

Postcolonial Goals and Human Rights Violations in Roy

Scranton's novel War Porn

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الملخص

تتناول هذه الدراسة تحليل رواية روي سكرانتون "إباحية الحرب" الصادرة عام ٢٠١٦، للكشف عن كيفية تغيير الغزو الأمريكي للعراق عام ٢٠٠٣ حياة الشعب العراقي. ومن خلال ذلك، تستكشف الدراسة الطبيعة الإشكالية العميقة للوجود الأمريكي في العراق في أعقاب الصراع. لطالما تحدّى أدب ما بعد الاستعمار الهيمنة السياسية والاقتصادية للقوى الاستعمارية، مسلطاً الضوء على العواقب المدمرة للاحتلال على السكان المحليين ووطنهم. تُعدّ "إباحية الحرب" نموذجاً رائداً لأدب ما بعد الاستعمار، إذ كتبها كاتب أمريكي مخضرم شارك فعلياً في الحملة العسكرية التي ينتقدها في روايته. وتتميز هذه الرواية بين روايات الحرب الأمريكية الشهيرة بتخصيصها حيزاً سردياً كبيراً لتجارب الشخصيات العراقية الرئيسية، ما يُظهر بوضوح الأثر المدمر للاستعمار الحديث على العراق ومواطنيه.

الكلمات المفتاحية: ما بعد الاستعمار، الاستعمار الجديد، الغزو الأمريكي، حقوق الإنسان، التعذيب، "إباحية الحرب" (2016).

Abstract:

This study analyzes Roy Scranton's 2016 novel, War Porn, to uncover how the 2003 US invasion altered the lives of the Iraqi people. In doing so, it explores the deeply problematic nature of the American presence in Iraq following the conflict.

Postcolonial literature traditionally challenges the political and economic dominance of colonial powers, shedding light on the destructive consequences of occupation for both the local population and their homeland. War Porn functions as an exemplary postcolonial novel, uniquely authored by an American veteran who actively took part in the very military campaign his narrative critiques. It stands out among celebrated American war fiction for dedicating substantial narrative weight to the experiences of major Iraqi characters, thereby directly illustrating the devastating impact of modern colonialism on Iraq and its citizens.

Keywords : Postcolonialism, Neocolonialism, American invasion, Human Rights, Torture, War porn (2016).

Introduction

Colonialism is a policy whereby a powerful state—often one of the well-known colonial powers—imposes its economic, political, and cultural dominance over other peoples or regions. Edward Said was one of the most prominent specialists in the field of colonialism and Postcolonialism. In his book *Orientalism* (1979), Said clarified the limits, definition, and objectives of colonialism.

From 1815 to 1914 European direct colonial dominion expanded from about 35 percent of the earth's surface to about 85 percent of it. Every continent was affected, none more so than Africa and Asia. The two greatest empires were the British and the French; allies and partners in some things, in others they were hostile rivals. In the Orient, from the eastern shores of the Mediterranean to Indochina and Malaya, their colonial possessions and imperial spheres of influence were adjacent, frequently overlapped, often were fought over. But it was in the Near Orient, the lands of the Arab Near East, where Islam was supposed to define cultural and

racial characteristics, that the British and the French encountered each other and "the Orient" with the greatest intensity, familiarity, and complexity (Said, 1979, p.41).

Colonialism emerged after the industrialization of Europe, beginning in the 15th century, and its primary aim was to exploit the resources of colonized countries and control land and sea trade routes. This meant that colonized countries either possessed natural resources or a strategic geographical location, thus becoming colonies dependent on the colonizing state, including their human resources. Colonies were administered through direct military control, meaning the presence of the colonizing state's forces on the colonized country's territory, where populations were transferred to settle and establish colonies.

