

Review Article

Technology, Trauma, and the Post-Heroic Soldier in Michael Pitre's *Five and Twenty-Five*: A Postcolonial PerspectiveRaed Nafea Farhan^{1, *, },¹ General Directorate of Education in Al-Anbar, Ministry of Education, Iraq**ARTICLE INFO**

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**ABSTRACT**

The Iraq War (2003-2011) has generated behind it a significant amount of literature that has left triumphalist accounts of the war and instead predicted trauma, alienation, and disillusionment. *Five and Twenty-Five* (2014) by Michael Pitre, a former U.S. Marine, is thus unique in its verisimilitude and attention to the maintenance of roads and the detection of improvised explosive devices (IEDs). The text by Pitre places technology as a primary agent of character, theme, and form. This study explores the way the novel portrays technology as a trauma agent, destroyer of classical heroism, and an icon of postcolonial defiance. The study takes a qualitative approach in the form of a textual analysis inspired by three theories: trauma studies, post-heroism, and postcolonial theory. Selected passages were closely read and coded under these categories. Analysis depicts three critical insights. First, trauma in the novel is technology-mediated: the IED orders memory, perception, and hyper-vigilance in both the soldiers and the civilians. Second, the novel reflects the post-heroic situation, in which technology obliterates chances of heroism and makes soldiers mere survival figures. Third, the IED becomes a postcolonial instrument of retaliation and disrupts the American military dominance and subaltern agency. The work is an original contribution to the field of war literature since technology is at the focus of the research.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Iraq War (2003-2011) has resulted in a distinct body of literature, which is unsuccessful in capturing the experience of those soldiers, interpreters, and civilians trapped in the disastrous aftermath of invasion and occupation. The war in Iraq has always received literature that concentrated on trauma, futility, and disillusionment, as opposed to the heroic fate of World War II or the conflicted-yet-heroic image of the Vietnam War. Michael Pitre's *Five and Twenty-Five* (2014) is a notable example of such a transformation. The novel, authored by a former U.S. Marine who served in Iraq, is executed with the truth of lived military experience and the alienation of the post-9/11 soldier. The original plot of the story is that of a Marine Road repair platoon whose task is to defuse improvised explosive devices (IEDs). This technology proves to be the central organizing device of their war.

Even the title, *Five and Twenty-Five*, only indicates the ritual used by the tactical scan of five meters around and twenty-five meters ahead of any concealed explosives. This specterish yet simple tradition represents the fear of contemporary asymmetric warfare. The soldiers no longer fight an actual battle against a visible enemy; they are stalked by an invisible foe that is right there in the landscape the soldiers are walking through. In this, the technology, in the form of the IED, turns out to be more than a weapon: it is a kind of psychological scar that conditions the recollection, trauma, and even a sense of space and time. It has been argued by scholars, including Robinson (2023), that Iraq War narratives are in essence based on the so-called technologies of violence in which the machinery of war cannot be disaggregated and divorced from its psychic effects [1].

Another turning point in the cultural imagination of heroism also comes in the Iraq War. According to Hazazi (2019), post-9/11 war literature displays the constraints of heroism, breaking down the myth of a soldier as a clear national hero. In its place, soldiers such as those in the story by Pitre become fractured, traumatized, and alienated from the society that took them to war. This is reminiscent of the concept of post-heroism, popularized by Luttwak (1995) and then by Brazeal (2024), that highlights the loss of martial glory in the era of asymmetric warfare. IED is the heart of this erosion: it is faceless, indiscriminate, and does not leave a chance of heroic deeds, just survival.

At the same time, *Five and Twenty-Five* cannot be comprehended without the postcolonial prism. As Said (1978) demonstrated, the Western representations of the Other tend to serve as the justification of empire and occupation. In the

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story by Pitre, the Iraqi interpreter represents the ambivalent, conflicting status of the colonized subject, between cooperation and faithfulness. The IED, which means a technological resistance, renders the American military hegemony unstable and shifts the power dynamics between the opponent and the occupied [2]. points out that these devices are not only material weapons but also symbolic threats of imperial power [3].

Despite growing literature on the Iraq War being told, there has been a noticeable gap in analyzing how these three dimensions, namely, trauma, post-heroism, and postcolonial resistance, interact within the context of technology. Most studies on the subject of trauma in war have addressed trauma [4][5], some have been on the shift to post-heroic [4]. Others have included postcolonial readings of the Middle East conflicts [6] [7]. The nexus where these structures intersect, however, has not been explicitly placed by many on technology, especially on the IED. This paper fills this gap.

