'ath Party was Makiya's *Republic of Fear*, initially published in 1990 under a pseudonym for the author's safety. In exile in Europe at the time, Makiya documented the brutality of Hussein's regime as he and his associates experienced it

[49] Philip M. Taylor, *War and the Media: Propaganda and Persuasion in the Gulf War* (Manchester ; New York: Manchester University Press ; Distributed exclusively in the USA and Canada by St. Martin's Press, 1992), 35.
[50] Shahira Fahmy, "'They Took It Down': Exploring Determinants of Visual Reporting in the Toppling of the Saddam Statue in National and International Newspapers," *Mass Communication and Society* 10, no. 2 (May 2, 2007): 143–70.

in several works, the main ones used in this inquiry being the aforementioned *Republic of Fear* and *Cruelty and Silence*. In *Cruelty and Silence*, among other things, Makiya addresses what he saw as the silences of Western academics in the face of growing evidence of brutality by Hussein's regime. More relevant to this study, *Cruelty and Silence* contains a number of extended personal narratives, collected from anonymized acquaintances of Makiya who suffered at the hands of the Ba'ath. Shorter, similar narratives punctuate the text in *Republic of Fear,* and indeed the very first experience Makiya uses to hook his reader contains numerous sensory aspects, including sound, as Makiya recounts Salim's experiences at the hands of the Jihaz al-Khas (a very special intelligence arm). Makiya's retelling begins with sound: a knock on the door.[51]

Although some accounts come from secondary sources (e.g. Kanan Makiya's work) and that might bring up questions of legitimacy, in the case of Makiya specifically, these layers of transmission add necessary anonymization at a time when even Makiya himself was publishing under a pseudonym.

There are numerous edited volumes of sources in translation this research incorporates, such as Stacy E. Holden's *A Documentary History of Modern Iraq*, which excerpts primary sources about Iraqi history beginning in the Ottoman Era. Using sources originating in several languages, Holden includes letters, diaries, and government documents as well as poetry and contemporary literature.[52]

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[51] Makiya, *Republic of Fear*, 1.
[52] Holden, *A Documentary History of Modern Iraq*, 62.

Another useful volume frames the concept of silence in the Iran-Iraq War in terms of cultural production (or sometimes lack thereof): *Moments of Silence: Authenticity in the Cultural Expressions of the Iran-Iraq War, 1980-1988*. The literature excerpted in *Moments of Silence* illustrates that individuals could sometimes express unspeakable traumas put into creative forms like song or verse.[53]

Sensory studies of wars or works at the intersection of military history and sensory studies, such as the edited volume *Modern Conflict and the Senses*, which contains various articles about the senses in the wars of the 20th century. The volume begins with a call to action (one which this work answers): "For all that war is 'senseless', 'unrepresentable' and even 'unthinkable', it leaves a material and sensory legacy which it behooves is to try and comprehend."[54] In addition to introducing the research presented within, the foreword of this book David Howes enumerates the three levels of engagement between the senses and conflict, the first of which is "at the level of the soldier's body and senses, the second at the level of the landscape and detritus of war, and the third at the level of the commemoration of conflict in war memorials and museum displays."[55] Some memoirs enable access to the first level, those written by men in the military, such as General Georges Sada and Shant Kenderian. In other instances, the second level becomes more pertinent, as the landscape plays a role in Hussein's violent terrorizing spectacles like public hangings. The line between landscape (really, cityscape) and the detritus of war is very blurry,

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[53] Arta Khakpour, Shouleh Vatanabadi, and Mohammad Mehdi Khorrami, *Moments of Silence: Authenticity in the Cultural Expressions of the Iran-Iraq War, 1980-1988* (New York: NYU Press, 2016), sec. Appendices.
[54] Saunders and Cornish, *Modern Conflict and the Senses : Killer Instincts?*, xix.
[55] Saunders and Cornish, xix.

for example when Hussein used Iranian helmets in the Victory Arch, and as US troops burned oil fields and bombed out bridges.

The Victory Arch was started while Iran and Iraq were still at war—indeed Saddam Hussein was commemorating his media darling Qadisiyyat Saddam *as* it was unfolding in the 1980s, invoking a great battle in the history of Islam while doing so.[56] In some ways, relying upon memoir as this work does, it is intimately connected to the commemoration of this conflict. Regardless of one's position on the reliability of some of these testimonies, sounds from as many as 45 years ago are preserved within, sounds that echo other mass killings, both past and present, and some sounds unique to the late 20th century as the last radio-TV age before the transition to the internet era.

There are a number of memoirs listened to for this study, including Zainab Salbi's *Between Two Worlds*. Salbi's father was Hussein's pilot, and she and her family spent time rather closely with the Hussein family and their inner circle. Through her own memories and excerpts from her mother Alia's deathbed writings, Salbi recounts her family's experience with Hussein's parties and abuse. Salbi described "staring at the screen of our little black-and-white TV" watching Hussein's stern expression as his guards led the 'traitors' out of the auditorium. Although only 9 years old, Salbi recognized the horror on her mother's face, as she "felt fear stream out of that small television screen and chill our kitchen, where until that moment [she] had always felt safe."[57]

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[56] Kanan. Makiya, *The Monument: Art and Vulgarity in Saddam Hussein's Iraq* (London ; I.B. Tauris :, 2004), 1.
[57] Salbi, *Between Two Worlds*, 18.

Two memoirs come from men who served in the military, Shant Kenderian's *1001 Nights in Iraq*[58] and Gen. Georges Sada's *Saddam's Secrets*, which boldly asserts (in the face of evidence countering this claim) that Iraq did have weapons of mass destruction, actually.[59] Both Kenderian and Sada are religious minorities, which Sada used to remain assertive in the face of Hussein's leadership.[60] Kenderian was conscripted into the Iraqi Navy and served in the Iran-Iraq War and the First Gulf War, where he was finally able to surrender into American custody and return to his family stateside.[61] Kevin Woods and Stephen Palkki's work, *The Saddam Tapes: Inner Workings of a Tyrant's Regime*, and Metz and Martin's work regarding decision making in the Iran-Iraq War, provide complementary accounts from Saddam Hussein's side.[62]

Artist Nuha al-Radi's memoir, or rather, the published version of her diary, shares more in common with the chronicles the bloggers provide—she wrote down her thoughts and remembrances on the day they happened (usually) or shortly after. Her diaries provide insight into the cyclical nature of the First Gulf War, and confirm other accounts' claims of community support—she spends countless hours with her neighbors, eating, chatting, sheltering from bombs.[63] Her artist's soul also engenders

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[58] Shant. Kenderian, *1001 Nights in Iraq: The Shocking Story of an American Forced to Fight for Saddam against the Country He Loves* (New York: Atria Books, 2007).
[59] Georges Sada and Jim Nelson Black, *Saddam's Secrets: How an Iraqi General Defied and Survived Saddam Hussein* (Brentwood, TN: Integrity Publishers, 2006).
[60] Sada and Black, 23.
[61] Kenderian, *1001 Nights in Iraq*, 280.
[62] Kevin M. Woods, Mark Stout, and David D. Palkki, *The Saddam Tapes : The Inner Workings of a Tyrant's Regime, 1978–2001* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Steven Metz, John R. Martin, and Army War College (U.S.)., *Decisionmaking in Operation Iraqi Freedom: Removing Saddam Hussein by Force*, Operation Iraqi Freedom Key Decisions Monograph Series ;v. 1 (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2010).
[63] Radi, *Baghdad Diaries*, chap. Funduq al-Saada, or Hotel Paradiso.

creative, musical comparisons rife for analysis. Luckily for al-Radi, she had made it to Beirut by the time of the 2003 war.

Memoirs that were published in or translated into English usually reflect the privilege of their author to both speak and write English, which can also go along with the privilege of living in exile. There is undoubtedly a whole other universe of memoirs in Arabic that lie beyond the scope of this project. Some secondary sources engaged with Iraqi records in Arabic that are held in the United States, both by the military and by civilian academic institutions, including Dina Rizk Khoury's *Iraq in Wartime*, which relies on the Hoover Institution's Ba'ath Regional Command Records.[64] Kevin Woods' works rely on the documents seized by the military, housed (at one point) in the US Department of Defense's Harmony Database.[65] It is possible these records are now part of the collections at the Conflict Records Research Center at the National Defense University.

Much of the documentation of experiences of the Kurdish genocide comes from compiled stories of survivors, in works like Mike Tucker's *Hell is Over*.[66] The Kurdish Memory Programme, and Human Rights Watch also collected stories of survivors, in (ultimately failed) attempts to prosecute the genocide. Kanan Makiya also spoke with survivors of the Anfal,[67] as did Choman Hardi—listening to testimonies documented in their secondary stories bears further witness to the

[64] Khoury, *Iraq in Wartime*, 12.
[65] Woods, Stout, and Palkki, *The Saddam Tapes*.
[66] Tucker, *Hell Is Over*.
[67] Kanan Makiya, *Cruelty and Silence: War, Tyranny, Uprising, and the Arab World* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1993), sec. Mustafa.

common terrorizing, violent, fatal sounds and experiences of this mass murder.[68] Tucker, formerly a Marine infantryman, picks up on and elucidates themes of the survivors' experiences, mainly the hellishness.[69] However heavy handed his mission, Kurdish voices and stories are important, as is chronicling them.

Rather than writing in exile, two of the main chronicles of the 2003 invasion and subsequent war are published volumes of blog posts. These blogs are still available for perusal in their contemporary to 2003 form via the Internet Archive's WayBackMachine. Salam Pax and RiverBend's blogs and multimedia objects were produced at the time of the war, rather than being published after and in exile, like most of the memoirs, and Makiya's works. The Iraqi bloggers of the Aughts were younger than the memoirists when their work was being published and publicized, and also rather well off. Even though not everyone had internet in Iraq in 2003, it spread beyond the mansions. Blogger Salam Pax explains that internet was widely available in internet cafes and most Iraqis learned English in school, so he could be considered an everyman.