The policy of Western control or domination over the resources of colonized countries continued, even after the concept of colonial policy changed to post-colonialism or neo-colonialism. Neo-colonialism is a critical framework advanced by numerous theorists and scholars, including *Edward Said*, *Gayatri Spivak*, *Homi Bhabha*, and *Noam Chomsky*. According to Jean-Paul Sartre, the term is defined as 'the continuation of the colonial system at independent states, by transforming these states into colonies for forms of political, economic, social and military domination that are implemented through indirect and hidden means that do not include violence' (Sartre, 2001). The framework of neocolonialism emerged following the adoption of the United Nations Charter at the conclusion of World War II in 1945. Because the charter demanded an end to traditional imperialism and advocated for the universal right to self-determination and liberty, direct colonization and foreign subjugation became explicitly forbidden. To circumvent these new global rules, former imperial powers pivoted toward binding newly independent nations to restrictive, long-term treaties and economic agreements. Aligning with Sartre's perspective on this modern iteration of control, Gayatri Spivak observes that "Within neocolonialism, they are run much more by ministries of finance" (Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Personal interview, 1991). This indicates that neocolonialism is fundamentally economic in nature, pursuing financial objectives rather than political or social ones, and is orchestrated by corporate entities or global financial institutions. This dynamic was clearly visible during the US invasion of Iraq, where American forces bound the Iraqi government to a series of treaties and agreements. Essentially, the traditional territorial expansion of major Western imperial powers was supplanted by this modern strategy of economic known as Neo-colonialism.

Roy Scranton's novel *War Porn* (2016) presents a narrative that blends the perspectives of Iraqi victims and American perpetrators. It stands out within American war literature about Iraq for its empathetic portrayal of Iraqi victims and its rejection of American wartime myths that transform American soldiers from perpetrators into victims.

The novel's title, *War Porn* (2016), refers to the transformation of death and destruction into a visual commodity consumed by audiences behind screens, and the transformation of violence into a tool for pleasure or a means of releasing pent-up emotions among soldiers. The author strips war of any heroic allure, presenting a harsh, neutral, and painful view of the effects of the American invasion on both victim and perpetrator.

The novel does not follow a single timeline, but rather consists of three parallel narrative threads that gradually intertwine to reveal how war affects both soldiers and civilians, portraying them as victims of war.

The novel's opening storyline centers on an American soldier named Wilson, a logistics specialist stationed at a US Army base near Baghdad in 2004. Instead of depicting heroic combat, the author highlights the suffocating heat, agonizing boredom, and monotonous routines that gradually erode the soldiers' moral compass. To pass the time, Wilson and his peers consume pornography and harbor deep-seated racial animosity toward the local population—creating a toxic environment where sheer boredom and a loss of empathy pave the way for horrific acts.

The second storyline shifts to the Iraqi perspective through Qasim, a Baghdad university professor and poet. Following the invasion, Qasim struggles to shield his family as the city crumbles around them, trapped between foreign occupying forces and violent extremist groups. The narrative deeply explores how the lives of both intellectuals and everyday citizens are reduced to a living hell defined by constant terror, instability, and the brutal necessity of surviving a broken world dictated by American military might.

The final storyline emerges through memories and photographs shared by a veteran named Aaron during a Fourth of July barbecue at his rural Utah home. Years after his deployment, Aaron hosts a gathering for friends and civilians who have never known combat. This setting illustrates the concept of "war pornography," as the civilian guests speak about the conflict with a naive, romanticized fascination, treating it like a Hollywood blockbuster. Meanwhile, Aaron grapples with profound psychological trauma and a deep sense of isolation from his own community, a disconnect that builds into an aggressive, sexually charged tension among the guests.

The novel reaches its devastating climax as these three threads collide: it is revealed that Wilson took part in a violent raid on a home that belonged to Qasim and his family. The resulting atrocities utterly destroy Qasim's life—leaving a legacy of trauma that the American soldiers carry back with them, eventually fracturing their lives at home. Ultimately, the book underscores how the severe psychological wounds inflicted on many invasion veterans later manifested as domestic tragedy and crime.

The author deeply examines the widespread ruin and aftermath of the American invasion. This devastation is captured through the loss of countless innocent civilian lives, the fracturing of Iraqi society along sectarian lines, and the agonizing transformation of everyday life into a constant nightmare of terror and instability. Ultimately, ordinary citizens are left with no choice but to endure and adapt to a fractured, broken reality dictated by the presence of American tanks.

Theoretical Framework

This study examines postcolonial theory in Roy Scranton's novel *War Porn* (2016). It highlights the consequences of the American invasion of Iraq, linking neocolonialism to the catastrophic toll the military campaign took on the Iraqi population. Furthermore, it offers an authentic depiction of the wartime era and its legacy, chronicling the specific events that unfolded alongside the deployment of American forces in the country.