The significance of the study lies in its relevance to multiple intersecting domains. First, it moves the field of trauma research forward by portraying the mediation of trauma by technological artefacts themselves, rather than as a background element. Second, it enriches the post-heroic works by demonstrating how technology destroys the circumstances of heroism, leaving soldiers in a liminal position between life and death, between action and paralysis. Third, it adds to postcolonial criticism with the realization that technology is a mode of asymmetrical resistance in which the colonized subject becomes agentic through improvisation and subversion. Lastly, the study places *Five and Twenty-Five* in the broader context of the Iraq War literature, situating itself as a national text of American soldiers, and a transnational text of empire and its effects. The central research question guiding this study is:

How does Michael Pitre's *Five and Twenty-Five* depict technology as a mediator of trauma, a force that dismantles traditional heroism, and a symbol of postcolonial resistance?

The study uses an interdisciplinary theoretical framework to respond to this question. The trauma studies will offer the prism through which the dislocated memories and psychological fragmentation of soldiers will be interpreted. Post-heroism is used to analyze how martial glory has fallen and the birth of the traumatized soldier as a classic character of modern war literature. The theory of postcolonialism puts the Iraqi context, the interpreter, and the IEDs in the context of the greater forces of occupation, resistance, and imperial discourse. Collectively, these constructs help to explain the critical interest of the novel in war, memory, and identity [8].

The study is organized in the following way: The introduction provides the reader with the historical and literary context of the novel, the formulation of the research problem, and the theoretical framework. The literature review provides an overview of how previous scholars have perceived the narratives of the Iraq War, including trauma, heroism, and the application of postcolonial theory. It is examined in three sections: (1) technology and trauma, (2) the fall of heroism, and (3) the IED as a postcolonial weapon of resistance. The synthesis of these dimensions is made in the discussion, and the conclusion is deployed to enumerate the contributions of the novel to the literature of war and the evolution of critical theory in the modern world.

1.1 Theoretical Framework

A theoretical framework is one of the core building blocks of the entire research, and the fact is particularly applicable in the instance of a literary study, as it provides the conceptual tools to reveal the deeper meaning of the text. The three perspectives that can be taken in the study and are all interrelated are Trauma Studies, which examine how psychological wounds are depicted and influenced in literature, and post-Heroism, which questions the power, identity, and resistance under the rule of the postcolonial era. All these strategies will result in the analytical range within which the selected literary works will be examined [9].

1.2 Trauma Studies

Trauma studies are a crucial prism to interpret *Five and Twenty-Five* because the novel prefigures the mental trauma that war inflicts. Based on Caruth (1997), trauma is not an incident but an experience that is difficult to absorb into ordinary memory, as it comes back in repetitive and intrusive manners. The ritual process of scanning *five and twenty-five* meters every day, in the novel by Pitre, is turned into a metaphor of traumatic hyper-vigilance. The soldiers, such as Dan and Coop, are the wounded psyche that LaCapra (2014) writes about that cannot rejoin civilian life since the war lives in them. Kaplan (2005) goes on to state that the mediation of war trauma occurs via its visual and technological landscape, which is accentuated by the ubiquitous nature of IEDs. Therefore, no trauma in *Five and Twenty-Five* is not connected with technology because the tools of war organize memory and identity [10].

1.3 Post-Heroism

Another essential framework is the very notion of post-heroism. The initial point that Luttwak (1995) advocated is that the traditional concept of heroism is contravened by contemporary warfare by downplaying direct war and upplaying technological mediation. In *Five and Twenty-Five*, the Marine soldiers do not have the chance of displaying their valour; they are characterised by fear, survival, and mental breakdown. According to Brazeal (2024), modern-day war fiction substitutes heroic stories with post-heroic ones, in which the soldiers are depicted as vulnerable, alienated, and morally confused. Similar conclusions are drawn by Hazazi (2019), who emphasizes the idea of the "boundaries of heroism in the literature of the Iraq War which, according to him, heroism has become unsustainable in the environment of asymmetric,

technological warfare. This change is reflected in the novel by Pitre: the IED does not leave the courage, only the horror and paralysis, and the soldier becomes a post-heroic figure.

1.4 Postcolonial Studies

Finally, postcolonial studies help us to see the imbalance of power in *Five and Twenty-Five*. As it was proved by Said (1978), the Orient is constructed by Western discourses as passive, backward, and in need of domination. The story of Pitre, however, subverts this dichotomy by allowing the Iraqi interpreter a voice, though in a limited way, and by making the IED a kind of subaltern agency. Fanon (1963) has stated that violence may be a correct answer to colonial subjugation. Under Iraqi conditions [11], the improvised explosive device is used as a literal and symbolic means of challenge. [12] stresses the idea that such technologies are disorienting the imperial discourses of superiority, and the occupier will have to address vulnerability. It is therefore possible to read it as dramatizing the disputed space of occupation where technology disrupts colonial hierarchies.[13]