Sounds Daughtry would qualify as 'belliphonic' are apparent in the blog posts—sounds of planes and artillery for example. However, "not all wars impacted all of the senses in the same way, rearranged the sensorium for all constituencies in equal fashion, or spoke in like measure to soldiers and civilians."[70] Like visual and audiovisual media existing or being produced for a specular economy, violence occurs in a moral economy, and certain sensory experiences are class-coded.

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[68] Choman Hardi, *Gendered Experiences of Genocide: Anfal Survivors in Kurdistan-Iraq* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011).
[69] Tucker, *Hell Is Over*, 47.
[70] Saunders and Cornish, *Modern Conflict and the Senses : Killer Instincts?*, 7.

Western media frequently reduced the Iraqi experience to simplified and exoticized narratives, perpetuating orientalist tropes while neglecting the profound dehumanization and trauma endured by civilians. By engaging with more current discussions of embodiment that are taking place across disciplines, this thesis will attempt to ground discussions of modern Iraq in civilian auditory experiences, although of course the story told will also be incomplete. Fear and trauma were constant, like war, in Iraqi society from the first spectacle Makiya identifies in 1968—the exposure, trial, and execution of a ring of alleged Jewish spies.[71] Then, the violence changed, became more about the threat: "the punishment that was once so public and sensual, almost tactile, has become a total abstraction; it is now the knowledge of the inevitability of a horrible and anonymous death under certain conditions."[72] Chronicling every incident in this space would be impossible, not least because many of the most targeted victims are dead, and certain crimes or violations of a person's body are unspeakable—NGOs like Amnesty International and the Committee Against Repression work to keep track of this data, however.[73]

Building on these important works on Modern Iraq, the next section describes the sounds that comprised the soundscapes of Iraq under Saddam Hussein, and the embodied experience of those hearing them. The violent auditory regime of the Ba'ath was purposefully terroristic and inescapable, and there are certain sites and events which typify the strategies of auditory domination used by Hussein and the Ba'ath. Sites like Abu Ghraib and events like the Kurdish Genocide show the

[71] Makiya, *Republic of Fear*, 51.
[72] Makiya, 68.
[73] Makiya, 64.

normalcy and rituality of violence, and the pervasiveness of enforced societal silences.

By analyzing survivors' accounts of their time in Ba'athist prisons, and memoirs by civilians and soldiers, and Iraqi bloggers for auditory experiences this thesis proves the importance of the Ba'athist sonic context in understanding the effects, both historic and ongoing, of the 2003 war on the Iraqi populace. There was also a great deal of close reading for auditory moments of narratives in secondary compilations, listening to texts like short stories and chronicles of the Kurdish Genocide. The Iraqis who lived through the 1980s and 1990s became well versed in the vocabulary of war, and could identify aircraft and weaponry on sound (and visual sometimes). Despite change in regime, the soundscape of modern Iraq remained relatively constant—bloggers and memoirists of the 2003 conflict frequently reference the 1991 Gulf War and the Iran-Iraq War.

Conclusion

Strong scholarly foundations for this inquiry can be found across fields, from military history to sound studies to history of modern Iraq. Concepts like R. Murray Schafer's 'soundscape,' and J. Martin Daughtry's 'belliphonic' inform the argument that the sounds of the 2003 U.S.-led coalition invasion echoed trauma Iraqis experienced under Hussein, as they lived under, in some parts of the country, near constant barrage. This argument is built upon memoirs, blog posts, video, and chronicles that come from compilations, secondary sources, and literature, through all of which emerges the importance of silence, as a counterpart to sound: literal

quietness and figurative silences in the narrative brought by the widespread casualties.

Chapter 2: Ba'athi Soundscapes: Establishing Sonic Contexts, 1979-2003

Under Hussein and the Ba'athi government, several sites and events provide examples and case studies of sounds that struck fear into Iraqis. Beaten into submission (often literally, otherwise silenced by the threat of torture), Iraqis lives were controlled by the state, including soundscapes. So tight was the surveillance and so extensive was the network of the secret police, that Iraqis could not speak a word against Hussein.

Through three sections, dealing first with Abu Ghraib and prisons/camps, then censorship and freedom, including silences, and concluding with the sounds of terror and violence, this chapter establishes the sonic vocabulary and context for the 2003 invasion. The first section of this chapter deals with the realities of Abu Ghraib under Hussein, setting it up for a comparison to Abu Ghraib under the US in Chapter Three. The torture and murder that the military undertook at prisons and camps like Abu Ghraib forced people into silence and compliance with the Ba'athist official narrative, and the subsequent section deals with this censorship and conceptualizations of freedom. Communication was heavily regulated, even as technology advanced, and communication technologies are vital to the military, and so the final section chapter explores the sounds of terror, namely those of wartime. The sounds of the First Gulf War echo loudly in 2003, and chapter three will prove that the consequences of what Dina Rizk Khoury called a 'normalization of war,' under Hussein and the American's

subsequent lack of contextual understanding of and sensitivity to this historical auditory context meant that the 2003 occupation only further traumatized Iraqi citizens.

One of the most salient sites, in view of the continuous auditory regime present under both governments, was Abu Ghraib. Under the Ba'ath regime this prison was a brutal, lawless site of torture and death, and during al-Anfal although it was not part of the Anfal system, Kurds imprisoned there recall the brutal tactics and violent murders.[74] An investigation of Abu Ghraib serves two purposes: obviously as a comparison point to emphasize US torture/transgressions/war crimes in 2003 in the upcoming chapter, and as a case study into the brutality of prisons and camps under the Ba'ath—survivors of imprisonment at Abu Ghraib under Hussein recall sounds of torture, firing squads, and smells, feelings, and tastes. Although focus remains on auditory memories, one must keep in mind the inherently embodied nature of physical torture, and the physical and mental scars it leaves.

Following Abu Ghraib, the chapter shifts to discussing censorship and freedom, including an explanation of the media landscape of Iraq under Hussein, and a subsection focusing on the silences literary and literal. From silences, we move to sounds, namely those of terror and violence. The final section of the chapter deals with the three main violent conflicts under Hussein: the Iran-Iraq War, the Kurdish Genocide, and the 1991 Gulf War. In the 1980s, during the Iran-Iraq War, Hussein and his media regime kept tight control over the narrative of the war. By 1991, he lost this control, in part due to technological development, and in part due to the increased

[74] Tucker, *Hell Is Over*, 70; Makiya, *Cruelty and Silence*, 139.

western/U.S. influence in Iraq, which included physical presence and sound, and silences due to deaths from sanction-induced famines.

Abu Ghraib and other sites of violence

One could argue that the site of Abu Ghraib, a location of continuous violence for at least 20 years, is a site that itself embodies violence. Those who survived the prison while it was under control of the Ba'ath remember torture and murder tactics almost too dire to speak about.[75] There was also a heavy element of psychological torture, and techniques like forcing prisoners to stand for hours and threatening death, were repeated in 2003.

While the guards shouted in Arabic, prisoners were often forced into silence, while guards dreamed up new and disturbed torture methods. According to a survivor who spoke with Tucker, "There were no rules to the torture at Abu Ghraib. […] And the guards invented strange, very cruel ways of torturing us. For instance, they forced us to stand on our feet for three hours, watching television. Then, the guards would ask questions about whatever we'd watched. If you could not answer, or answer correctly, they'd beat you on the spot with the heavy wooden clubs and steel cables. This happened every day."[76] What this Kurdish survivor experienced involved countless sounds, beyond the specific ones referenced here: the television and the interrogation.

Apart from the standard Ba'ath methods of beating and brutality, here were several other cruel methods of torture in use at Abu Ghraib concerning death

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[75] Tucker, *Hell Is Over*, 70, 84.
[76] Tucker, 80.

specifically. One, a type of psychological torture, was the fake execution, which a Kurdish prisoner experienced twice, recalling that the executioner taunted them in a whisper and laughed along with his guard colleagues.[10] There was also a last meal process, if you were lucky enough not to get slaughtered *en masse* in the night, "the sound of the machine guns hammering."[11] While the guards laughed, taunted, screamed, and interrogated, the prisoners were not allowed to talk, although they talked secretly despite the threat that "had [they] been found out, they would have hanged."[77]

Both before being rounded up by the military trucks and after arriving at Topzawa, men who remained alive after the chemical attacks were massacred, often after digging their own graves, and in some cases, living for several weeks in those pits.

At these camps, prisoners were often forced to dig large pits, where they were kept for long periods of time without food, water, or appropriate bathroom facilities. These pits were often the last destination for their prisoners, after the Iraqi military executed them and buried them in these now mass-graves.

One Kurdish survivor, Hashim, remembered that "they used to take prisoners out to the courtyard every once in a while. They would beat the prisoner with cables while he helplessly screamed and begged for them to stop. The more he screamed, the more they beat him until he lost consciousness. Then they would leave him."[78] Even

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[77] Tucker, 75.
[78] *Testimonies: Iraq History Project* (Chicago, IL: International Human Rights Law Institute, DePaul University. College of Law, 2007), 76.

if one was not at that precise moment a subject of torture, the sound of it was likely still all around them, screams and blows resonating in the walls and air.

The point of censorship is silence, and the upcoming section deals with some of the silences created by the oppression of the Ba'ath party, focusing mainly on the nonviolent methods like intelligence gathering, media censorship, and the permeation of Hussein's name and image. Silences also emerge via violence, if someone is seriously injured or killed.

Censorship and Freedom

Radio and television figured heavily into Hussein's rule from the beginning, so it should come as no surprise that that continued throughout his Qaddisiyyat Saddam propaganda campaign. One constant in this war was the mobilization of martyrs/martyrdom and their families as political pawns. So beyond perpetual re-aired and new Hussein speeches, was the cyclical news of martyrs and 'victories.' Albayati remembers this phenomenon, and recounts: "Every day I came home from school and turned on the TV. There was only one channel; and every day the news seemed the same: coffin of dead soldiers (people's fathers, brothers, sons) accompanied by false reports of the stirring victories that our army was supposed to be enjoying."[79]

In her investigation of the normalization of war under Hussein, Dina Rizk Khoury mentions Hussein and the Ba'athists' media practice surrounding the Iran-Iraq War, and the important role of the Directorate of Political Governance. This

[79] Holden, *A Documentary History of Modern Iraq*, 246.