This study is primarily based on the evolution of colonialism since the beginning of the twentieth century, considering the contemporary effects of neocolonialism in Iraq. Neocolonialism is a critical framework developed by numerous critics and theorists.

1. Postcolonial Goals

We all know that the declared colonial objective is to market war under the banners of spreading democracy, human rights, and liberating the "other"—the occupied people—from dictatorship. This is what happened in Iraq. In a conversation—which could be considered a reflection of the Iraqi people—between two pivotal characters in the novel, Othman and Mohammed, the people's yearning for freedom is revealed, but not according to American policy “Oh, sure I knew it was all a con. I knew the system was out to get me. I knew we all wanted to be free and live our lives and make art and all that bullshit” (Scranton, 2016, p.187). Othman and Mohammed represent two contrasting yet complementary voices of Iraqi intellectuals who lived through the 2003 American invasion and its aftermath. The two characters are introduced in the novel as childhood friends and relatives of the Iraqi main character, mathematics professor Qasim al-Zubaidi, representing a stark social and intellectual contrast.

Mohammed, an Iraqi engineer and building contractor, is a pragmatic, nationalistic realist who prioritizes reconstruction and concrete development. He participates in intense arguments contrasting life in Iraq under Saddam Hussein with the "democracy" brought by the George W. Bush administration following the invasion. Serving as the family's steady and responsible anchor, Mohammed steps in to guide younger relatives like Qasim, keeping them from losing their way or withdrawing from the world.

Conversely, Othman is a poet, translator, and intellectual who spent two years exiled in Beirut. Othman embodies a humanistic, literary idealism, searching for redemption through language and art as he translates intricate global poetry by figures like Hart Crane and Lautréamont. Challenging Mohammed's material focus, Othman explores philosophical and cultural dilemmas surrounding the occupation and the core of Iraqi identity.

Through these two contrasting figures, Scranton adds layers of complexity to the portrait of occupied Iraqi society, capturing its internal friction through Othman's openness to the concept of American liberation and Mohammed's firm opposition to it {Othman said, “it's great opportunity. I think they really mean democracy.” “Nonsense,” said Mohammed, not taking his attention from his paper”} (Scranton, 2016, P.124). Instead of portraying Iraqis as

passive victims or "collateral damage", as some Western narratives do, Osman and Mohammed are presented as models of intellectuals with a high degree of political and philosophical awareness, engaging in open and critical debate about the fate of their occupied country.

Although Iraqis welcomed the idea of liberation from the oppression of the previous regime, this was the stated goal of the American campaign to overthrow Saddam Hussein's regime. However, what was hidden from the Iraqis was the true objective: American control over the energy resources of the Arab region. Scranton dismantles this deception of the stated objective of the invasion of Iraq by exposing the stark contradiction between the political rhetoric and the reality on the ground. In his novel *War Porn* (2016), Scranton focuses on the character of Qasim to reveal this truth.

In this work, the symbolism of Qasim embodies the violated country. Qasim represents the Iraqi voice and the civilian victim crushed by the military machine. In the third section of the novel, titled "The Fall", Scranton speaks at length about the events of the arrest and torture of the protagonist, Qasim as in "That's the professor. Puck named Qasim. He got picked up on a ride in Baqubah" and "The next picture showed Qasim hanging against the cell door, naked now, blood chest and thighs, his face cut, bruised, swollen, and bleeding"(Scranton, 2016, p.213). Qasim is a social worker and academic, which gives him a special symbolic significance. Qasim also represents the educated and middle class in Iraqi society, thus dismantling the colonial stereotype that attempts to portray the occupied people as ignorant and in need of guardianship. After Qasim lost all sense of security, he transformed from a man striving to maintain his daily routine and protect his family into a violated body with no control over his fate. This embodies the concept of "Bare Life" as defined by the Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben, "Behind the long, strife-ridden process that leads to the recognition of rights and formal liberties stands once again the body of the sacred man with his double sovereign, his life that cannot be sacrificed yet may, nevertheless, be killed"(Agamben,1998,p.10). This describes a life stripped of all political and social rights, where a human being is reduced to a purely biological existence. It represents the individual abandoned by authority, rendering them vulnerable to death or exploitation without their killing being considered a crime, in other words, that is, pure biological life that falls outside legal protection, where it can be killed with impunity. Qasim is stripped of his political and legal rights as a citizen, becoming merely a "body" upon which the occupier can inflict violence with impunity. The author draws a clear parallel between Qasim's violated character and the devastated, occupied, and violated state of Iraq. For Qasim and the Iraqi people, the so-called "liberation" brought nothing but the erosion of personal security, transforming their daily lives into an unknown void and a state of perpetual terror. The occupation in the novel does not rebuild the state; rather, it reproduces classic colonial military domination in its new guise: neocolonialism. Lois Tyson explains in his book *Critical Theory Today* confirms that "Today, through different means, the same kind of political, economic, and cultural subjugation of vulnerable nations occurs at the hands of international corporations from such world powers as the United States" (Tyson,2006, p.425). This means that the goals of neo-colonialism are economic, and in cases of occupation, they are managed by financial