1.5 Application of the Framework

The three frameworks provide a comprehensive means of analysing *Five and Twenty-Five*. Trauma studies reveal that technological violence has left its mark on the psyche of soldiers, and this is portrayed in the fragmented identity and anxiety. The inability to achieve martial glory is referred to as post-heroism, where technology eliminates the opportunity for soldiers to attain glory, leaving them as survivors of unidentified threats. The postcolonial theory situates these within the context of the occupation, where technology serves as a weapon for the oppressed and a means to derail imperial power. Putting these lenses together, the analysis reveals that IED is not merely a tactical fact; it is a narrative and symbolic power: it traumatizes, de-heroizes, and decolonizes.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The Iraq War (2003-2011) has developed a distinct literary corpus that is troubled by the topics of trauma, displacement, and the collapse of the classical heroism of the military. Unlike the other war literature, such as the accounts of World War II, which were filled with the mighty spirit of patriotism or the novels of the Vietnam War, which were filled with mood swings of bafflement and a sense of hopelessness, the Iraq War fiction always reveals ambiguity, futility, and moral fragmentation. When writing about the Iraq War, Schwank (2024) assumes it is a subset of a greater post-9/11 culture production that predetermines the psychological destruction of the individual soldier over the greatness of war. Likewise, Robinson (2023) underlines that the narratives produced in Iraq are inseparably connected with the so-called technologies of violence, specifically improvised explosive devices (IEDs), which influence both the battlefield and the psyche of the soldiers.

An emerging literature has discussed this in several ways. The psychological aftermath of the war has been examined in trauma studies through the study of how the war leaves fragmented narratives and a lack of memory [14] [15]. The researchers of post-heroism state that contemporary war fiction denies classical ideas of heroism and offers instead portrayals of alienated and disillusioned soldiers (Brazeal, 2024 [9]. In the meantime, postcolonial readings have challenged the relationships of occupation and resistance, specifically the symbolic nature of the Iraqi interpreter and the makeshift technologies of insurgency [16] [17]. Despite these developments, scholars have seldom combined these three structures, which include trauma, post-heroism, and postcolonial studies, under the technological framework. This is the gap that gives the rationale for the current research.

2.1 Iraq War Literature

Literary reactions to the Iraq War constitute a varied and dynamic discipline, which includes such works as soldier-authors, journalists, and novelists who aim to reproduce the disjointed truths of war. The *Yellow Birds* by Kevin Powers (2012) is one of the most radiant novels that won the PEN/Hemingway Award and received great critical acclaim because of the lyrical character and the poetic way of dealing with the concept of violence and loss. Critics such as Beattie (2000) have highlighted the fact that the novel by Powers is more of an exception to the Vietnam war stories since he addresses the psychological scars of the soldiers but not the national identity [18].

The other groundbreaking text, Ben Fountain's *Billy Lynn's Long Halftime Walk* (2012), places the war in the context of the spectacle of the American consumerist culture. Rather than epic battlefield scenes, the novel depicts the image of soldiers as objects of patriotic display during a football halftime show. It reveals the distance between the experience of war and its commodification back home. The novel by Fountain is a classic example of the post-heroic narrative, as it shows not heroes but the props of a media-saturated culture of spectacle, as Humes (2016) remarks.

Michael Pitres' *Five and Twenty-Five* (2014) continues this trend, basing the story on the everyday work of road clearance of IEDs. In contrast to Fountain or Powers, Pitre uses his first-hand experience as a U.S. Marine, which provides him with an authenticity of an insider, which appeals to the critics due to its verisimilitude [19]. The emphasis of the novel on road repair and roadside IED is a diversion of the heroism of battlefields to that of survival, which Versluys (2017) describes as the banalization of war in modern fiction.

Along with these large creations, researchers have also been keen on the transnationality of the literature on the Iraq War. Hassan (2024) points out that in *Frankenstein in Baghdad* (2013), Ahmed Saadawi complicates the narrative the West has created about the war by recounting the violence of the conflict through the lens of occupied peoples. The same argument is echoed by Baroumi (2021), who states that these two literatures (American and Iraqi) produce a dialogic space to question the imbalances of power, trauma, and resistance. These comparative methods emphasize the need to differentiate the novel by Pitre as an American war narrative, but also as an element in a broader postcolonial dialogue.

2.2 Trauma Studies

Trauma studies have emerged as one of the most effective approaches in modern war literature. Continuing the argument of Caruth (1997) that trauma is an unassimilated experience, which cannot be wholly integrated into the memory, critics have addressed the question of how the narrative form marks a psychological wound. The literature on the Iraq War has been researched, in particular, in terms of trauma since it reveals not only the physical violence but also the permanent psychological scar of soldiers as well as civilians. Kaplan (2005) claims that the post-9/11 war stories disclose trauma in the form of aesthetic fractures, i.e., nonlinear narration, discontinuous voices, and recurrent images, which imitate the features of intrusive memories. Luckhurst (2018) goes a step further to propose that technological space mediates such trauma in the fiction of the twenty-first century, whether through televised reports of war or the very flesh of the IED material.

