

A Critical Discourse Analysis of War Narratives in "*The Yellow Birds*" by Kevin Powers

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Abstract:

This paper adopts a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to explore the ideological dimensions embedded in Kevin Powers' novel, *The Yellow Birds* (2012). The analysis delves into linguistic choices, metaphors, and narrative structures employed by the author to convey the psychological toll of war on individuals, the broader societal implications, and the nuanced exploration of power dynamics. Through the lens of CDA, the study aims to uncover how language functions as a vehicle for conveying ideological perspectives on war, trauma, and the human experience. Special attention is given to metaphors as linguistic devices, examining their role in shaping the narrative's ideological framework. Moreover, the paper explores the impact of the novel's first-person narration on the reader's understanding, considering the subjective perspective and emotional engagement it fosters. The findings contribute to a deeper understanding of the ideological underpinnings of war literature and how the language constructs meaning in narratives of conflict and its aftermath.

Keywords: CDA, Ideology, Metaphor, War narratives, Kevin Powers

المستخلص

تتبنى هذه الورقة التحليل النقدي للخطاب (CDA) لاستكشاف الأبعاد الأيديولوجية المضمنة في رواية كيفين باورز، الطيور الصفراء (2012). حيث يتعمق التحليل في الاختيارات اللغوية والاستعارات والهياكل السردية التي يستخدمها المؤلف لنقل الخسائر النفسية للحرب على الأفراد، والتداعيات المجتمعية الأوسع، والاستكشاف الدقيق لديناميكيات السلطة. ومن خلال محاور تحليل الخطاب النقدي، تهدف الدراسة إلى الكشف عن كيفية استخدام اللغة كوسيلة لنقل وجهات النظر الأيديولوجية حول الحرب والصدمات والتجربة الإنسانية. يتم إيلاء اهتمام خاص للاستعارات كأدوات لغوية، ودراسة دورها في تشكيل الإطار الأيديولوجي للسرد. علاوة على ذلك، تستكشف الورقة تأثير السرد بضمير المتكلم في الرواية على فهم القارئ، مع الأخذ في الاعتبار المنظور الذاتي والمشاركة العاطفية التي تعززها. تساهم النتائج في فهم أعمق للأسس الأيديولوجية لأدب الحرب وكيف تبني اللغة المعنى في روايات الصراع وعواقبه.

الكلمات المفتاحية: تحليل الخطاب النقدي، الأيديولوجيا، الاستعارة، روايات الحرب، كيفين باورز

Background of the Study

The portrayal of war in literature has long been a subject of scholarly inquiry, offering a lens through which societal attitudes, power structures, and individual experiences can be critically examined (Dawes, 2002). Kevin Powers' novel, *The Yellow Birds* (2012), stands as a compelling work within the genre, delving into the intricate web of emotions, trauma, and ideological

undercurrents that characterize the experience of war. This study seeks to thoroughly examine the novel's ideological dimensions through the framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA).

Against the backdrop of contemporary discourse on war, *The Yellow Birds* offers an obvious exploration of the human cost of conflict, both on an individual and societal level. As literature often serves as a reflection and critique of prevailing ideologies, employing CDA allows for a systematic investigation into the linguistic choices, metaphors, and narrative strategies employed by Powers to convey the multifaceted nature of war.

The background of this study is rooted in the recognition that war narratives not only shape public perceptions but also play a crucial role in constructing and disseminating ideologies related to patriotism, sacrifice, heroism, and the consequences of violence. CDA, as a methodological approach, provides a robust framework for unpacking the layers of meaning embedded in the language of the novel, revealing the ideological perspectives underpinning its narrative structure (Bajri & Othman: 2020).

Moreover, the choice of first-person narration in *The Yellow Birds* adds a distinctive layer to the study. Understanding how the protagonist's subjective perspective shapes the narrative contributes to the broader discourse on the role of individual voices in portraying the collective experiences of war.

By exploring the ideological dimensions within *The Yellow Birds*, this study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the intricate relationship between language, literature, and the construction of meaning in the context of war narratives. It also seeks to shed light on the potential impact of such narratives on shaping societal perceptions and fostering empathy toward the human experiences often obscured by the broader discourse on armed conflict.