institutions or corporations. This is evident in the American invasion of Iraq, where US forces imposed several long-term agreements and treaties on the Iraqis, such as managing oil fields and other contracts that included developing and training military institutions. In essence, the traditional imperialist strategies of dominant Western nations were superseded by a modern alternative: neocolonialism. Under this framework, American policy seeks to broaden the United States' political, economic, cultural, and social leverage over Iraq. In this respect, American imperialism resembles the concept of neo-colonialism as explained by Noam Chomsky "The idea is to have independent states, but with weak governments that must rely on the imperial power for their survival ... But they have to provide a facade behind which the real power can rule. That's standard imperialism" (Chomsky & Barsamian, 2005, p.45). The concept of imperialism encompasses control over territories beyond the borders of the United States, including direct military warfare, political control through US government support for allied armed groups, and, on the economic front, support for private companies to control the Iraqi economy. These measures are succeeded by forceful intervention whenever American interests are endangered or when a regime changes. Frantz Fanon likened American imperialism to a monster, saying: "two centuries ago, a former European colony took it into its head to catch up with Europe. It has been so successful that the United States of America has become a monster where the flaws, sickness, and inhumanity of Europe have reached frightening proportions" (Fanon, 1968, p.236-237). Fanon characterizes American foreign policy as inherently brutal, pointing to its reliance on aggression and cruelty to subjugate foreign countries. The United States largely achieved its goal of dominating and controlling Iraq to serve its own strategic priorities—chief among them securing the steady flow of petroleum and safeguarding the lucrative nature of financial investments within the country.

Scranton attempts to translate the reality of American politics and the false claims about the true objectives of the invasion through this literary work, asserting:

{The United States had invaded Afghanistan and was making diplomatic preparations for the invasion of Iraq. I had a good idea we were going and, despite my attempts to see things geopolitically and realistically, we follow the dust, heading off the main road through fields then grids of now flattened and overgrown former modular units by air, tractor-trailer, or ship can be fully functional in 24 to 48 hours. Even at the CSH level, the goal is not definitive repair. The maximal length of stay is policies and practices developed and approved for use on "the war against terrorism is a new kind of war," in fact, a "new paradigm [that] renders obsolete Geneva's strict limitations." No sane man can be a world, and do not try to do too much with your own hands. Better the Arabs do it tolerably than question the use of national military power.} (Scranton, 2016, p.194).

This section represents the personal perspective of an American soldier, which intersects with Roy Scranton's own background as a soldier who participated in the invasion. The writer

describes the political atmosphere after the events of September 11, 2001, when America began its invasion of Afghanistan and then the diplomatic and military preparations for the invasion of Iraq. The soldier expresses his awareness that he is inevitably going to war, and despite his attempts to understand it from a "geopolitical and realistic" perspective, the reality on the ground is dictated by the relentless march of military forces.