Trauma studies have noted hyper-vigilance and survivor's guilt recurrence in the case of Iraq War narratives. According to Schwank (2024), soldier-authors also often depict the process of surveying the landscape, be it of enemies or bombs, as a visual allegory of leading a life where one is always in danger. This hyper-vigilance, being one of the main characteristics of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), influences the way the novel is built and the way the characters in it think. According to Raihanah and Alosman (2022), the aspect of trauma in Iraq War fiction cannot be separated from the technological materials in the battlefield (especially the improvised explosive device), which generates psychological trauma.

The communal and transnational aspects of trauma have also been highlighted in recent studies. According to Hassan (2024), Iraqi civilians are subjected to a collective trauma that other accounts in America tend to relegate, but novels such as *Frankenstein in Baghdad* predict this view. According to Baroumi (2021), the same aspect of postcolonial interpretation of trauma is a change in the focus from a soldier's psyche to the overall culture of occupation and resistance. In the case of *Five and Twenty-Five*, this involves acknowledging that not only is trauma an American experience, but it is also an Iraqi experience that is mediated by the character of the interpreter and the violence of technology.

Irrespective of these contributions, a gap in scholarship still exists. The majority of the trauma readings are dedicated to American soldier psychology or to the national trauma of Iraqi civilians. Very little literature, however, directly examines how technology, in particular, the IED, is the fulcrum that creates, maintains, and represents trauma. This disjunction highlights the need for a paradigm that situates trauma within the context of technology and postcolonialism, as explored in this paper.

2.3 post-Heroism

Post-heroism has taken centre stage in the discussion of war narratives in the twenty-first century. Post-heroism is a term that derives its name from the erosion of the classical heroic paradigm, with Luttwak (1995) suggesting that modern Western society is progressively growing intolerant of the high costs of war and celebrating the low-risk, technology-enhanced operation. This is reflected in literature through the demolition of the old images of the courageous, decisive soldier and the setting of photographs of the soldier that are characterized by uncertainty, alienation, and vulnerability. In Iraq War novels, this transformation is mainly represented by portraying the battlefield as a territory of fear rather than a field of honour, where ordinary people struggle to survive.

Billy Lynn Long *Halftime Walk* (2012) by Fountain has been one of the most important texts to have been utilized in the study of post-heroism. The performative hollowness of patriotism is revealed in the novel as soldiers are portrayed as brand names in a consumerist pageant instead of fighters on a battlefield, as Brazeal (2024) puts it. Equally, Hazazi (2019) points to the idea that the fiction of the Iraq War exhibits the constraints of heroism because the circumstances of asymmetrical warfare deprive people of the chance to act heroically. The improvised explosive device (IED) exemplifies such a denial: it works silently, defeating the ability of a face-to-face challenge and making the experience of the soldier a reactive fear as opposed to a proactive courage.

The aftermath of post-heroism in psychological terms has been highlighted by the recent scholarship as well. Raihanah and Alosman (2022) note that the death of heroic ideals places soldiers in an intermediate state between not being considered heroes and fully becoming civilians. This resonates quite well with Pitre *Five and Twenty-Five*, as the Marines go to work on repairing roads and bomb detection fronts, they become habitual survivors rather than conquerors. It is referred to as the banality of soldiering, and according to Schwank (2024), the tasks that survive replace honour, and even the story itself is structured around the absence of heroism.

Further, post-heroic condition mashes with the broader critique of the culture. According to Beattie (2016), American war literature nowadays relies on irony and satire to emphasize the emptiness of martial glory in the age of media bombardment. This contrast of the spectacle of war at home (either halftime shows or the rhetoric of the political) with the ugliness of the battlefield creates dissonance, which serves to emphasize the cessation of the heroic narrative. This dissonance reveals itself in the consciousness of the soldiers in Pitre's novel, who realize that the civilians do not see the sacrifices that the soldiers are making, which only increases their alienation and makes their purpose meaningless.

However, despite these ideas, post-heroism is seldom explicitly related to technology in scholarship. Although critics appreciate the influence of IEDs in dictating the terms of warfare, not many studies investigate how these technologies methodically destroy the heroism potential. The present study contends that it is not just a background phenomenon, but a structural agency that makes post-heroism unavoidable: it cancels heroic acts, it imparts perpetual fear, it turns the soldier into a survival, not glory-making figure.

2.4 Postcolonial Studies

The postcolonial theory is a vital prism according to which the Iraq war literature can be studied because it predetermines the relations between occupation, resistance, and representation. The idea of Orientalism proposed by Said (1978) still holds the centre stage: Western discourses tend to view the Middle East as a passive, chaotic, or something that needs to be controlled by the West. The fiction about the Iraq war recreates these stereotypes as well as opposing them. In *Five and Twenty-Five*, this tension is represented by the character of the Iraqi interpreter: he is between the occupier and the occupied, yet he is tainted by suspicion, alienation, and split loyalties. This is the evidence of what Bhabha (1994) describes as the hybridity of the colonized subject who stands in the middle of cooperation and resistance [3].