Identifying the Gap in the Literature:

Despite the extensive scholarship surrounding war literature, particularly narratives of conflict arising from the Iraq War, there remains a discernible gap in the critical discourse analysis (CDA) of contemporary war novels. The majority of existing studies have explored broader thematic elements, historical contexts, or psychological impacts of war narratives, often overlooking the specific linguistic and discursive strategies employed by authors to convey the ideological dimensions of war experiences. Notably, the CDA of war literature, with a focus on the linguistic elaborations shaping ideological perspectives, is an underrepresented area within current academic papers. The significance of addressing this gap lies in the potential to unveil the nuanced ways in which language constructs meaning within war literature, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of the ideological underpinnings in narratives of conflict. A specific focus on the novel *The Yellow Birds* by Kevin Powers adds a contemporary dimension, considering the ongoing relevance and impact of narratives emerging from recent conflicts. The study's emphasis on CDA and metaphors as analytical tools brings a novel approach to the analysis, offering insights that extend beyond traditional examinations of war literature.

The literature gap highlighted in this study underscores the need for a more focused exploration of linguistic and discursive elements within contemporary war literature, offering a nuanced

understanding of how language constructs ideological perspectives in narratives of war and its aftermath.

Objectives of the Study:

Here are some potential objectives that could be articulated for the study:

1. To exploring how language is used to convey ideological perspectives on war, trauma, and the human experience within the novel.
2. By employing Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), the study adopts a firm theoretical framework for analyzing the linguistic choices, metaphors, and narrative structures within the novel.
3. To highlight the significance of linguistic devices such as metaphors in shaping the ideological framework of the narrative. This emphasis on language as a vehicle for conveying meaning aligns well with the goals of CDA.
4. The study also acknowledges the impact of the novel's first-person narration on the reader's understanding, emphasizing the subjective perspective and emotional engagement it fosters. This consideration adds depth to the analysis by recognizing the role of narrative voice in shaping ideological interpretation.
5. The findings of the study will contribute to a deeper understanding of the ideological underpinnings of war literature. By examining how language constructs meaning in narratives of conflict and its aftermath, the study aims to shed light on broader societal implications and power dynamics.

Research Questions

Based on the objectives of the present study, the research questions are:

- 1- How does the linguistic construction of war experiences in *The Yellow Birds* contribute to the ideological discourse surrounding the Iraq War?
- 2- What metaphors are used in the novel to convey broader societal implications of war, and how do these metaphors shape the ideological framework of the narrative?
- 3- How does the first-person narration in *The Yellow Birds* influence readers' understanding of war trauma and emotional engagement with the text?
- 4- In what ways does the first-person narrative perspective in *The Yellow Birds* influence the representation of ideological dimensions within the discourse on war experiences?

These research questions aim to guide an in-depth exploration of the linguistic and discursive elements within *The Yellow Birds*, emphasizing the ideological dimensions and the role of language in shaping representations of war experiences.

Methodology

The methodology employed in this paper involves a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework applied to the novel *The Yellow Birds* by Kevin Powers which is a contemporary war novel, offering a rich narrative of war experiences during the Iraq War. CDA is chosen as a methodological approach due to its suitability for exploring the intricate relationship between

language, ideology, and the representation of war experiences within literary texts (Fowler, and Kress (1979); Fairclough (1995); van Dijk, (1995, 1998, 2000, 2003, 2008, 2009). The analysis focuses on linguistic choices, metaphors, and discourse structures to unveil the ideological dimensions embedded in the novel.

The text is segmented into meaningful units, considering chapters, paragraphs, and specific passages that prominently feature war-related themes, experiences, and reflections. An initial reading of the text is conducted to identify linguistic features, including metaphors, and other elements relevant to the analysis of ideological dimensions. Segments of the text are coded and annotated based on recurring metaphorical expressions, and instances of discourse that convey ideological perspectives related to war, power, and trauma.

Metaphors are systematically analyzed to understand their symbolic significance and how they contribute to the ideological discourse on war within the novel.

The analysis includes an exploration of power dynamics reflected in the language, examining how individuals and institutions are linguistically positioned in relation to war and its consequences.

The study evaluates the impact of first-person narration on the reader's engagement with ideological dimensions, considering subjectivity, emotional resonance, and potential implications for the reliability of the narrative voice.

The selected texts have been curated with precision to allow for a focused and in-depth analysis of the linguistic and thematic elements that contribute to the ideological discourse within *The Yellow Birds*. These excerpts serve as representative samples, offering a microcosm of the novel's narrative richness and inviting a comprehensive exploration of its complexities.