The text suddenly transitions into the language of military logistics, reflecting the author's background as a former US Army soldier with deep experience in wartime preparation. Scranton describes the geography of prefabricated camps and housing units that are transported by air or sea and become operational within 24 to 48 hours. The term CSH stands for mobile or field hospital, used on the front lines. The text explains that the purpose of these field hospitals is not to treat wounded soldiers, but rather to provide first aid and stabilize the patient to facilitate evacuation, as the stay there is very short. The author also includes in this section a direct quote from the famous legal memoirs of former US President George W. Bush's administration, specifically, Alberto Gonzales's 2002 memoirs. This quote justifies abuses and torture by arguing that the War on Terror is a new kind of warfare, and that this new model renders the strict limitations of the Geneva Conventions on warfare obsolete, and everything they encompass, especially human rights violations, will be discussed later. This passage provides the historical and legal justification that legitimized the atrocities at Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay. The author also refers to a quote from Lawrence of Arabia's famous book, "Seven Pillars of Wisdom: A Triumph," specifically his advice to British officers: "Better the Arabs do it tolerably than that you do it perfectly" (Lawrence, 1917/2017, p. 27). This phrase appeared in Lawrence's book published in 1917, which he wrote as a guide for British infantry and officers dealing with Arab tribes during the Great Arab Revolt, which means that work led by the landowners themselves, even if not perfectly executed, is better in the long run than ideal work imposed by an occupying foreign power. This quote is included here to illustrate the historical Western colonial perspective on dealing with the Middle East and how external powers attempt to manage the region through local proxies. The text concludes by pointing to the inevitable result of this system (soldiers, logistics, legal justifications, and colonial history), as the text as a whole reflects the permissiveness of war as an integrated system: it begins with political propaganda, passes through the rapid logistical machine and hospitals that do not care about human beings, is legally legitimized by dropping the human rights stipulated in the Geneva Conventions and United Nations

agreements, is based on an old colonial legacy, and ends with imposing blind obedience on soldiers and peoples alike. It is worth noting that the military procedures followed in Iraq during the American invasion and its aftermath completely contradict the Third Geneva Convention relating to prisoners of war, and the Fourth Geneva Convention relating to the protection of civilians. Article 17 of the Third Geneva Convention explicitly prohibits all forms of physical or psychological torture during the interrogation of military detainees.

“No physical or mental torture, nor any other form of coercion, may be inflicted on prisoners of war to secure from them information of any kind whatever. Prisoners of war who refuse to answer may not be threatened, insulted, or exposed to any unpleasant or disadvantageous treatment of any kind.” (Third Geneva Convention, 1949, art. 17)

Article 32 of the Fourth Geneva Convention explicitly prohibits any measures that cause physical suffering to protected persons

“The High Contracting Parties specifically agree that each of them is prohibited from taking any measure of such a character as to cause the physical suffering or extermination of protected persons in their hands. This prohibition applies not only to murder, torture, corporal punishment, mutilation and medical or scientific experiments not necessitated by the medical treatment of a protected person, but also to any other measures of brutality whether applied by civilian or military agents.” (Fourth Geneva Convention, 1949, art. 32)

2. Violations of International Human Rights Conventions in armed conflicts and wars

The period followed the 2003 US invasion of Iraq witnessed the documentation of numerous human rights violations by US forces. These violations included the excessive use of force against civilians, arbitrary arrests without clear charges or fair trials, prolonged detention and torture, violation of the sanctity of homes and property through night raids and destruction of private property, sieges of cities leading to humanitarian crises and mass displacement, violations against cultural and civilian property, not to mention indiscriminate and unlawful killings, with many civilians falling victim to aerial bombardments, indiscriminate gunfire, or in incidents such as the Nisour Square massacre, perpetrated by private security companies – BlackWater– contracted by the US military “In over 80% of the shooting incidents, however, Blackwater reports that its forces fired the first shots” (U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, 2007, p.2). A report by the U.S. House Oversight and Reform Committee, released by Democratic Representative Henry Waxman in October 2007, documented Blackwater's bloody record in Iraq. The report revealed that the company-initiated gunfire in most incidents and was involved in 195 shootings between 2005 and September 2007, resulting in Iraqi casualties. The report also documented the company's

serious abuses before and after the Nisour Square massacre in Baghdad (September 16, 2007), in which 17 unarmed Iraqi civilians were killed.

Human rights violations by US forces took many forms, but the worst violations were in US prisons and detention centers in Iraq, the most famous of which was Abu Ghraib prison. The official military report, known as the Taguba Report, a classified internal U.S. Army report prepared by Major General Antonio Taguba at the request of military command to investigate the practices of the 800th Military Police Brigade at Abu Ghraib, officially concluded that there were sadistic, egregious, and deliberate criminal violations, as stated in the report “This inquiry into all facts and circumstances surrounding recent allegations of detainee abuse at Abu Ghraib Prison (Baghdad Central Confinement Facility) has produced incontrovertible evidence that such abuse did occur” (Taguba, 2004, p.2).