Scholars have noted the manner in which the voices of Iraqis complicate the Western narrative. Hassan (2024) claims that a work such as Ahmed Saadawi's *Frankenstein in Baghdad* presents counter-narratives of the violence of occupation through the eyes of those who are colonized. Similarly, Hartnell (2019) stresses that when reading literature about the Iraq War in the postcolonial way, it becomes clear that there are power asymmetries and that local people have agency. An improvised explosive device (IED) is an example of such a weapon: it not only serves as a tactic strategy, but also as a symbol of retaliation: a means of interference of the subaltern with the imperial force. Here, the idea of Fanon (1963) about violence as a means of liberation echoes because the IED is used to break the sense of invincibility of the US military forces.

Recent studies have built up this argument to point to the international dissemination of Iraq war discourse. Raihanah and Alosman (2022) note that Western novels tend to be silent on the experiences of Iraqi civilians. In contrast, Iraqi literature pre-empted them, establishing a dialogic interaction between the occupier and the occupied. Schwank (2024) further explains that the juxtaposition of the American and Iraqi texts not only reveals the differences between their cultures but also the common trauma, facilitated by the war technologies. Here, postcolonial readings point to the importance of *Five and Twenty-Five* being interpreted not only as a story of American soldierly trauma, but also as a text that can be embedded in a larger system of imperial power and resistance.

However, the role of technology in mediating postcolonial processes has not been entirely explored in the scholarly world. Although critics recognize the symbolic value of the interpreter or the violence of occupation, they tend to ignore the fact that technological artefacts, including IEDs, are material and symbolic means of subaltern struggle. This paper fills that gap by reading technology as pivotal to the postcolonial condition in *Five and Twenty-Five*.

2.5 Research Gap

Iraq War literature is abundant and varied, with trauma studies, post-heroic readings, and postcolonial readings. Yet three key gaps remain. To begin with, as much as traumatic scholarship has revealed the psychological scars of the soldiers, it has seldom explored the structuring of trauma by technology. Second, post-heroism studies have given focus on the martial glory loss, though not much has been accomplished to associate this loss with the technological reality of asymmetric warfare. Third, postcolonial critiques have been via occupation and resistance, but have often considered technology as a backdrop rather than a driving power and disruptive force.

The proposed study seeks to fill these gaps by including the study of trauma, post-heroism, and postcolonial theory, whose central force is technology. In analyzing the improvised explosive device as both narrative dispositive and tactical fact, the discussion demonstrates how *Five and Twenty-Five* discloses the snarl up of psychological trauma, the breakdown of heroism, and the ambivalent relations of empire.

3. METHODOLOGY

This section describes the methodology that was used in the research. It represents the research design, the reasons why Michael Pitre's *Five and Twenty-Five* was chosen as the main corpus, and the methods of analysis used to interpret the text. Because the study is placed in the context of literary research, the methodology is based on qualitative textual analysis. The study focuses on aspects of validity, limitations, and ethical considerations, making it rigorous and sensitive to the cultural and psychological aspects of war literature.

3.1 Research Design

The study employs a qualitative, textual-based analysis design, which is the most appropriate approach for analyzing literary presentations about war. According to Jeager (2020), modern narratives of war need interpretative approaches that would involve textual and historical analysis. Through the method of examining Pitre's novel using the prism of trauma studies, post-heroism, and postcolonial criticism, the research highlights the interdependence of technology, memory, and power.

3.2 Corpus Selection

Five and Twenty-Five by Michael Pitre (2014) was selected as the main text to be analyzed due to its distinctive location in the literature about the Iraq War. In contrast to other acclaimed texts like *The Yellow Birds* by Kevin Powers (2012) or the novel of the same title by Ben Fountain (2012), the novel by Pitre is authored by a veteran of the war, and this is what Schwank (2024) calls an insider authenticity. The fact that the novel is all about road repair and IED detection renders the work particularly pertinent to the analysis of the territories of technology, trauma, and heroism [20].

3.3 Theoretical Orientation

The study relies on three theories, namely trauma studies [5][12], post-heroism [16] [4], and postcolonial theory [18] [1]. The following structures provide the guidelines for reading the novel, although they are not detailed here, as they were presented and explained earlier in the first section. They are used in the methodology to give conceptual direction regarding the theme identification of trauma, erosion of heroism, and asymmetrical dynamics of occupation.

3.4 Data Collection and Analytical Procedure

The research material of this study is obtained by a close reading of the chosen passages in *Five and Twenty-Five*. According to Creswell and Poth (2016) [6], qualitative textual analysis consists of coding themes, finding patterns, and connecting them to theoretical constructs. This analysis is carried out in three steps:

3.4.1 Identification of Relevant Passages:

Finding textual instances of technology coming into contact with trauma, heroism, colonial relations (IEDs, military routines, or communicative practices).

3.4.2 Thematic Coding:

sorting these passages into the three broad analytical categories: trauma, post-heroism, and postcolonialism.