Directorate managed "Press coverage, visits to the front by journalists, filming of battle scenes, and the education of schoolchildren and other members of the Iraqi public brought to the front to cohabit with fighters," and had a captive audience, as there were only one television station and two official radio stations.[80] According to Khoury, this "was the first war in which extensive coverage, albeit of a propagandistic type, was made available to the Iraqi public, linking Iraqis of all stripes to the developments on the front."[81] In controlling the media during the war, the Directorate of Political Governance had two goals. First, "to create a sense of shared experience between Iraqis on the home front and soldiers in the trenches," and second, "At the battlefront, its primary concern was to persuade soldiers to continue fighting and to boost their morale by offering entertainment as a reprieve from war."[82]

The state radio stations and TV channels broadcast every speech of Hussein's, often multiple times. These broadcast channels also played a small carefully curated set of foreign media (music, movies, shows) that had been deemed acceptable. But clandestine opposition stations were cropping up in neighboring countries like Saudi Arabia, Syria, and of course, Iran, who established "Voice of the Islamic Revolution in Iraq, which later became Voice of the Rebellious Iraq."[83]

Although it seems likely that the exodus of musicians from Iraq began in the 1960s when the Ba'ath party began targeting minorities with violence and death, and this trend continued throughout the Iraq War in 2003 as well. Some musicians

[80] Khoury, *Iraq in Wartime*, 87.
[81] Khoury, 87.
[82] Khoury, 87.
[83] A. Al-Rawi, *Media Practice in Iraq* (London, UNITED KINGDOM: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2012), 25.

remained and wrote music acceptable to the regime. Ismail Hussein describes working with Uday Hussein:

> "Later he'd bring out the machine guns and start shooting them off. He'd point the guns right over my head and the bullets would spray all over the place … I would sing right through the flying bullets. I couldn't hear the music anymore. I'd just keep going, because I couldn't stop. You just can't. I'd sing until dawn or later. It ended when Uday was ready for it to end."[84]

Ismail describes the terrifying realities of working with President Hussein's son Uday—drowned out by the sound of gunfire, he continues to sing so he can stay alive. Artists who stayed in Iraq could be employed under similar violent conditions, or they could work for the Directorate of Political guidance—bringing the story of the Iran-Iraq War home, for example.[85]

Silencing and silences

The silences created and enforced by the Ba'athists could be and often frequently were violent, but the mechanisms were, at times, more subtle, created by the threat of violence, surveillance, and propaganda.

Before and during the Iran-Iraq War, Iranians and Shi'a people became victims of violence at the hands of the Ba'ath. This was after similar targeting of Jewish Iraqis which preceded the genocidal violence of the Anfal. Shi'a and Jewish deaths and expulsions (or forced exiles) created gaps in Iraqi society and engendered further silences in Iraqi discourses. These silences are apparent in stories like 'The Nursery' by Ibtisam Abdullah, where quiet is accompanied by erratic spurts of talking too much: "Long talks about incoming fire and engulfing flames. Smoke and

[84] Daughtry, *Listening to War*, 260.
[85] Khoury, *Iraq in Wartime*, 57.

explosions and dead soldiers and POWs. And the state of mental collapse that seized them in moments of weakness so devastating to both body and soul. I'd listen, not daring to interrupt."[86]

Despite the rare chattiness of Abdullah's protagonist's partner, the silence of the traumatized was so overpowering that Arta Khakpour et al. titled their compilation of literary sources dealing with the Iran-Iraq War "Moments of Silence," joining Kanan Makiya's "Cruelty and Silence" In *Moments of Silence*, the editors selected a short story, "Only the Dead Witnessed the End of the War" by Ali Bader translated by Amir Moosavi, where the main character, a soldier, describes silence: "after those images of ruins, blood, ashes and smoke—nothing. Nothing but silence. The silence of those soldiers, on that morbid and rainy afternoon, heading towards an unknown fate."[87]

Beyond silences of martyred soldiers, there were silences created in the wake of Shia killings and self-exile to Iran, which were comparable if not in numbers to the silences created in the wake of the execution of hundreds of thousands of Kurds in the Kurdish Genocide. The silence of the dead was not the only silence. Countless traumatized Kurdish women maintain silence regarding the torture and rape they experienced at the hands of the Iraqi soldiers, a silence that is any victim's right. There are also societally enforced silences regarding the Kurdish Genocide—a genocide Human Rights Watch intended to prosecute in the early 1990s, only to be stymied by the culpability of several western powers, including American companies,

[86] Abdullah quoted in Holden, *A Documentary History of Modern Iraq*, 256.
[87] Khakpour, Vatanabadi, and Khorrami, *Moments of Silence*, 239.

in providing chemical material to the Baathists.[88] In 1990, Ayub Nuri was lucky enough to return to Halabja, where he "didn't come across anyone in the many homes [he] entered. It was deadly quiet everywhere."[89]

Khoury describes the Ba'ath Government attempting to manage the emotions of their soldiers, they badly needed them to stay loyal and not quit.[90] Nonetheless, Shant Kenderian did just that, finally defecting to (or getting captured by) the US in the 1991 Gulf War.[91] Like during the Iran-Iraq war, the state managed remembrances of martyrs, though the softness, dissonance, and rebirth and rearrangement of the national anthem found in Naseer Shamma's piece commemorating the al-'Amiriyya bombing were a stark contrast to the militaristic and nationalistic music played during the Iran-Iraq war martyrs' commemorations. Instead of pompous and patriotic, it was soft, playful, and dissonant, linking "private and community mourning to national suffering and rebirth."[92] Much like earlier musician colleagues, Shamma also "ran afoul of the regime and left Iraq in 1993."[93]

As Jews, artists, and other minorities were being forced to flee or silenced with violence. Hussein and the Ba'ath crafted the Qaddisiyah narrative of the Iran-Iraq War and began targeting Iranians and Shi'a Iraqis. This upcoming section covers the sounds of this conflict, a sonic vocabulary that would be referenced by nearly a quarter century of continuing violence in Iraq. Although the scope of this study is

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[88] Hardi, *Gendered Experiences of Genocide*, 34.
[89] Ayub Nuri, *Being Kurdish in a Hostile World* (Regina, Saskatchewan: U of R Press, 2017), 73.
[90] Khoury, *Iraq in Wartime*, 73.
[91] Kenderian, *1001 Nights in Iraq*, 104.
[92] Khoury, *Iraq in Wartime*, 237.
[93] Khoury, 238.

limited to the 2000s, it is likely that this vocabulary, and the experiences of being a "war kid" are still germane among the extremist violence that plagues Iraq today.

Sounds of terror and violence

Apart from the violence and fear associated with prisons, torture, and camps, the normalization of war meant that average Iraqi citizens became intimately familiar with the sounds of warfare. The Iran-Iraq War, or Qadisiyyat Saddam, was, in many ways, the apex of Hussein and the Ba'ath Party's media and censorship regimes, while the Anfal or Kurdish Genocide was the pinnacle of the torture and murder tactics the state used against minorities beginning as early as the 1960s.[94]

Although, obviously, the every-day Iraqi did not experience the interior of Hussein's palaces nor the intricacies of his unpredictable temper and violent ways, he systematized them through the various secret police branches, and violence extended its tendrils throughout each of Iraq's directorates by way of Hussein's henchmen like Ali Hussein al-Majid (Chemical Ali). Even those in Hussein's inner circle were not safe — he killed (or ordered killed) many ministers and relatives, including his own sons in law.[95]

As a point of comparison for the 2003 auditory regime though, the focus is on the First Gulf War in 1991. Some sounds of the 1991 Gulf War are echoes from the 1980s, like the air raid sirens, or Hussein's voice. Certain sounds are similar, but the technology has advanced, like jets breaking the sound barrier. By 2003 military

[94] Makiya, *Republic of Fear*, 52–53.
[95] Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, chap. 6; Makiya, *Republic of Fear*, 6; Joseph Sassoon, *Saddam Hussein's Ba'th Party: Inside an Authoritarian Regime* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

technology had advanced even further, but one must wonder why the US thought the sounds of their war in 2003 were 'sounds of freedom' rather than direct lines (including the same aircraft) to the 1991 War, where the implicit goal of the US had been intimidation into submission. In fact, the United States influence in Iraq goes back even further to the 1980s, during the Iran-Iraq War when

> "the US sought to produce a stalemate to prevent one of the two states from dominating the region. The CIA regularly briefed Iraqi intelligence officials with satellite imagery of Iranian positions. According to US Commerce Department files obtained by Newsweek, the Reagan administration supplied Iraqis with helicopters and video surveillance technology, and permitted sales of "highly toxic" pesticides and "bacteria/fungi/protozoa" --precursor elements of biological weapons."[96]

The Iran-Iraq War, and its official narrative spun by Iraqi President Saddam Hussein and the Ba'th Party, provides important traumatic and auditory context for the sounds of the 2003 invasion as chronicled by Daughtry. The aural canon and associated silences established in the 1980s in Iraq comprise vital context for our understanding of the effects of the 2003 occupation. The first subsection will cover the sounds of the Iran-Iraq War, exploring the categories Daughtry established: Weapons, Vehicular sounds, Communications, and civilian sounds. The second subsection deals with the sounds of the Kurdish Genocide. The chapter concludes with a section dealing with the First Gulf War and the 1990s.