Findings are interpreted within the broader context of war literature, considering historical and societal influences, as well as the author's intentions in portraying ideological dimensions.

Data Analysis

To analyze *The Yellow Birds* novel using CDA, the researcher would examine the overarching organizational framework and narrative structure of the text through a critical lens. This involves looking beyond the surface-level plot to identify the macrostructure of deeper ideological dimensions, power dynamics, and societal implications embedded within the text.

In the course of this analysis, specific texts or excerpts have been carefully selected from *The Yellow Birds* to illuminate the ideological dimensions embedded within the novel. These selections have been chosen based on their significance in conveying key themes, linguistic features, and metaphors that contribute to the broader discourse on war experiences and the human condition.

The Political Dimensions of Powers' Novel

Kevin Powers' novel encompasses several political dimensions, reflecting the broader context of the conflicts in which the characters are embroiled. The novel implicitly critiques the decision-making processes that lead to war and the policies guiding military engagements. Through the

experiences of the characters, it portrays the disconnect between political leaders who make decisions about war and the soldiers who bear the brunt of its consequences. Powers criticizes decision-making processes in the political realm is depicted through the character of Bartle, the protagonist, and his experiences in combat. Throughout the novel, Bartle grapples with the senselessness of the war in which he is embroiled, questioning the decisions made by political leaders that led to the conflict.

Powers explores the repercussions of war on civilians, particularly in regions like the Iraqi civilian. The loss of innocent lives and the destruction caused by conflict highlight the human cost of political decisions made in distant capitals. The novel delves into the culture and institutions of the military, shedding light on issues such as the chain of command, military discipline, and the treatment of soldiers. It examines how political objectives filter down to the soldiers on the ground and shape their experiences. Powers navigates the moral and ethical dilemmas faced by soldiers in combat situations. These dilemmas often stem from conflicting political objectives, such as the tension between following orders and adhering to one's conscience.

An instance that highlights this critique occurs when Bartle reflects on the lack of clear objectives and the arbitrary nature of the missions assigned to his unit. Despite the absence of a discernible purpose, Bartle and his fellow soldiers are sent into dangerous situations, resulting in devastating consequences. For instance, Bartle recounts a mission where his unit is tasked with securing a remote village. However, the mission quickly spirals out of control, leading to civilian casualties and further escalating tensions in the region. Bartle's inner turmoil and disillusionment reflect a broader critique of the decision-making processes that prioritize political objectives over the well-being of soldiers and civilians. Through Bartle's perspective, Powers underscores the disconnect between the political rhetoric surrounding the war and the harsh realities faced by those on the front lines. This critique challenges the notion of war as a means to achieve political ends and highlights the human cost of such decisions.

Al Tafar [Tal La'far], a small village in Nineveh, is mentioned multiple times in the novel. It holds significant importance within the narrative. Tal La'far serves as a focal point for the experiences of the characters, particularly Bartle and Murph, during their deployment in Iraq. It represents the harsh realities of war, including the brutality of combat, the loss of innocence, and the psychological toll on soldiers. The village is where Bartle and Murph are stationed and where they experience intense combat and witness the devastation wrought by the conflict. Tal La'far becomes a symbol of the challenges and moral ambiguities faced by soldiers in the midst of war. Additionally, Tal La'far plays a crucial role in Bartle's post-war struggles with guilt and trauma. His experiences in the village haunt him long after he returns home, underscoring the lasting impact of war on the human psyche. Tal La'far is central to the narrative of *The Yellow Birds*, representing the harsh realities of war and the profound effects it has on those who experience it firsthand.

The novel also addresses the challenges of post-war reintegration faced by veterans, highlighting issues such as mental health, homelessness, and the inadequacy of support systems. This dimension touches on broader political debates about the responsibilities of governments toward returning soldiers.

The Macrostructure of the Novel

The Yellow Birds is a novel that explores the psychological impact of war on soldiers, focusing on their experiences during the Iraq War. The story is narrated by Private John Bartle, a young soldier who forms a close bond with his fellow soldier, Private Daniel Murphy.

The novel unfolds in a non-linear fashion, weaving between Bartle's time in Iraq and his struggles to come to terms with the traumatic events he witnessed. Central to the narrative is the mystery surrounding the fate of Murphy, whose death becomes a haunting and pivotal moment in Bartle's life.