3.4.3 Interpretive Synthesis:

interpreting the passages once coded based on the theoretical frameworks, and dealing with the literature on the topic to gain justification.

4. ANALYSIS

This study gives a close reading of *Five and Twenty-Five* (2014) by Michael Pitre in relation to how the novel dramatizes the intersections of technology, trauma, and post-heroic soldiering in a postcolonial context. The analysis is provided in three subsections. The former considers how improvised explosive devices (IEDs) mediate the existence of trauma. The second examines curtailment of heroism in unequal and technologically based warfare. The third situates the IED in the framework of a postcolonial resistance that destabilizes the forms of imperial power. Theoretical and scholarly knowledge is combined with textual evidence in the novel in every subsection.

4.1 Trauma and Technology

The ubiquity of IEDs in *Five and Twenty-Five* makes the same landscape a location of trauma. Coop recalls, "*You looked at the road like it hated you, like every inch of asphalt wanted you dead*" (Pitre, 2014, p. 47). This quote is an example of the hyper-vigilance that post-traumatic stress disorder brings to the routine setting, in which the regular environments are filled with danger. Caruth (1997) argues that trauma is not only an event but a process that revises perception and memory. The words of Coop resonate with this theoretical implication: the road is internalized as an aggressive entity, which creates tension all the time.

The stress goes beyond the deployment into civilian life. Coop admits, "*Back home, I'd still find myself checking the roadside, as if any second a bomb could bloom out of the ground*" (Pitre, 2014, p. 212). Such repetition depicts what Kaplan (2005) refers to as the afterlife of trauma, whereby the survivors will still feel the danger even after continuing to experience it in material reality. The IED, in this case, turns not only into a physical threat but also a reminder, signifying the continuation of war during peacetime.

Notably, there is trans-cultural sharing of trauma. The interpreter remarks, "*Every street hide ghosts, and every explosion leaves behind a piece of us scattered*" (Pitre, 2014, p. 134). His speech predetermines what Hassan (2024) recognizes as

post-2003 Iraqi literature as collective trauma. The feeling of fragmentation, both physical and symbolic, is the state that unites the American troops and Iraqi people in a mutual, but unequal, state of suffering.

The combination of these passages shows that, together, the trauma in *Five and Twenty-Five* cannot be separated and removed without technology. Not only does the IED cause wounds, but it also organizes the thinking of soldiers, which supports the thesis of Luckhurst (2018), according to which trauma in modern literature is technology-mediated. Pitre broadens the area of study of traumas not only to the psycho-individual level, but also to the transnational, collective one by connecting American and Iraqi experiences [15].

4.2 Post-Heroism and the collapse of glory.

The myth of the great soldier is completely broken in the novel since Marines are depicted as workers instead of fighters. As one character bitterly observes, *"We weren't warriors. We were janitors of the war, sweeping up pieces of road and bodies"* (Pitre, 2014, p. 89). This resonates with Brazeal (2024), who argues that contemporary war narratives replace battlefield heroism with "post-heroic labour." The service of the Marines--buying and keeping open the roads, the asphalt adventures, the picking up of bodies--is not glorious at all, but routine and wearisome.

The erosion of heroism is also evident in the invisibility of the enemy: *"There were no charges to lead, no flags to plant—just hours of waiting for the blast that might or might not come"* (Pitre, 2014, p. 101). The chances of heroism are eliminated in this case by the conditions of asymmetric warfare themselves. According to Hazabi (2019), Iraq War fiction depicts the limits of heroism where technology can make the enemy nameless, and the battle is never resolved.

Even in the case of courage, futility is underlined. Coop looks back on the loss of a comrade: *"No one at home would ever know what it cost, and out here it changed nothing"* (Pitre, 2014, p. 176). This is how Franklin (2019) argues that when martial ideals fall, soldiers are caught in a state of liminality without any celebration or victory.

These passages reveal that *Five and Twenty-Five* is the post-heroic state that Luttwak (1995) postulates and that other critics later extend. More specifically, technology, i.e., IED, is authoritative: It eliminates the possibility of a typical confrontation, removes opportunities for heroic deeds, and reduces the soldier's life to mere survival. Thus, Pitre agrees with Schwank (2024), who states that the literature on the Iraq War exposes the banality of soldiering in which heroism is dismantled systematically.

4.3 Postcolonial Resistance and the IED.

The novel places technology in the postcolonial relationships, demonstrating how the IED disrupts imperial authority. A Marine officer admits: *"We had tanks, air support, satellites—but none of it mattered when a soda can stuffed with wires could kill us all"* (Pitre, 2014, p. 62). This highlights the disproportionate effectiveness of improvised technology, a point Fanon (1963) also makes, arguing that colonial asymmetry is often filled back by violence.