Normalizing Aural Vocabulary of War in the Iran-Iraq War

Throughout the decade of the 1980s, driven by the Iran-Iraq War, Hussein and the Ba'ath bureaucratic and military mechanisms undertook the project of

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[96] Michael. Otterman, *Erasing Iraq : The Human Costs of Carnage* (London ; Pluto :, 2010), 20.

normalizing war. Qadisiyyat Saddam permanently altered the landscape and soundscape of Iraq (and Iran). Memories of this war indicate that its sounds can be categorized very similarly to those after 2003: weapons, vehicular sounds, communications, and civilian sounds (including music, etc.). These categories are not black and white—vehicles used to transport weapons had communication systems, for example. Music became co-opted by the Ba'athist State. Some might argue the loudest thing about the war was the silences created by its propaganda and in the wake of its victims. Even prior to wartime, Iraqis were silenced through torture and death. Beyond affecting the victim, this trauma extends through their family—how can parents cope with their daughter's depression after she was raped by Uday, for example. Although the influence of world powers in this war was less direct, as compared to either of the Gulf Wars, for example, the weapons (and the aircraft/tanks) were heavily Soviet. Using memoirs, these upcoming segments identify specific experiences of being "war kids" as Mahmoud Albayati calls it and the associated sounds of, first, weaponry, second, vehicles, third, communication, and finally, civilian sounds. Soon, Iraqis became fluent in the common sounds of war, its vocabulary, as outlined ahead, knowledge which they could use for more than 25 more years.

Weapons:

One of the major identifiable categories of sounds in Iraq during this war was weapons. In their memoirs, Shant Kenderian and Mahmoud Al-bayati describe how they as children could identify the sounds of different bombs and weapons, a skill and

transformation Al-bayati talks about as going "from normal kids to war kids," who "listened for planes and explosions the way children in other countries listened to nature and animals."[97] Albayati was much younger than Kenderian was in the war, while Albayati was drawing pictures of tanks, Kenderian was at university attempting to avoid serving in the military. Kenderian and his classmates experienced being "caught in the middle of Iranian shelling as [they] walked from [their] classroom back to the Engineering Department."[98] The trauma of this experience played with time, as "[t]he fifteen-minute walk felt like fifteen hours as [they] constantly dove for cover while shrapnel from enemy fire sprayed the walls and fell to the ground like rain."[99] Regardless of age when these experiences took place, they were resonant enough to make it into both memoirs, written decades after the war itself.

Beyond the noises of enemy weaponry during the war, a common celebration under Hussein, and likely nurtured by him, though it is impossible to attribute the act of shooting guns into the air in celebration to just one man, as it is a common military memorialization process globally. Nonetheless, in Iraq under Hussein (even separate from during the Iran-Iraq War), the firing of firearms in celebration was common practice. In her chronicle of the normalization of war in Iraq, Dina Rizq Khoury documents an Iraqi citizen's memory of the act of remembering of the first martyr from his neighborhood. He describes how he will never forget the "coffin of a fallen soldier or […]the cries of women in the neighborhood who had been informed of a

[97] Holden, *A Documentary History of Modern Iraq*, 245.
[98] Kenderian, *1001 Nights in Iraq*, 17.
[99] Kenderian, 17.

beloved soldier's death. They brought him home with a celebration and fired rounds in the air."[100]

Sounds of offensive weaponry were inextricably linked to the noises of their forms of transport. Arguments could be made for the use of a broader category of sounds, however in keeping with Daughtry's categorization, the upcoming subsection deals with vehicular sounds.

Vehicular sounds:

The weapons that Iran used against Iraq had to be transported to their targets. This usually happened via the air, as it was the stealthiest. Closer to the front at the border, land transportation was a slightly more viable option, with tanks and trucks making trips between bases in Iraq ferrying supplies and personnel. Much as Iraqis experiencing war became well versed in and able to identify particular weapons by their sounds, this skill generally extended to vehicles as well. One of the Iraqi generals interviewed for the US Department of Defense's Project 1946 described using ground radar to identify troop movements, small animals, and "every kind of sound pattern. The men of the radar reconnaissance platoon started to know the difference between a tank engine, a car engine, and other engines related to the area."[101]

Communications

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[100] Khoury, *Iraq in Wartime*, 68.
[101] United States: Defense Department et al., "Saddam's Generals: Perspectives of the Iran-Iraq War" (Defense Department, January 1, 2011), 36.

Within every military aircraft, tank, and ship, were mediated communication devices—radios, mainly. Land military installations also held radio/communications rooms, which had radios, phones, radar, and more.

It was common knowledge that every phone in Iraq was bugged, and likely your house was too. Memoirists describe going out into their gardens where they were theoretically out of the reach of the party's ears.[102] Until the advent of the internet, most long-distance communication was done via phone or letter. Zainab Salbi described the code phrase her family had in case of emergency, which her mother used from Jordan when she needed medical treatment.[103]

Beyond military and intelligence use, radio (and television) were used to communicate with the general public, to further Saddam's Qadisiyyat agenda—both domestically and in Iran. In addition to producing countless propaganda for Iraqis, "starting in 1981, the Iraqi regime began broadcasting the clandestine *Ahvaz Voice of al-Qadisiyyah (Sawt al-Qadisiyyah min al-Ahwaz)*, to present what it called 'illustrations of the Persian tyranny in the Arab land of Ahvaz, brave and valiant Arab stands, and magnificent cohesion with the Arab people of Iraq under the banner of the Arabs' new Qadisiyah, Saddam's Qadisiyah'."[104] In addition to framing this conflict in terms of ancient conflicts, this comparison, and Hussein's claim or association with the so-called Qaddisiyat Saddam, Saddam's Qaddisiyah, enabled Hussein to

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[102] Juman Kubba, *The First Evidence: A Memoir of Life in Iraq under Saddam Hussein* (Jefferson, N.C: McFarland & Co., 2003), 98; Salbi, *Between Two Worlds*, 86.
[103] Salbi, *Between Two Worlds*, 189.
[104] Soley cited in D Gershon Lewental, "'Saddam's Qadisiyyah': Religion and History in the Service of State Ideology in Baʿthi Iraq," *Middle Eastern Studies* 50, no. 6 (2014): 893. Lewental explains in an endnote that Ahvaz is the capital of Khuzestan. We can assume this channel was broadcasting in Arabic. .

strengthen his cult of personality with comparisons to the leader of the first battle, Muhammad's Companion Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas.[105]

Civilian Sounds:

The Islamic call to prayer was the most frequently heard and widely spread civilian sound in Iraq. There were also commonly wailing sounds of women whose sons or husbands had been martyred in the war. But, according to Khoury, the public remembrances or spectacles commemorating martyrs were highly regulated by the state, and frequently included moments of silence, prayers, nationalistic music, and other art, such as poetry. Khoury characterizes this music as being 'of mobilization and militant nationalism.'[106] In fact, music was an important tool of the state, for it was in the early 1980s that the Ba'athists began hosting the Baghdad International Music Conference. Material from the 1986 iteration, the fourth of these conferences, promoted the incorrect idea that Iraq was lured into this war, and that the Iraqis want peace, to save the children.[107] Music had long been used in service of Iraqi state propaganda, but this conference was an attempt to spread that sentiment internationally—this was the Ba'athist propaganda machine at its peak.

In this period, censorship and exile profoundly affected the Iraqi music scene. In the wake of friends and musicians lost, some of their sounds remained or echoed, mixed in with the sounds of weapons. In *Cruelty and Silence*, Makiya's interlocutor Habeeb describes how in 1991, "while Baghdad Radio was broadcasting the love

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[105] Lewental, 893.
[106] Khoury, *Iraq in Wartime*, 237.
[107] Sub-subseries 3.2.1"On Education: Baghdad International Music Conference," 36/9, September 1986, 3.122.4, Box: 122, Folder: 4.0. Charles B. Fowler papers, 0003-SCPA. Michelle Smith Performing Arts Library.

songs of the singer Majida al-Roumi, more than a million of the four million residents were stampeding out of the city."[108] Daughtry lists four musicians who fled in the 1990s.[109] Mohammed Albayati also recalls a song his best friend, lost to the war, enjoyed, in contrast to the typical silence of the traumatized, who often could not listen to music or even hear after experiencing a bombing or going to the front.[110]

The upcoming section returns to the violent disorienting reality of the Kurdish Genocide. Survivors described the smell of death at the camps, the sight of victims of the chemical weapons, sounds of trucks, guns, and screams, and omens like dogs. In some instances, especially of sexual violence, survivors struggle to discuss what they experienced, often relaying the message through an intermediary, or heavily implying rape. These "women's silences may not always be an oppressive strategy forced on them. In some cases, this may be a rational choice made by women who want to protect themselves from the social consequences of such disclosure. It is also possible some women still find it too painful to talk about these issues."[111]

Al-Anfal

The Ba'ath government referred to their 1988 operations against Kurds and other minorities in Northern Iraq as 'Al-Anfal,' which means 'the spoils of war,' and is the name of the eighth chapter of the Qur'an. In the beginning of her study on the effects of this genocide on Kurdish women, Choman Hardi briefly sums up how this "religiously coined word was used to legitimize this campaign – portraying Kurds as

[108] Makiya, *Cruelty and Silence*, 77.
[109] Daughtry, *Listening to War*, 260–61.
[110] Al-Radi quoted in Holden, *A Documentary History of Modern Iraq*, 277.
[111] Hardi, *Gendered Experiences of Genocide*, 65.

non-Muslims – and to mobilise support for it inside the country and in the Muslim world"[112] Hardi estimates 100,000 civilians were murdered, and 2,600 villages destroyed.[113] Beyond the smells and other horrific sensory experiences that index the Kurdish Genocide, there are sonic indicators of al-Anfal, like the sounds of the trucks, the weeping of surviving women, the relative quiet of the chemical bombs, and the gaping silences left by the 100,000 murdered Kurds.

Although more notable for their smell and corporeal effects, survivor Kurds described the "sort of popping sound" of the inner casing breaking allowing the two chemicals inside to mix.[114] The jets that dropped these chemical bombs, said to contain various mixes of lethal and injurious gases like sarin and mustard, were louder than the bombs themselves, as Mike Tucker documented in *Hell is Over: Voices of the Kurds after Saddam*: "I heard the jets before I saw them. The voice of the jets made an explosion in my ears. And the jets dove over Hessee village, and Akmallee. One jet dove over each village. Each dropped one bomb. The voice of the bombs was not a huge deafening sound. The voice of each bomb was a low rumbling sound. These were chemical bombs Saddam attacked us with, the chemical death." [115]

In other instances, the bombs were quite loud, as Hawbash, a Halabja survivor explained after two bombs fell close by, in fact he "had never heard such a loud sound." Around and on top of the noise of the bombs, in the basement they took shelter in, there was cacophony, "people were crying, shouting and praying to god. . .