As Bartle grapples with the moral and emotional complexities of war, the novel delves into themes of guilt, friendship, loss, and the dehumanizing effects of combat. The narrative provides a raw and introspective look at the toll that war takes on the human psyche, exploring the challenges soldiers face in reconciling their experiences on the battlefield with the realities of homecoming. The novel also explores themes of *loss* and *absence*, both on the battlefield and at home. Powers portrays the devastating impact of death and injury on soldiers and their families, as well as the sense of alienation and disconnection experienced by those who return from war.

Through evocative prose and poignant storytelling, Kevin Powers captures the devastating impact of war on individuals, offering a powerful and thought-provoking examination of the human cost of conflict. *The Yellow Birds* has been praised for its authenticity and emotional resonance, providing readers with a glimpse into the harrowing realities faced by soldiers in the midst of war and its aftermath.

The first page of the novel begins with the following extract:

Extract 1:

“The war tried to kill us in the spring. As grass greened the plains of Nineveh and the weather warmed, we patrolled the low-slung hills beyond the cities and towns. We moved over them and through the tall grass on faith, kneading paths into the windswept growth like pioneers. While we slept, the war rubbed its thousand ribs against the ground in prayer. When we pressed onward though exhaustion, its eyes were white and open in the dark. While we ate, the war fasted, fed by its own deprivation. It made love and gave birth and spread through fire” (Powers: 2012).

This extract sets the stage for the narrative, establishing the setting, tone, and thematic elements of the novel. It introduces the reader to the context of war and the experiences of the characters. The mention of **Nineveh**, an ancient city historically associated with warfare and destruction, carries symbolic weight. It foreshadows the impending conflict and suggests themes of historical resonance and cyclical patterns of violence. The structural element observed here is the introduction or exposition, which provides essential background information to orient the reader within the narrative.

The extract is narrated in the first-person perspective, suggesting a subjective and intimate portrayal of the protagonist's experiences. The voice is reflective and evocative, drawing the reader into the emotional and psychological landscape of war. While this extract does not explicitly demonstrate a non-linear temporal structure, it does provide glimpses of the passage of time and the cyclical nature of war. The metaphor of *spring* and the changing seasons suggest a temporal progression, while the repetition of actions (*patrolling, sleeping, eating*) reflects the routine and monotony of military life.

The thematic cohesion represents the survival, resilience, and the pervasive presence of war are evident in this extract. The metaphor of the war as a relentless force, personified with characteristics of *hunger, prayer, and procreation*, underscores the thematic exploration of the psychological and physical toll of conflict. While specific characters are not introduced in this extract, the collective experiences of soldiers are depicted, highlighting their shared struggles and resilience in the face of adversity. The portrayal of the war as a ubiquitous presence suggests a collective antagonist that shapes the experiences and interactions of the characters.

Intertextuality used in the extract evokes biblical and mythological allusions, with references to *prayer, fasting, and birth*. These allusions contribute to the thematic depth of the text, inviting readers to consider broader cultural and historical contexts.

The extract invites readers to reflect on the nature of war and its impact on individuals and societies. The evocative imagery and vivid language encourage emotional engagement and provoke deeper introspection into the human experience of conflict.

The extract contributes to the macrostructure of the novel by setting the thematic tone, introducing key motifs and metaphors, and engaging readers in the exploration of war's profound and far-reaching effects.

Metaphors used in Extract 1

The use of metaphors in the provided extract serves several important purposes, they often carry symbolic significance, helping to reinforce central themes and motifs within the text. In this extract, metaphors such as *the war fasted, fed by its own deprivation* underscore themes of sacrifice, endurance, and the cyclical nature of conflict. Table 1 identifies metaphors from the provided extract:

Table 1: The Metaphors in Extract 1

Metaphor	Interpretation
"The war tried to kill us in the spring."	War is personified as a sentient force actively seeking to harm or destroy the soldiers.
"While we slept, the war rubbed its thousand ribs against the ground in prayer."	War is metaphorically described as a creature engaged in an act of prayer.
"When we pressed onward though exhaustion, its eyes were white and open in the dark."	The war's "eyes" are metaphorically described as watching and waiting, even in darkness.