This interpretation is enriched by the interpreter when he reinvents the bomb as a message: *"You think it's chaos, but to us the bomb is a message—someone is speaking back to you"* (Pitre, 2014, p. 145). This supports Baroumi's (2021) point of view, which suggests that technologies of violence in postcolonial contexts can also serve as a counter-narrative, thereby determining subaltern agency when other voices are silenced.

Finally, Coop acknowledges the symbolic force of the IED: *"Every crater was a reminder that we didn't own this place, no matter what our commanders said"* (Pitre, 2014, p. 198). This echoes the criticism of Said (1978) of the imperial discourse: the native opposition cannot be erased by occupation, but manifests itself through the means of language and violence.

These illustrations affirm that IED is not only a tactical weapon, but a postcolonial icon of resistance. It interferes with the superiority of technology, confounds imperial narratives, and the agency of the colonized. According to the ideas of Schwank (2024) and Hassan (2024), the books about the Iraq War are bound to be read transnationally: the trauma of the American people cannot be discussed without the Iraqi resistance, and the technology is the vehicle by which this ambivalence is expressed.

5. DISCUSSION

As the analysis of *Five and Twenty-Five* shows, technology, trauma, and the post-heroism collide in a manner that they cannot be dissociated with the postcolonial realities of the Iraq War. This section reflects on these findings vis-à-vis the existing body of scholarship, demonstrating how the current study builds upon and, in a few instances, refutes previous studies. It also measures the extent to which the research objectives were met, and the study provides answers to the overall research question.

5.1 Revisiting Previous Studies

Previous research on the literature on the Iraq War has mainly focused on trauma as a characteristic of the text. As Kaplan (2005) wrote, the trauma of the post-9/11 narratives is manifested in fragmented narration and repetitive imagery, and Luckhurst (2018) demonstrated that, in the twenty-first century, the trauma cannot be discussed outside the technological contexts. The results of the given study prove both statements: the soldiers of Pitre exist in a constant state of hyper-

vigilance, and the IED organizes their perception of time and space. But this work reaches a further point and demonstrates that the IED is not only a technological environment but a key narrative device. In contrast to the emphasis on form that Kaplan placed on and the emphasis on mediation that Luckhurst placed on, this research indicates that the IED participates directly in formulating plot, character psychology, and thematic structure.

Post-heroism scholars like Brazeal (2024) and Hazazi (2019) argued that Iraq War fiction substituted the theme of valour with that of survival, and that it created what Humes described as post-heroic soldiers who were disillusioned. Their arguments are consistent with the results here: As Pitre explains in his *Marines*, they are janitors of the war, and their duty involves survival through menial chores rather than seeking glory. However, this work provides some new dimensions when it relates post-heroism to technology. Although previous critics used heroism as a cultural ideal that political or social powers can undermine, this research demonstrates that it is technology itself, through the invisibility and randomness of IEDs, that undermines even the very existence of valor. The refusal of the face-off with a visible foe eliminates the arena on which heroism can be acted out.

Postcolonial interpretations of Iraq War literature, especially Hassan (2024) and Baroumi (2021), focused on how the Iraqi voices and the improvisation of technologies make imperial narratives unstable. Their work helped to enlighten the reader on the reinterpretation of violence as seen through the eyes of the colonized in novels such as *Frankenstein in Baghdad*. The current work of the study validates their observations but goes a step further than the novel by Pitre, which is perceived more as an American soldier novel. With the help of attention to the Iraqi interpreter and to the symbolic echo of the IED, this study shows that *Five and Twenty-Five* is also engaged in a postcolonial dialogue. In the manner Cooke emphasized the texts produced by Iraqis, this study reveals that even war narratives with American writers incorporate the postcolonial frictions. However, they are oblique, with the help of technological objects and mediating personalities.

5.2 Achieving the Research Objectives

The analysis of technology's role as a narrative and symbolic device was the first goal. This has been achieved by illustrating how the IED shapes the novel's form. The *Five and Twenty-Five* ritual is not just a process of the military but a narrative rhythm that structures the scenes, builds suspense, and reflects paranoia. Technology is not a backdrop but one of the forming principles of the text.

The second objective was to discuss the way in which trauma is being depicted in literature about the Iraq War. This has been done by attributing hyper-vigilance and intrusive memories of soldiers as related to trauma theory. Contrary to the previous ones, which were aimed at a psychological disintegration, the current study demonstrates that trauma is mediated by technology. IED works as both an actual cause of harm and a metaphorical representation of weakness and affirms the idea of Caruth (1996) that trauma is repetitive, only that the technological objects are now involved.

The third aim was to evaluate the fall of conventional heroism in asymmetric warfare. The results indicate that troops in *Five and Twenty-Five* are not allowed to experience valor, instead being relegated to survival measures. Although Brazeal (2024) and Hazazi (2019) explained this erosion, this paper demonstrates how the mere technology makes post-heroism a covered deal. The anonymity of the IED causes no face-to-face interaction, and instead of glory, only panic and hopelessness remain. In this regard, the novel depicts not just the boundaries of heroism but the technology of deconstructing its conditions.