[112] Hardi, 1.
[113] Hardi, 1.
[114] Makiya, *Cruelty and Silence*, 146.
[115] Tucker, *Hell Is Over*, 45.

It was so loud that no one could hear each other." Hawbash "will never forget the shouting and screaming of the people in the basement."[116]

Beyond the odd quietness of the bombs, there were a number of other common experiences shared by Anfal survivors. Women and men were separated so that the military could exterminate/execute the males of fighting age. Trucks or tractors ran their engines to cover up the screams and gunshots. These trucks also took Kurds to the various prison camps in Iraq, like Dibs, Salamiyyah, Nugra Salman, Topzawa, Dahuk prison. A survivor Mike Tucker spoke with describes how "The Iraqis separated the women from the men. I cried for my son, my husband, and my father. I cried for the men of our village. Oh, all the women screamed and cried."[117] The women screamed as they heard the trucks filled with the Kurdish men from their village drive away. Several Kurds whose stories Tucker chronicled not only spoke of hearing the trucks but used metaphor to compare the sound of the trucks to "the sound of death," and "the terrifying sound of knowing you will never see your loved ones again"[118]—metaphors are one way to describe the indescribable, like the surrealness and trauma experienced by survivors of the Kurdish Genocide.

Although the chemical weapons were quieter than traditional artillery, the deaths they caused were not silent. To contribute to depersonalization and demoralization, the military often forced Kurds to enlist, then made them kill their own brethren, and if a Kurd was lucky enough to survive the chemical weapons, further surreal and terrifying sounds awaited them. Once they had survived chemical

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[116] *Testimonies*, 20.
[117] Tucker, *Hell Is Over*, 54.
[118] Tucker, 57–58.

weapons, transportation to a camp, and tactics like this one Ali Hasan al-Majeed described: “taking care of them means burying them with bulldozers,”[119] the sounds of the loudspeaker, and of the guns and heavy equipment, are not soon forgotten by survivors, as well as other sounds of the camps.

Wailing, crying, and screaming punctuate enforced silences and the shouts of Arabic speaking guards at Kurdish resettlement camps like Salamiyya, Topzawa, Dahuk, and Abu Ghraib. These sounds were in addition to sounds of torture, and fatal sanitation conditions. Kurdish prisoners were moved between rooms of different sizes, and often left in pits or mass graves. Mike Tucker’s conversations with survivors illuminated several of the mukhabarat’s murderous methods and their sounds, including “The sound of the machine guns hammering in the night. You could hear the billets striking concrete, as the Iraqis killed our comrades.”[120]

Torture tactics included separating the children from their mothers, which caused uproars, which were, in at least one instance, orchestrated by sympathetic guards: “Later Keejan’s daughter, who was eight years old at the time, told her that a Turkoman and a Kurdish guard were walking around ‘pinching the children’ and telling them to make a lot of noise so they will be taken back to their mothers.”[121]

Kanan Makiya talked to a young boy, Taimour who survived a mass grave, who, when his traumatized silence was broken, discussed sounds like women “shouting and beating themselves,” and his experience as he ‘sat in the pit and they fired bullets at us, […] stopping and starting shooting.’[122] Prior to his attempted

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[119] Makiya, *Cruelty and Silence*, 167.
[120] Tucker, *Hell Is Over*, 61.
[121] Hardi, *Gendered Experiences of Genocide*, 51.
[122] Makiya, *Cruelty and Silence*, 187–95.

extinction, Taimour described how silence was enforced at Dahuk prison: "We couldn't ask anything because if we asked they would beat us and throw bricks on our back."[123] Despite his hesitance to discuss the horrors he went through, at the end of the interview with Makiya, Taimour expressed his desire for the world to know what happened to him.[124]

Previewing Shock and Awe: 1991 Gulf War

SCUD missiles were the main weapon used by Iraq in 1991. Many other sounds continued on as before: Iraq TV, the official radio stations, large machinery of war, the wailing. The United States used tactics that intimidated Iraqis, especially after the war. But throughout, the din of the sirens and missiles became familiar, silence was "unnatural."[125] Despite "awful" nights, with "rocketing non-stop and the biggest loudest explosion ever,"[126] Nuha al Radi's neighbors said "they now prefer to live with the noise."

Beyond missiles, al-Radi also frequently heard bullets being fired into the air, in commemoration and in celebration. On two consecutive days, she first hears firing in the air as "as a salute for the funeral of those who died in the [Amiriyah] shelter." Followed on the next day by "a peace rumor for a couple hours," which meant "stupid people started shooting into the air, celebrating our victory."

Finally, the war concluded, not with a whimper, but with many bangs, and months of constant sonic boom flyovers. Al-Radi wrote that "it was the worst night of

[123] Makiya, 173.
[124] Makiya, 199.
[125] Radi, *Baghdad Diaries* Day 36.
[126] Radi Day 17.

bombing of the whole war, relentless – nobody slept a wink. The noise was indescribable. We shook, rattled, and rolled. Nobody could call this one a concert." Following the conclusion of the war, on March 3, 1991, al-Radi explained how the "national radio continues to broadcast our victorious state."[127] Then, reflecting back on the war in April 1991, she remembered how "[a]fter the war ended, the Allies spent all day and night flying over our heads and breaking the sound barrier."[128] This torture, which she likens to the US blasting music at Manuel Noriega, "went on for months – twenty or thirty times, day and night, jets broke the sound barrier over our heads, horrific, deafening noise, swooping down, rubbing our noses in the dirt. . . . The Israelis used to do this to us in Beirut – a daily, though not nightly, occurrence for years."[129]

Struggling to articulate her experience and the normalization of war that has come in just under a month, al-Radi wrote "I tell you, there is this sameness. Even war becomes a routine."[130] This passage, where al-Radi compared the nightly thuds of the antiaircraft gun in her neighborhood to a symphony in her memoir, provides another example of the struggle of articulating the soundscape of war:

> We have a new anti-aircraft gun, a 16-millimetre or whatever, very close by. It makes a beautiful slow, dull, thud-like noise and adds weight to our nightly open-air concert. A modern symphony of sounds, discordant yet harmonious. At night, when the sky is covered with great big white yellow and red flashes and our neighborhood gun is thudding away, it is almost possible to fool oneself into thinking that one is attending a Philip Glass-like opera with an overlay of *son et lumière*. No *son* or even words yet, but in time it will be history, and they can have the whole of Iraq to play this light and sound in. Nobody agrees with my interpretation of our war music.[131]

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[127] Radi, sec. Day 34.
[128] Radi, sec. 15 April 1991.
[129] Radi, sec. 15 April 1991.
[130] Radi, *Baghdad Diaries*, Days 24 and 25.
[131] Radi, sec. Day 34.

Al-Radi, perhaps not as adept at identifying specific missiles and weapons as other Iraqis, crafts a couple of powerful musical metaphors, describing how the bombings are like a "nightly open air concert" that the new anti-aircraft gun adds a "weight" to, as the "modern symphony of sounds, discordant yet harmonious" plays. She takes it beyond the symphony, talking about how "it is almost possible to fool oneself into thinking that one is attending a Philip Glass-like opera." Although nobody may have agreed with her interpretation of the 'war music,' arguably her prediction that "they can have the whole of Iraq to play this light and sound in"[132] came true in 2003, with the return of the familiar sounds of the United States' war machinery and tactics of, including some explicitly referred to as 'Shock and Awe.'

In the wake of Hussein's perceived weakness, two uprisings cropped up in Iraq in 1991, one in the south originating in Basra, organized by Shi'a groups, who coordinated with the Kurdish uprising that arose in the north. These rebels killed Ba'athist officials, who then retaliated with indiscriminate fire. Makiya describes this uprising as "a watershed in the modern history of Iraq," because "the barrier of fear was broken."[133] Sounds of the intifada burst into the Ba'ath controlled environment before being violently silenced.[134]

Here again, the radio played an important role for the rebels: "In the evening of March 6, the radio station [of the Kurdish Front] began calling on the people to take to the streets."[135] Makiya spoke with a woman, Fatma, who described the sounds

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[132] Radi, *Baghdad Diaries*, Day 34.
[133] Makiya, *Cruelty and Silence*, 64.
[134] *Baghdad Blogger*, *VAST - Academic Video Online* (New York, NY: Filmakers Library, 2009), http://www.aspresolver.com/aspresolver.asp?VASC;1650407; Makiya, *Cruelty and Silence*.
[135] Makiya, *Cruelty and Silence*, 89.

of the intifada in Najaf, where the first thing she heard, “was sharp crackling sounds coming from the roofs of houses. It was a Thursday night in Ramadan. All through the night, the shooting went on making an unbelievable racket. [She] didn’t know where the bullets were coming from.”

In Najaf, the Shi’a rebels took over the *sahan* of Ali’s Shrine there, and Makiya’s interlocuter Hameed remembers some chants used there, including ‘God is Great,’ ‘Islam is our religion, Hakim[136] is our leader,’ and “*la sharqiyya, la gharbiyaa, jumhouriyya Islamiyya”* (No East, no west, we want an Islamic republic).[137] Hussein and the Ba’athists crushed both uprisings, sowing seeds of outside Iranian agitators, and using the helicopters they received permission to fly from the US in the ceasefire agreement as gunships to gun down supposed rebels.