"While we ate, the war fasted, fed by its own deprivation."	The war is metaphorically described as consuming or being nourished by its own deprivation.
"It made love and gave birth and spread through fire."	War is anthropomorphized as engaging in acts associated with human life and reproduction.

Metaphors have the power to evoke strong emotional responses from readers by tapping into universal experiences and emotions (Gibbs:1993). By portraying war as a relentless and omnipresent force that impacts every aspect of life, the metaphors in the extract elicit feelings of fear, awe, and resignation, they invite readers to interpret and reflect on the deeper meanings and implications of the text. The use of figurative language encourages readers to consider the allegorical and metaphorical dimensions of war, prompting them to engage critically with the themes and ideas presented in the novel.

The use of first-person narration allows readers to directly experience the protagonist's thoughts, feelings, and perceptions (Malone: 1997). By immersing readers in the subjective experiences of the narrator, the extract offers a deeply personal and intimate portrayal of war trauma. Readers are able to empathize with the protagonist's struggles, fears, and emotional turmoil, fostering a sense of connection and identification with the character's journey. Readers are granted access to the protagonist's innermost thoughts, memories, and reflections, providing insight into the complexities of trauma, guilt, and survivor's guilt. The narrative delves into the protagonist's internal struggles, revealing the profound psychological wounds inflicted by war and the challenges of coping with trauma and loss.

The first sentence in the extract *The war tried to kill us in the spring* suggests that the narrator is part of a group of individuals who experienced the events. This indicates that the narrator is speaking from a first-person plural perspective, likely as a member of a military unit.

The extract clearly indicates the presence of a first-person narrator through the use of pronouns such as "us" and "we," which suggest that the narrator is part of a group experiencing the events described in the extract. Table 2 provides examples from the extract that indicate the first-person narrator:

Table 2 First-Person Indications in Extract 1

Example	Indication of First-Person Narrator
"The war tried to kill us in the spring."	Use of "us"
"While we slept, the war rubbed its thousand ribs against the ground in prayer."	Use of "we"
"When we pressed onward though exhaustion, its eyes were white and open in the dark."	Use of "we"
"While we ate, the war fasted, fed by its own deprivation."	Use of "we"
"It made love and gave birth and spread through fire."	Consistent use of "we" in the surrounding context.

Critical Reflection and Interpretation:

The metaphors found in extract 1 invite critical reflection on the ideological dimensions of war as a cultural phenomenon intertwined with notions of faith, sacrifice, and transcendence. It prompts readers to consider the complex intersections between religion, nationalism, and militarism in shaping the discourse on war and its justification.

The first-person narrative perspective encourages critical reflection and interpretation of the ideological underpinnings of war experiences. Through the protagonist's introspection and internal dialogue, readers are invited to engage in deeper analysis of the moral, political, and philosophical implications of war. The narrative prompts readers to question conventional assumptions, challenge dominant narratives, and consider alternative perspectives on issues such as patriotism, duty, sacrifice, and the human cost of conflict.

The extract alludes to the ideological dimensions of power within the discourse on war experiences. War is depicted not only as a physical conflict but also as a cultural and ideological construct that shapes perceptions, values, and beliefs. The personification of war and the use of metaphorical language convey the ideological power of warfare to influence and shape human behavior, attitudes, and collective consciousness.

Extract 2

“It wasn't long after I left Al Tifar that I began to feel very strange. I first noticed it on the highway between the airbase and the town of Kaiserslautern. The trees outside the window of the taxi made a silver blur, but I could clearly see the green buds of spring as they untethered themselves from the remains of winter. It reminded me of the war, though I was only a week removed from it, and unbeknownst to me at the time, my memories would seem closer the farther I got from the circumstances that gave birth to them. I suppose, now, that they grew the same way other things grow. In the quiet of the taxi, the thin trees made me think of the war and how in the desert our year seemed like a seasonless thing, except in fall. There was a sharp disquiet in the way days passed into other days and the dust covered everything in Al Tifar, so that even the blooming hyacinth flowers became a kind of rumor.

I imagined it would be easier then, to arrive in a temperate place so obviously passing from winter into spring, but it was not. The wet, cold air of March in Germany shocked my skin, and when the LT said we wouldn't get a pass even though we couldn't leave until the next day, just wait it out, I decided I'd earned one anyway” (Powers: 2012).

The extract begins with the narrator reflecting on his departure from [Tal La`far] in Nineveh, a location likely associated with his experiences in war. The mention of feeling "*very strange*" suggests a disconnection or disorientation resulting from his recent experiences.