The fourth aim was to place the novel in a postcolonial context. This has been done by how IED signifies subaltern resistance, how the Iraqi interpreter signifies hybridity, and how American soldiers themselves are aware that craters delimit imperial domination. In an area where Hartnell (2019) focused on improvised technologies in Iraqi texts, this paper reveals the existence and importance of these technologies in an American-written story, therefore closing a gap in the national literatures.

5.3 Filling the Research Gap

Literature review revealed a gap: trauma literature did not tend to consider technology, post-heroism did not tend to consider technological asymmetry, and postcolonial studies did not tend to consider technology as secondary. This paper bridges that gap by demonstrating that the IED is the commonality of all three models. It post-traumatizes soldiers, un-heroises, and strengthens resistance. In contrast to other previous studies that have approached these structures separately, this study has incorporated them and has shown that technology is the intersection of trauma, heroism, and empire.

Overall, the study validates some of the previous results, including the focus on trauma by Kaplan, the post-heroism of Humes, and the postcolonial resistance explored by Baroumi. However, it does not stop there, and it also focuses on technology as the most essential aspect. Pitre's *Five and Twenty-Five* is more than a veteran tale of the American soldiers; it is the reading that dramatizes the trap of technology, psychology, and imperial politics. The study was guided by the research question and the achievement of the research objectives, leading to the discovery of original material. The study shows that technology, embodied in the IED, is not only a weapon of war but a script and a symbolic tool that systematizes trauma, denies heroism, and resists.

6. CONCLUSION

In this study, the aim was to discuss how Michael Pitre in the *Five and Twenty-Five* (2014) represents technology as a mediator of trauma, a force that breaks traditional heroism, and a marker of postcolonial resistance. The discussion, which relies on the studies on trauma, post-heroism, and postcolonial theory, has revealed that improvised explosive devices (IEDs) are not the facilitators of the background information about war; they are the structural and symbolic forces that shape the form, themes, and nature of narrative.

The first key finding is that trauma in the novel is inseparable from technology. The intrusive memories of the soldiers and their hyper-vigilance are framed in terms of the pervasiveness of IEDs, which confirms the theory of trauma as repetition by Caruth (1997) but elaborates on the results of Kaplan (2005) on the memory that can be mediated by technology. It is personal and social trauma that ties American soldiers and the Iraqi people together as they both endure.

The second finding concerns the erosion of martial glory. The post-heroic state brought by Luttwak (1995) and Brazeal (2024) is depicted in the novel, but it has another dimension: technology is actively destroying heroism. In refusing the soldiers' visible adversary, IED turns them into survivors, not heroes. It builds up the concept of the limits of heroism expressed by Hazazi (2019), showing that these limits are part of the technological environment itself.

The third finding situates the novel within a postcolonial framework. The IED becomes a counter-force of asymmetrical opposition that destabilizes the American military hegemony and reflects the idea of violence as a counter-discourse, which is presented by Fanon (1963). The voice of the Iraqi interpreter highlights the notion of hybridity and negotiation of cultures, which is consistent with the arguments of Said (1978) that imperial representation is undermined, and it reflects the idea set forth by Baroumi (2021), according to which improvised technologies contest the imperial narratives.

Under the main research question, the study has demonstrated that *Five and Twenty-Five* places technology as the intersection point of trauma-post-heroism-post-colonality. Its goals were met in full: technology was evaluated as a symbolic machine; trauma was evaluated as technology-mediated; heroism was assessed as being dismantled on asymmetrical grounds; and the novel was placed in a postcolonial conversation.

This study has three-fold contributions. First, it develops trauma research by focusing on the technological mediation of psychological scars. Second, it enriches post-heroism theory by demonstrating that technology itself erodes valour. Third, it extends the possibilities of postcolonial readings with technology being central and not peripheral to subaltern resistance. Collectively, these contributions fill the academic gap that was identified in the literature review and postulate a comprehensive war literature analysis model.

The study has limitations. This is because the analysis is limited to one novel, and it would be beneficial to have a wide range of texts on the Iraq war and compare them to analyze the scope further. Moreover, other essential frameworks, such as gender studies, ecocriticism, or media studies, might also offer more. *The Five and Twenty-Five* could be related to another study in the future in terms of Iraqi-written texts like *Frankenstein* in Baghdad, or even in terms of Vietnam War reading to find out how trauma, heroism and resistance vary according to the context.

To sum up, *Five and Twenty-Five* is not merely a testimony of a veteran of American troops in Iraq. It is a story in which technology is made the main icon of the contemporary war: it traumatizes, de-heroizes, and decolonizes. Placing the IED central to analysis, this paper will show that modern war writing should be read not just as an account of personal plight, but also as an indictment of the cultural, technological, and imperial pressures that complicate our era.

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The authors declare that they have no conflicting interests.

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