Conclusion

The sounds and silences engendered by Saddam Hussein and the Ba’ath Party in their time in power in Iraq were deeply traumatic to the populace. The arms of this machine were many, and spanned physical prison systems, training, several arms of secret police, and the entire media of Iraq. Sounds of beating, screaming, of trucks, of guns, and the silences of family members lost to violence (including at the hands of the Ba’ath) resonate with Iraqis into the present day. But the sonic violence Iraqis experienced under Hussein’s government would continue to echo as the US led coalition set their boots on the ground to bring democracy to Iraq in 2003.

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[136] Ayatollah al-Hakim, leader of the Badr Brigades—exiled in Iran.
[137] Makiya, 81.

Chapter 3: Sounds of 2003: an aural continuation

The framework Daughtry established exists in a context, a preexisting violent sonic (and sensory) tapestry that contributed to the trauma of and permanently affected countless Iraqis when the US Coalition invaded. Missiles continued, and aircraft remained ubiquitous, along with large wheeled or tracked vehicles like tanks. The US coalition brought extensive electrical infrastructure, the hum of generators filled the air. While SCUDs were the signature weapon of the Gulf War, Daughtry identified the Improvised Explosive Device (IED) as the signature weapon of 2003.[138] The wailing from the once banned Ashura ceremony (commemorating the death of Ali's son Husayn at the Battle of Karbala) returned. Finally, in a trend that had certainly started prior to 2003, musicians were fleeing Iraq. Why stay in a place where music was perceived as a threat, either by US coalition forces or by up-and-coming fundamentalist groups?

US and coalition soldiers and Iraqi civilians alike remember the almost overpowering buzz of the generators in 1991 and 2003, and Hussein's military strategists admit they were not prepared for the US electrical domination during the Gulf War. The coalition caused blackouts as part of their strategy, one that continued through the 2003 war. However, in 2003 the US also began to use radio to show their dominance, broadcasting programs on 'Radio Tikrit,' "produced by the 4th Psychological Operations Group at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, and broadcast from a CIA-controlled transmitter in Kuwait."[139] Operations like this existed on the ground

[138] Daughtry, *Listening to War*, 70.
[139] Whitaker, "US Starts Subversive and Radio War against Saddam."

in Iraq, a category Daughtry calls psyops, which were usually a truck with a speaker broadcasting a message calling the insurgents cowards.

Technology developments affected all parts of the sonic war experience, enabling coalition soldiers to listen to their favorite tunes on iPods, while video and web news enabled both mainstream propagandistic narratives, as well as counternarratives—often eyewitness images which challenged the official story. Frequently painted as a democratization of communication technology, the 90s and 2000s put the internet, computing, cell phones and eventually cameras into the hands of more average citizens–though what this means in the US and in Iraq is different…. Through Saddam Hussein's, and then the US Coalition's censorship, emerge a number of narrative-correcting blogs and even videos.[140] Although the soundscape crafted in this chapter continues to rely upon memoirs, the web log, or blog emerges as a vital source base. There continue to be videos, with much more consistently available coverage beginning in the 90s.

The overarching categories of sound Daughtry enumerates are: vehicular, weapons, communication, and civilian sounds. Obviously useful for purposes of analysis, the reality of the Iraqi soundscape in 2003 was not so easily divisible. This quote, from a western memoirist whose memoir figured in to the previous chapter, Paul William Roberts, emphasizes the grey areas of wartime sounds:

> "There was then the faintest, cricket-like chirp of speech coming through a radio receiver, and the huddle of men passed on all but noiselessly. Dogs started barking irritably.

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[140] Mette Mortensen, "Counter-Images : Visual Censorship and the Challenges of Digital Media—The Snapshot of Fallen US Soldiers (2004) and the Bootleg Tape of Saddam Hussein's Hanging (2006)," in *Journalism and Eyewitness Images: Digital Media, Participation, and Conflict*, Routledge Research in Journalism 8 (London, UK: Taylor & Francis Group, 2014), 73.

> Moments later, there was a jowl-shuddering explosion about a kilometer away — which was about as near as you would want it to be—and all the lights went out."[141]

This quote has it all: communications noise in the 'faintest, cricket-like chirp of speech coming through a radio receiver,' civilian sounds–the dogs barking–and finally the tactile and proprioceptive aspects of experiencing a bombing one kilometer away, which he describes as 'jowl-shuddering'-a noise so big it shattered windows and made all the lights go out.

Additionally, sounds the Americans interpreted as 'sounds of freedom' as Donald Rumsfeld famously said, such as guns, the sounds of Ashura rituals, or music, ultimately either began as sounds of occupation and oppression (in the case of dominating sounds of aircraft and weapons) or morphed into or back into sounds of oppression (both US officials and Shi'a insurgents targeted music).[142]

Abu Ghraib

The discourse surrounding Abu Ghraib intersects with Queer and Women's Studies, and orientalism, revealing the deeply embedded cultural biases that shaped its psychological torture practices and its enduring legacy in global consciousness. The 1973 book *The Arab Mind* is most widely cited as the rationale for the sexual psychological torture methods used at Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib among others. Written by cultural anthropologist Raphael Patai, it includes a 25-page chapter about sex in Arab society, and one academic referred to it as "the bible of the neocons for

[141] Paul William Roberts, *A War against Truth : An Intimate Account of the Invasion of Iraq* (Berkeley, CA: Raincoast Books, 2004), 9.
[142] Daughtry, *Listening to War*, 263, 267.

Arab behavior."[143] Today, a simple Google News search for Abu Ghraib shows that it has entered the zeitgeist as a point of comparison for particularly brutal (and/or genocidal) prisons and camps.

Hussein had used this cursed prison as a relocation camp for Kurds during the genocide, and although it was Nugra Salman that had the words 'Welcome to Hell' written on the wall, all Kurdish 'camps' or prisons were brutal, exceedingly violent places whose memories haunt the lucky survivors. As the United States found out in 2004, the US-led coalition and their contractors maintained Abu Ghraib's brutality with no checks until it became public knowledge. The parallels between Abu Ghraib under Hussein and under the coalition occupation are striking: sexually violent torture continued post 2003, dogs, music, and beatings were some of the similar instruments of torture, and the threat of familial shame remained.

To "set the record straight on what occurred at Abu Ghraib" during the latter half of 2003, two officers involved in the Abu Ghraib military trials and investigations wrote a book, which contains sonic details of the torture carried out there. The sounds of the Military Police and other soldiers are most prominent, especially those more culpable/enthusiastic about the humiliating torture. The officers mentioned how by "using his booming, drill instructor-like voice, Graner intended to frighten and disorient the detainees."[144] Graner and his colleagues were shouting and laughing while the prisoners groaned in pain from their extremities being crushed by

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[143] Hersh cited in Jasbir K. Puar, "Abu Ghraib: Arguing against Exceptionalism," *Feminist Studies* 30, no. 2 (2004): 524–25.

[144] Michael Clemens and Christopher Graveline, *The Secrets of Abu Ghraib Revealed : American Soldiers on Trial*, vol. 1st ed (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, 2010), 7.

combat boots. Music was also an acceptable form of intimidation in the eyes of the Combined Joint Task Force 7, "used to create fear, disorient detainee and prolong capture shock."[145]

The trials in the wake of the public exposure of the torture at Abu Ghraib exposed another auditory avenue of torture, the mishandling of military dogs. The officers describe how "there were numerous photos of Bollendia, stripped naked and cowering from the dogs, and others depicting the snarling, leaping, unmuzzled dogs pinning the screaming man against the wall."[146] In a less confrontational but still intimidating version, the dogs' handlers "Smith and Cardona would position the dogs outside the doors, barking and snarling within a few inches of the detainees, to threaten the men."[147]

"Freedom" and Censorship

As the US coalition struggled to control a populace they had very little understanding of, and in the power vacuum created by their toppling of Hussein and the Ba'ath, a perfect space emerged for the then-underground Shi'a Fundamentalists (including the Mahdi army) to fill. Both 'powers' targeted music, though the fundamentalists did it more consistently than the US coalition soldiers. Daughtry describes businesses targeted by coalition forces for playing 'music' or sometimes even just recitations of the Qur'an, and bumbling vehicle searches where musical recordings could be perceived as a threat.[148]

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[145] Clemens and Graveline, 1st ed:107.
[146] Clemens and Graveline, 1st ed:285.
[147] Clemens and Graveline, 1st ed:288.
[148] Daughtry, *Listening to War*, 266.

Daughtry also mentions that musicians continued to leave Iraq in 2003 and after, a phenomenon which began shortly after Hussein's rise to power. This was likely counter to what the west expected to happen, since in their minds, artists would want to return to their homeland once a tyrant was removed and along with him his censors. But, as mentioned, into the power vacuum came the Shia fundamentalists, who absolutely saw music as a threat, as evidenced by their bombing of music shops.[149]

The US military in Iraq conceived of certain types of religious music, or 'jihad music,' as a threat. Having a certain ring tone or being in possession of recordings could be cause for suspicion as well. Looking to military reports of detentions in Iraq, Daughtry points out "the degree to which "music" in the form of recorded sound, acquired the status of irrefutable evidence of affiliation." He also mentions that this threatening music was likely to be nashid, a genre of praise song.[150]

According to one of the more widely read Iraqi bloggers of the time, Salam Pax, there were some generative changes to the music soundscape of Iraq post 2003, indeed the end of censorship did enable the Iraqi Symphony Orchestra to practice inside the Green Zone, and certain musicians did return, Like Hashem Ashraf.[151] Also, a new Iraqi national anthem was chosen, an old patriotic song that everyone knew the words to. Pax remembers how everyone cried and sang along to it when it was announced and broadcast.[152] Although these were positive musical and sonic developments, they were not the 'sounds of freedom' the US was referring to.

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[149] Daughtry, 266.
[150] Daughtry, 267–68.
[151] *Baghdad Blogger* min. 1:13:45.
[152] *Baghdad Blogger* min. 1:15:10.