The narrator describes how memories of the war begin to intrude upon his consciousness, even as they physically distance themselves from the conflict. This highlights the enduring psychological impact of war trauma and the ways in which memories can assert his presence long after the immediate circumstances have passed. The juxtaposition of the war-torn desert environment of [Tal La`far] with the green landscape of *spring in Germany* underscores the contrast between the harsh realities of war and the semblance of normalcy and renewal in peacetime. This reflects broader themes of displacement, alienation, and the struggle to reintegrate into civilian life after experiencing war trauma.

The image of the trees "*making a silver blur*" outside the taxi window and the green buds of spring untethering themselves from the remains of winter serves as a metaphor for the narrator's own psychological journey of untethering from the trauma of war. The changing seasons mirror the narrator's shifting emotional landscape as they grapple with his memories and experiences. The mention of the dust covering everything in [Tal La`far], including the blooming hyacinth flowers, symbolizes the pervasive and suffocating nature of war. Even in moments of beauty and renewal, the specter of conflict looms large, overshadowing any semblance of normalcy or peace.

The extract is narrated in the first person, providing readers with insight into the narrator's internal thoughts, emotions, and reflections. This subjective perspective allows readers to empathize with the narrator's experiences and to understand the psychological toll of war trauma.

The narrator's decision to assert agency by deciding they "*earned*" a pass, despite being denied one by their superior, reflects their attempt to reclaim a sense of control and autonomy in the face of external constraints. This highlights the tension between individual agency and institutional power within the military hierarchy. The extract offers a influential exploration of war trauma, memory, and the struggle for reintegration into civilian life. Through rich metaphors, introspective narration, and subtle shifts in tone, the text invites readers to critically engage with the psychological and emotional complexities of war experiences and their aftermath.

Metaphors in Extract 2

The provided extract offers a reflection on the protagonist's transition from the battlefield to civilian life, as he grapples with the haunting specter of war and the indelible imprint it leaves on his consciousness. Through metaphors and evocative language, Powers encapsulates the complexity of human memory, the passage of time, and the fragility of existence in the aftermath of conflict.

The researcher of the present paper analyzes the key metaphors from extract 2 , exploring their symbolic significance, thematic resonance, and ideological implications within the broader discourse on war experiences. By critically engaging with these metaphors, the researcher aims to unravel the thematic threads woven throughout the text, shedding light on the profound impact of war on individuals' lives and the enduring reverberations of trauma. Through close examination

and interpretation, she seeks to uncover the ideological underpinnings of Powers' narrative, offering fresh insights into the complexities of war literature and its representation of human experience.

The description of the trees as "*a silver blur*" while also being able to "*clearly see the green buds of spring*" metaphorically represents the visual effect of the trees passing by quickly, creating a blurry image, yet still being able to discern the signs of spring. This juxtaposition of clarity and blur emphasizes the contrast between motion and stillness, highlighting the narrator's perception of time and change. Here's a table with the identified metaphors from the provided extract:

Table 3 The Identified Metaphors with their Interpretations in Extract 2

Metaphor	Interpretation
"The trees outside the window of the taxi made a silver blur, but I could clearly see the green buds of spring as they untethered themselves from the remains of winter."	Contrast between motion and clarity, emphasizing perception of time and change.
"My memories would seem closer the farther I got from the circumstances that gave birth to them."	Memories are personified as entities that can become closer or more distant over time.
"I suppose, now, that they grew the same way other things grow."	Memories are likened to living organisms undergoing a process of growth and change.
"There was a sharp disquiet in the way days passed into other days and the dust covered everything in Al Tafar, so that even the blooming hyacinth flowers became a kind of rumor."	Dust covering everything represents the pervasive nature of war, overshadowing moments of beauty.

The metaphors in the extract still reflect the narrator's struggle to come to terms with his wartime experiences and the memories they have left behind. The metaphor of memories seeming closer the farther he gets from the circumstances that gave birth to them highlights the complex and sometimes contradictory nature of memory and trauma. This resonates with the contextual ideology that war memories are deeply ingrained and can resurface unexpectedly, influencing individuals' perceptions and behavior in profound ways.