Abu Ghraib prison scandal following the 2003 US invasion of Iraq is considered one of the most egregious human rights abuses in modern history. The US military reopened Abu Ghraib prison, located west of Baghdad, and used it as a major detention center. Photographs and reports revealed physical torture, psychological humiliation, sexual abuse, and executions of Iraqi detainees by US soldiers. These abuses became a symbol of brutality and a moral and legal failure of the United States in Iraq. In 2004, photographs documenting the nature of the abuses were published, and reports included sexual assaults, stripping prisoners naked, forcing them into degrading acts, beatings, using dogs to intimidate them, and sleep deprivation. US military investigation -*Taguba Report*- revealed horrific practices. Human Rights Watch and other human rights organizations have documented serious violations of the Geneva Conventions on human rights in wars and armed conflicts, as stated in these lines:

In fact, the only exceptional aspect of the abuse at Abu Ghraib may have been that it was photographed. Detainees in U.S. custody in Afghanistan have testified that they experienced treatment similar to what happened in Abu Ghraib -- from beatings to prolonged sleep and sensory deprivation to being held naked -- as early as 2002. Comparable -- and, indeed, more extreme -- cases of torture and inhuman treatment have been extensively documented by the International Committee of the Red Cross and by journalists at numerous locations in Iraq outside Abu Ghraib. (Human Rights Watch, 2004, p.3).

In Scranton's novel *War Porn*(2016), This refers to the documentation of explicit, violent footage and imagery—frequently captured in active combat zones—which is consumed out of voyeuristic curiosity or a search for emotional stimulation. This dynamic is illustrated when Aaron, a veteran, hosts a barbecue at his house and displays photographs and video recordings of Iraqi detainees undergoing torture to his guests. {“Wait. I just... So...you tortured people?” “Enhanced interrogation, technically. Whatever you want to call it, I told you, I fucking held the camera. How many times I gotta say that? Click forward”} (Scranton, 2016, p.208). The systematic abuse and execution of Iraqi prisoners were recorded through a vast archive of photographs and video footage. Despite serving as clear proof of crimes against humanity, these files were routinely shared and watched by American military personnel. This media was frequently consumed and distributed as contextless entertainment, even though it possessed the legal weight to be used as evidence of war crimes.

Roy Scranton alludes to Abu Ghraib prison indirectly and metaphorically, but he explicitly and directly refers to another American military prison in Iraq called Camp Crawford as in this quotation “This is Camp Crawford. We called it the Pit. It was north of Baghdad, not far from Taji, and it was specifically for insurgents and intel targets. It's not like Cropper, on BIAP, which was high-value, or Abu G, which had a bunch of different shit” (Scranton, 2016, p.206). Through this prison, Scranton depicts the daily lives of the American soldiers responsible for guarding and monitoring, and explores the mechanisms of military detention and interrogation. This excerpt provides a precise description of the geography and structure of the oppressive detention centers operated by the US military following the 2003 invasion of Iraq. The author spotlights Camp Crawford—a clandestine facility situated north of Baghdad near Camp Taji—which was explicitly used to hold insurgents and individuals singled out for intelligence interrogation. It was far from a typical prison. The speaker contextualizes Camp Crawford within the broader American carceral network by drawing comparisons to two notorious facilities: Camp Cropper, located at Baghdad International Airport (BIAP) and used for high-value detainees like former Ba'athist regime leaders, and the infamous Abu Ghraib prison, which housed a massive, unvetted population of criminal, political, and randomly swept-up suspects.

The integration of military slang likes "The Pit," "Abu G," and "BIAP" mirrors the daily vernacular of American troops, giving the text a raw, documentary-like authenticity rooted in historical fact. Furthermore, the passage underscores how the US military categorized Iraqi prisoners, distributing them to specific facilities based entirely on their perceived intelligence value—a classification system that ultimately dictated their treatment and the interrogation methods used against them.