"Sounds of Freedom" in wartime: Safety vs Terror

Vehicular Sounds

Every weapon, round, soldier, and other assorted kit needed by the US Coalition in Iraq had to be transported there via vehicle, whether ground or aircraft. Daughtry identifies some common vehicles and vehicular phenomena, like the doppler effect (which can, of course, apply to weapons like missiles, or communications like psyops messages on van-mounted speakers). The sound of gunfire continued to be common in Iraq–remember Hussein and his Ba'ath cronies had used it liberally among civilian populations, a custom that possibly preexisted his reign: in celebration, or to clear intersections. Although the US Coalition collected countless firearms from the Iraqi populace, the western soldiers continued shooting into the air to clear intersections, for example.[153]

The technological advancements of the turn of the century obviously affected the machinery of war, though some of the vehicles remained constant from the first gulf war, like B-52s, Humvees, and helicopters. Daughtry identifies certain distinct-sounding vehicles: Bradleys, Stryker, MRAPs, Humvees and helicopters. Although the bloggers seem more concerned with weaponry (it is more immediately threatening), Paul William Roberts repeatedly describes the sounds of certain advanced aircraft and weaponry, like the "phasing and skimming" of stealth bombers like the F-117 Nighthawk and B-2 Spirit. Roberts also describes the sounds of a plane called the Warthog, officially the A/OA-10 Thunderbolt, an aircraft designed to provide close air support, which sounds "as if someone in an attic above the clouds

[153] Daughtry, *Listening to War*, 106 and 43.

was hauling massive chains across the bare wood floor."[154] Its nickname, however, derives from the sound of its cannon, which, according to Roberts, "made the strange, pig-like grunting sound whence its name derived."[155] The A/OA-10 Thunderbolt, or Warthog, exemplifies the grey areas among Daughtry's categories (vehicular sounds, communication, civilian sounds, and weapons), as it is a plane nicknamed for its sound, specifically the sound of the on-board weapon.

Beyond aircraft, there were ground vehicles on both sides, and these had weapons and communications abilities. A blogger who goes by riverbend documented the early days of the war, writing "For me, April 9 was a blur of faces distorted with fear, horror and tears. All over Baghdad you could hear shelling, explosions, clashes, fighter planes, the dreaded Apaches and the horrifying tanks heaving down streets and highways.[156] Riverbend listed six things she heard, but only the tanks merited both an adjective, 'horrifying,' and a verb, 'heaving.'

Communication

Daughtry highlights a number of characteristics of communication in the 2003 war, including the 'click-beep-static' ritual of broadcasting on the military communication network, as well as the potential pitfalls of mediated communications (whether amplified or simply interpreted), like mishearings or mistranslations.[157] As mentioned above, nearly every military vehicle had some sort of communication system, in addition to unamplified voices of conversations between soldiers. These

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[154] Roberts, *A War against Truth : An Intimate Account of the Invasion of Iraq*, 207.
[155] Roberts, 207.
[156] Riverbend, *Baghdad Burning : Girl Blog from Iraq*, 1st Feminist Press ed (New York: Feminist Press at the City University of New York, 2005), 29.
[157] Daughtry, *Listening to War*, 213–15.

sounds are, however, more internal to the US Coalition forces, and were not generally heard by the Iraqi populace.

One notable exception were the psychological operations carried out by the US Coalition, which, beyond leaflet drops, also included loudspeakers attached to land vehicles, which drove around broadcasting messages calling insurgents cowards, as well as 'Radio Tikrit'. Other forms of military adjacent communication were the air-raid sirens and the all clear sirens, which blogger Salam Pax describes, and compares to 1991:

> "Boy oh boy. There was silence for almost five minutes in the street, before the collective sigh of relief. Actually I think it was more like 9.30 when the sirens were sounded, not 10. What I heard was that planes were circling the area where the inspectors were doing their thing. But what is more worrying is that not everybody in Baghdad heard the air-raid sirens. I can't remember when they were tested the last time.
> FunFact: during the Gulf War and the attacks in later years the sirens would start screeching about thirty seconds before the first bomb dropped - if at all. They are almost useless. That's why today, when the sirens were sounded, people stood still for a couple of minutes, then went on with their business. If it was for real we would have been creamed within a minute. No time to run to a shelter, it is more fun to stay out and watch. I already have a comfy chair on the roof for that purpose."[158]

This quote epitomizes the importance of historical context to this discussion. When Salam Pax was hearing a siren in 2003, it was an experience informed by the sirens he remembered from 1991, whose 'screeches' were 'almost useless,' and the hopelessness that comes with that fact. He would rather stay out and watch, since there was always 'no time to run to a shelter.'

Beyond mediated and amplified military communication, this category begins to blur into Daughtry's subsequent category of civilian sounds, beginning of course

[158] Salam Pax, *Salam Pax: The Clandestine Diary of an Ordinary Iraqi*, 1st American ed (New York: Grove Press, 2003), 45.

with the speakers on every mosque used for broadcasting the adhan. And, in the immediate aftermath of the invasion, Hussein and the Ba'athists continued to broadcast other auditory (and audiovisual) communications on Iraqi TV, mostly, according to Salam Pax, without mention of the war. Salam Pax recorded how "all radio and TV stations are still on and while the air raid began the Iraqi TV was showing patriotic songs and didn't even bother to inform viewers that we are under attack. At the moment they are re-airing yesterday's interview with the Minister of Interior Affairs."[159]

Salam Pax's set up, 'hotel pax' as he called it, had "two safe rooms one with "international media" and the other with the Iraqi TV on."[160] He also goes on to discuss the status of the phones: "Phones are still ok, we called around the city a moment ago to check on friends. Information is what they need. IraqiTV says nothing, shows nothing. what good are patriotic songs when bombs are dropping."[161] Media like radio and television, are, at their crux, civilian enterprises, even when so heavily state controlled, as Roberts pointed out in highlighting that their destruction by the US Coalition violated the Geneva Conventions.[162]

Civilian Sounds

Beyond the media machine run by the Ba'athists, the US coalition established parallel systems, in some cases as far back as the 1990s and before–Radio Tikrit and other broadcasting enterprises attempted to challenge Hussein and the Ba'athists

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[159] Salam Pax, 127.
[160] Salam Pax, 128.
[161] Salam Pax, 128.
[162] Roberts, *A War against Truth : An Intimate Account of the Invasion of Iraq*, 87.

media monopoly. The US coalition's sonic dominance included the constant and often overpowering hum of the generators needed to run their installations/bases/machinery. Additionally, because the coalition strategically targeted power plants, if civilians wanted power they also often needed and used generators.[163]

In addition to the sounds of generators and electrical power, the civilian sounds in 2003 Iraq fall into two main and related categories of religious sounds and music. These lines of inquiry are related because there is religious music, but also because certain fundamentalist religions (Islam, in this case, but it is not the only religion that functions this way) can silence or criminalize music. There is a third sound or category of sounds which could be argued fits into both (or neither) religious and music, which is the wailing of mourning women.

Although perhaps located in a cemetery or funeral setting, the wailing that became commonplace following the Iraqi deaths in the Iran-Iraq war continued as Iraqi casualties continued in 2003. Usually an expression of profound grief by a martyr's wife or mother, various memoirists describe wailing happening either in the face of direct familial carnage (for example, when Paul William Roberts witnessed the tragic death of his friend's great aunt during a bombing),[164] or upon receiving the news (or body) of a dead relative. In non-war contexts, the wail of a mother who lost a child is an unforgettable sound, and although perhaps the Iraqi casualties were

[163] Salam Pax, *Salam Pax*, 146; Daughtry, *Listening to War*, 4.
[164] Roberts, *A War against Truth : An Intimate Account of the Invasion of Iraq*, 18.

fewer in 2003 versus 1980s, this sound nonetheless permeated the Iraqi soundscape (and likely continues to).

Another constant sound, this one explicitly religious, is the adhan, or the Muslim call to prayer, which happens every day, five times a day. According to Daughtry, the end of Ba'athist Shi'a censorship brought more muezzin voices onto the soundscape. With more Shi'a 'airtime' possible post 2003, this also meant a return of the Ashura celebration in 2004. The chants and rituals, including self-flagellation, commemorate the martyrdom of Imam Hussein, the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad, in the Battle of Karbala.

In 2006, the blogger Salam Pax traveled to Karbala to experience the Ashura rituals in person, and he filmed some footage for a documentary. Due to its centrality as the location of the battle, Karbala often attracts pilgrims who come to take part in this holy commemoration. Pax's documentary chronicled the carnival-like atmosphere of Karbala in 2006, full of sounds including crying, chanting, and melodic Qur'an recitation. Unfortunately, this cacophony was brutally interrupted with six explosions, and numerous casualties. After surviving such a harrowing experience, Pax only wished that the explosions not overshadow the amazing festival. The sounds of the bombs Salam Pax heard and experienced bring us to the next category, weapons.[165]

Weapons

Writing mainly based on the perspective of the Coalition soldiers, Daughtry characterizes the Improvised Explosive Device, or IED, as the 'signature weapon' of

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[165] *Baghdad Blogger* min. 52:40.

the invasion of Iraq.[166] However he also identifies other common weaponry sounds, which are evident in the memoirs, including small arms, and rockets and mortars, and discusses the hearing damage possible from continued exposure to larger weapons, and the "whip-like crack" of breaking the sound barrier.

The sources provide examples from this war of people in Iraq distinguishing between types of weapons within a category, like identifying the type of gun, but more commonly identified is the simpler distinction between small arms (guns) and larger explosions caused by rockets or mortars. For example, Faiza, another blogger and friend of Salam Pax's, describes the transition early in the war from feeling as if the bombing was far away, and then reckoning with the fact that the bombs were close and that they should stay inside for safety:

> Thursday March 20, 2003 "We heard sirens, and the first attack started… after the dawn prayer. I went running to the down floor, everyone was awake. [...] we watched some news channels, everyone in the world was watching us. Bombing was far way, it didnt seem to be dangerous, maybe it would be more dangerous next days.[...] The evening bombing lasted for more than one hour, I could clearly hear the sound of missiles falling down, and the anti aircraft guns shooting and shooting…. My stomach hurts and I feel depressed… How many days are we going to stay like this? Like prisoners…"[167]

The contrast between experiencing the bombing as mediated through the television: 'bombing was far [a]way,' and then the evening's bombing, where Faiza could 'clearly hear the sound of missiles,' and although there is no comparable example of Faiza identifying small arms fire, the use of the word missile implies the distinction.

