

**Character Transformation in Stephen Crane's *The Red Badge of
Courage* and Kevin Powers' *The Yellow Birds*: A Comparative
Study**

By

Islam Eid Mohammed Al-Olaimi

Supervisor

Prof. Abdul-Qader Al-Khattab

Al-Zaytoonah University of Jordan 2023

Abstract

This thesis discusses character development in two literary works concerning war; Stephen Crane's *The Red Badge of Courage* (1895) and Kevin Power's *The Yellow Birds* (2012). They were written during different centuries, but both center around the psychological impact that results from war. Interestingly, in *The Red Badge of Courage*, the central character, Henry, is presented as a naïve and inexperienced countryside boy who joins the Union Army with the perspective of attaining his ambitions of glory; on other hand, in *The Yellow Birds*, the main character, Bartle, is presented as a young and innocent man who, when sent to fight in Iraq, develops into a devastated soldier, as a result of his traumatic war experience. There are several issues that this thesis discusses; most prominently, it elaborates on the impact of war in both novels, and it also examines the starting point of the characters' transformations. Furthermore, it tackles the causes of trauma suffered by John Bartle in Kevin Powers' *The Yellow Birds*, as well as the indicators of (PTSD) post-traumatic stress disorder he experiences and its impact on him. The thesis also goes over the transformation that Henry Fleming undergoes in Stephen Crane's *The Red Badge of Courage*, covering a

variety of concepts, such as innocence vs experience, the psychology of survival, fear, shame, and the wound as a badge of courage, among others. Both novels paint a vivid picture of the cruelty of war, and I examine the chosen works by utilizing psychological and historical approaches, shedding light on the psychological aspects which underline the behavior of the main characters in the novels, like defense mechanisms, psychology of survival, and components of human personality from a Freudian point of view, all the while considering the historical context through which the events of both works are lived, as well as taking into account the life experiences of the authors behind each work, respectively.

Key Words: Kevin Powers, Stephen Crane, Survival psychology, transformation, trauma.