The Camp Crawford detention center appears in the final section of the novel, titled as *Strange Hells (Columbus Day, 2004)*. The events and details of this prison begin at the start of the final section and continue until the end of the novel. Scranton portrays the events of this final section through the character of Aaron, a former U.S. National Guard soldier. Aaron relives his memories and the shocking images of the abuses and torture he witnessed and participated in within this prison in Iraq. Scranton drew inspiration from the Abu Ghraib prison scandal of 2003 and reflected it in his novel. The practices of torture, psychological and physical humiliation, and the dehumanization of Iraqi detainees appear in the novel as a mirror image of what happened at Abu Ghraib. The title itself, *War Porn*, directly relates to the idea of soldiers taking and bragging about the abuses and torture, behavior for which U.S. soldiers became infamous during the Abu Ghraib scandal. The soldier relives Aaron Stojanovski; back at home in the United States after his service, is unable to live a normal life due to the horrific images stored in his mind and on his laptop, images that represent his soul, tainted by the atrocities he committed in Iraq. The author describes the systematic methods used against Iraqi detainees to break their will, methods that mirror those employed at Abu Ghraib. Scranton details how detainees were forced to strip naked, their heads covered with cloth bags to obscure their features and reduce them to mere objects; sleep deprivation; constant exposure to bright lights and noise; prolonged periods of painful and stressful standing; humiliation and physical abuse; severe beatings; ridicule; the use of dogs to

intimidate them; and verbal and physical harassment to crush their spirits. The photographic evidence described here reveals the deeper significance behind the novel's title, *War Porn*. Aaron and his fellow soldiers record these atrocities using their phones and digital cameras, capturing images and videos of the bodies and injuries of Iraqi detainees. Circulated throughout the barracks as trophies and wartime souvenirs, these files are treated as a form of entertainment—a stark reflection of how the soldiers' moral compass and basic humanity erode under the pressure of military discipline, monotony, and fear.

Scranton illustrates this descent by showing how Aaron Stojanovski, who entered the National Guard as a typical young man, transformed into an active participant in this brutality. Ultimately, the novel argues that these abuses were not the isolated actions of a few individuals, as American leadership asserted at the time, but were instead the unavoidable consequence of an occupying force that systematically trains soldiers to dehumanize and despise the local population as a means of survival.

Conclusion

Drawing upon its findings, this study concludes that Roy Scranton's novel *War Porn* (2016) serves as far more than a simple chronicle of personal military service; instead, it stands as a powerful literary and legal condemnation of postcolonialism's impact. By analyzing the narrative's architecture and the power hierarchies embedded within military facilities like Camp Crawford and Abu Ghraib, this research illustrates that the conflict was not merely a political instrument, but a mechanism for resurrecting historical colonial power dynamics under a contemporary veneer.

The study's primary conclusions are outlined below:

- **Unmasking Contemporary Colonial Discourse:** The novel effectively strips away the facade of humanitarian rhetoric that framed the invasion of Iraq. It illustrates how military might is systematically used to strip the "other" of their humanity, all while operating under the pretext of exporting democracy.
- **Establishing Zones of Legal Exception:** Utilizing its theoretical framework, this study demonstrates that the network of detention centers and camps—including "The Pit," Camp Cropper, and Abu Ghraib—functioned both geographically and theoretically as zones entirely divorced from international law. Within these sites, global human rights treaties were systematically frozen, allowing abuses against individuals to be rationalized under the classification of "intelligence targets."
- **Humanizing the Victim and Challenging the Justification of Warfare:** The critical analysis indicates that the concept of the "permissibility of war" stems from the commodification of violence and agony, minimizing human suffering into a marketable or politically defensible asset. The novel actively dismantles this view by emphasizing the

deep emotional, psychological, and physical trauma these violations inflict on victims and perpetrators alike.

- **Bridging Creative Literature and International Law:** This research highlights how contemporary fiction, especially war novels, functions alongside international law as an alternative form of indictment. It records wartime human rights abuses through an intimate, emotional lens that formal bureaucratic reports frequently overlook.

In summary, this study advocates for a broader scholarly approach to modern combat literature. It recommends utilizing an intersectional framework that merges postcolonial cultural theory with international humanitarian law, providing a deeper understanding of how creative texts can actively counter human rights abuses and challenges the actions of dominant global powers.

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