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[166] Daughtry, *Listening to War*, 70.
[167] Michael Otterman, Richard Hil, and Paul R. Wilson, *Erasing Iraq: The Human Costs of Carnage* (London ; Pluto, 2010), 44.

Another blogger, riverbend, chronicled a conversation she and her brother had on their roof after hearing bullets in the distance:

> "E: How far do you think that is?
> Me: I don't know… 'bout a kilometer?
> E: Yeah, about.
> Me: Not American bullets—
> E: No, it's probably from a…
> Me: Klashnikov.
> E (impressed): You're getting good at this."[168]

Riverbend follows this conversation up by concluding that in fact no, she's becoming "great at it," and telling the reader, "I can tell you if it's 'them' or 'us'. I can tell you how far away it is. I can tell you if it's a pistol or machine-gun, tank or armored vehicle, Apache or Chinook… I can determine the distance and maybe even the target. That's my new talent. [...] What's worse is that almost everyone seems to have acquired this new talent… young and old." She concludes by wondering "will an airplane ever sound the same again?"[169]

During his 2003 visit, Paul William Roberts documented his experience visiting Iraqi civilians he knew from his first visit, and the on-the-ground sights and sounds of the warfare. He, too, is able to tell the difference between small arms and missiles, "I began to hear gunfire both near and far, the steady pop-pop-pop of semiautomatics and the thump-thump-thump response from more hi-tech weaponry. Occasionally something much bigger went off."[170] In this case, the term 'much bigger' emphasizes that Roberts is a visitor (or guest) in Iraq, and has not yet acquired

[168] Riverbend, *Baghdad Burning : Girl Blog from Iraq*, 11.
[169] Riverbend, 12.
[170] Roberts, *A War against Truth : An Intimate Account of the Invasion of Iraq*, 149.

the same level of literacy regarding weapons as the bloggers, literacy also established through the constant war Hussein carried out in the 80s and 90s.

Conclusion

In the face of almost unimaginably rapid technological development, the sounds of war remained constant in Iraq. The advent of the internet did ultimately provide a new avenue for further counternarratives to emerge, especially in the wake of the US Coalition's elimination of the Ba'athist president, government, and its censors. Western media sites parroted paper news, while sharing pictures and video from their embedded reporters, although internet video was in its infancy compared to the newly (as of 2003) 'high concept' stories presented on cable news.[171]

The increased availability of the internet in 2003 enabled the proliferation of several Iraqi blogs chronicling the sights and sounds of the invasion. Other technological developments like more mobile camera functionality also enabled the emergence of further narratives countering official state stories. Unsupported by mainstream media at first, blogging was a rather democratic form of expression, and the networks created by bloggers like Salam Pax and RiverBend allowed the world access to on the ground realities that were not coming through the Western media.

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[171] Deborah Lynn Jaramillo, *Ugly War, Pretty Package : How CNN and Fox News Made the Invasion of Iraq High Concept* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2009), 2.

Chapter 4: Conclusion

President George W. Bush's 'Mission Accomplished' speech, and its location on an aircraft carrier, harkened back to the end of WWII. But this was not the frame of reference or context within which Iraqis were operating in 2003. Already deeply traumatized by Hussein's presidency and its normalization of war and violence, for Iraqis the sounds and overall experience of being in Iraq in 2003 recalled the violence of the 80s and subsequent, and especially that of the US's prior engagement in the country, the 1991 Gulf War—in 2003 some of the aircraft (B-52s) were likely the same exact planes used 12 years prior.

As the US got involved in Iraq, so too did its musicians. Jessica Rose Loranger's 2015 dissertation "Cultural Memory and Collectivity in Music from the 1991 Persian Gulf War" goes beyond the popular and parody music responses to include protest music found in more obscure genres such as Rap, Hip-Hop, Punk, Metal and Alternative. Groups like Bad Religion released protest albums (New World Order) while others, including Fugazi, held protest concerts. Loranger explains that collectivity and patriotism were at play in the lyrics of popular music at this time, while collectivity as an ethos permeated the punk and alternative music scenes.[172] These songs provided a sonic counternarrative to the patriotic register of media and music that was hegemonic in the US at the time.

Much like the stereotypical (and problematic) accents Paul William Roberts writes into his book, musical stereotypes are rampant, both in the documentaries and

[172] Jessica Rose Loranger, "Cultural Memory and Collectivity in Music from the 1991 Persian Gulf War" (UC Santa Cruz, 2015), 115.

in the Persian Gulf War Song Collection. Loranger mentions LG Brown's song "Desert Storm," which has "a melody reminiscent of stereotyped Middle Eastern scales, but played on synthesized steel drums." This type of what I would call orientalist music, appears in documentaries about Hussein. Camels also appear in parody songs about Hussein, like the version of Milli Vanilli's "Blame it on the Rain," called "Blame it on Hussein," which gained popularity on the radio around the time of the Gulf War, and contains the lyric "he's in love with a camel." These stereotyped songs prove that the US populace had no frame of reference for the soundscapes of Iraq.

This historical inquiry into the soundscapes of Iraq would only be strengthened by accompanying anthropological lines of inquiry, as well as an expansion beyond the auditory to include all the senses. Anthropological or semiotic research into the sensory regimes of the Middle East could benefit from nuanced inquiry around the concept of 'voice,' which can be both material and political. Do Weidman's foundational conceptualizations of the voice in Euro-Western societies (its link to individuality, for example) align with the cultural meanings of *sawt*?[173]

Additionally, the loci of remembering this period should be further investigated, especially as conflicts continue to foment in the region. Where and how are Iraqis remembering this violence, and are Americans commemorating it? After all, the third place war is activated sensorily is in its remembrance.[174] The construction of this memory, its framing when it is brought up, is also important.

[173] Amanda Weidman, "Anthropology and Voice," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 43 (2014): 37–51.
[174] Saunders and Cornish, *Modern Conflict and the Senses : Killer Instincts?*, ix.

Sensory studies of history addressing the full range of embodied experiences, though such research can be traumatic for the researcher, "can provide us with an intimated street-level analysis of the shifting realities of everyday life,"[175] which is what this study attempted to do with a focus on the auditory. Further investigations into sensory histories should include discussion of economies, both financial and metaphorical (economies of scale, specular economies, e.g.), as images like those from Abu Ghraib, as well as the sounds of a news broadcast (as a single example) which divorce violence from its effects exist in "a specular economy in which violence appears to be removed from bodies, and the relation to the other is severely attenuated, the scandal of these images lay in showing what torture was without any verbal justification."[176]

Further work should be done on the intersection of trauma and the senses, likely in the Psychological Sciences. Some work, like Suzanne G. Cusick's "Music as Torture/Music as Weapon," have taken on a small part of this query.

There are a number of embodied effects of violence and trauma (not just caused by sound) this paper could not cover. The gaping silences that remain in the wake of the raiding of the Baghdad Museum, and ISIS' subsequent destruction of cultural heritage artifacts have received some coverage, and these silences, like the silences created by the deaths of hundreds of thousands at the hands of Hussein and the Ba'athists, as well as the united states coalition, will never end. Iraqis lost senses like hearing, or smell, some lost limbs, and, lest we forget, lives. The extent of the

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175 Fahmy, *Street Sounds*, 21.
176 Peter J. Hutchings, "Entertaining Torture, Embodying Law," *Cultural Studies* 27, no. 1 (January 2013): 66.

trauma can never be known due to the genocide of the Kurds, and other ethno-religiously targeted campaigns of violence Hussein and his Ba'ath allies carried out, and the things survivors saw were devastating and often unspeakable.

After twenty years the 2003 War in Iraq reverberates loudly in Iraqi minds and media and is present in the same in the United States. Most of the large news conglomerates like ABC, Fox, CNN, who were there on the ground in 2003 posted highlights of their own coverage. Saddam Hussein appeared in countless Hollywood productions from Arrested Development to The Big Lebowski. Beyond media commemorations, new media is echoing 2003, like the podcast "Blowback."

Hussein's presidency continues to echo, and the 2003 invasion, arguably an echo of Hussein's violence, has its own echoes today, 20 years on. Beyond zoom panel recollections, and artistic and literary works, ISIS' strategies recall those of Hussein at times. The violence currently taking place in the Gaza Strip echoes of past conflicts, including Operation Iraqi Freedom.

As the United States' military involvement increases in the Middle East again, one hopes the lessons learned from Iraq resonate loudly. The nature of war has shifted since 1980, and in looking at RAND Corp's analysis of these 24 years of Iraqi history, the effect of more nuanced discussions of race is clear. 'Iraqis do not all have the same opinion' writes RAND Corp,[177] a drastic departure from the main media driving soldier understanding in 2003, *The Arab Mind*, which, in hindsight, is deeply problematic.

[177] David E. Johnson et al., *The U.S. Army and the Battle for Baghdad: Lessons Learned — And Still to Be Learned* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2019), 185.

This study uses almost exclusively English-language memoir sources, although there are many promising Arabic language sources as well. Further research could examine whether there are significant differences in sensory experiences between these two bodies of memory. My impression is that the bloggers skewed younger, and perhaps more middle class than the memoirists, but there are exceptions, like Nuha al-Radi, who, while not a blogger, was documenting nearly daily, and living an artist's lifestyle—she was still able to escape.

A more in-depth project would also involve systematic media consumption—there are countless news artifacts from this time period on YouTube and in archives across the globe, few of which I watched for this research. A channel called Iraq archives has videos of many Hussein appearances, including his notorious 1979 purge.

In trying to understand the soundscapes of Modern Iraq, it has become clear that this is a field ripe for further study. Additionally, sonic history can provide, as Ziad Fahmy asserts in *Street Sounds*, on-the-ground perspective, which in this case brings important perspective and narrative counter to that peddled in the US. Now we just need to listen.

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