The first-person indications collectively establish the narrator as a central character in the narrative, providing readers with insight into their thoughts, emotions, and experiences. They create a sense of immediacy and intimacy, allowing readers to engage closely with the narrator's journey and perspective. First-person indications in extract 2 from *The Yellow Birds* are phrases or language cues that signal the presence of a first-person narrator, someone directly involved in or experiencing the events described. The followings are some first-person indications from the extract:

- "*It wasn't long after I left Al Tafari...*" The use of "I" directly indicates the presence of a first-person narrator, suggesting that the narrator is recounting his own experiences.
- "*...though I was only a week removed from it...*" Again, the use of "I" indicates that the narrator is reflecting on his personal experiences, specifically his proximity to the events described.
- "*...unknownst to me at the time...*" The use of "me" further emphasizes the first-person perspective, highlighting that the narrator is sharing his own thoughts and reflections.
- "*...though I was only a week removed from it...*" Repeated use of "I" reinforces the first-person perspective, underscoring that the narrator is recounting events from his own point of view.
- "*I decided I'd earned one anyway.*" The use of "I'd" signifies the narrator's decision and agency, further confirming his first-person perspective.

The interpretation of the use of first-person indicators within the context of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) involves examining how these linguistic choices contribute to the construction of meaning, power dynamics, and ideological positioning within the narrative. Here is the interpretation through the lens of CDA:

- 1) **Construction of Subjectivity:** The use of first-person indicators, such as "I," "me," and "my," constructs the narrator as a subjective and central voice within the narrative. This linguistic choice emphasizes the personal experiences, perspectives, and agency of the narrator, shaping the reader's understanding of the events described (Cherry:1988; Fairclough:1989; Malone: 1997; Trask ;1999).
- 2) **Authority and Authenticity:** By employing first-person narration, the text establishes the narrator as an authoritative and authentic source of information. The narrator's direct engagement with his own experiences lends credibility to his account, fostering a sense of trust and intimacy between the narrator and the reader (Hyland: 2001).
- 3) **Power Dynamics:** Using first-person indicators also reflects power dynamics within the narrative (van Dijk: 1989; Hyland: 2001; Brown & Gilman, 1960). As the narrator shares his personal experiences and reflections, he asserts control over the storytelling process, shaping the reader's interpretation of events and characters. This imbues the narrator with a certain level of power and influence over the narrative discourse.
- 4) **Ideological Perspective and Positioning:** Through first-person narration, the text positions the narrator as the primary interpreter of events, influencing the reader's ideological perspective. The narrator's subjective viewpoint shapes the reader's

understanding of themes, values, and beliefs embedded within the narrative, reinforcing or challenging existing ideological frameworks.

- 5) **Emotional Engagement:** First-person narration fosters emotional engagement and empathy with the narrator's experiences (Louwerse, et al: 2004). By immersing readers in the narrator's thoughts, feelings, and perceptions, the text elicits emotional responses and encourages readers to empathize with the narrator's journey, reinforcing ideological themes related to empathy, human connection, and resilience.

Table 4 shows the first-person indications along with a logical interpretation for their use:

Table 4 First-Person Indications in Extract 2

First-Person Indications	Logical Interpretation
"I left Al Tamar..."	The narrator directly recounts their departure from Al Tamar, indicating that they are sharing their own experiences and perspective on leaving the location.
"...though I was only a week removed from it..."	The narrator reflects on his proximity to the events described, suggesting a personal connection to the timeframe being discussed.
"...unbeknownst to me at the time..."	The narrator acknowledges his lack of awareness at a specific point in the past, indicating introspection and self-awareness regarding his past experiences.
"...though I was only a week removed from it..."	Reiteration of the narrator's proximity to the events, emphasizing his personal connection to the timeframe and the ongoing impact of recent experiences.
"I decided I'd earned one anyway."	The narrator asserts their decision and agency, indicating a personal judgment or determination in response to a situation, reinforcing their role as the central character in the narrative.

The use of first-person indicators in the table within the framework of CDA highlights the complex interplay between language, power, and ideology in shaping narrative discourse. It underscores the importance of linguistic choices in constructing meaning and influencing reader interpretation, while also shedding light on broader social, cultural, and political dynamics embedded within the narrative.

The use of metaphorical language, such as comparing memories to growing organisms, serves to convey the complexity and evolution of traumatic experiences over time. This linguistic choice allows for a nuanced exploration of the psychological impact of war trauma, highlighting its enduring nature and the challenges of coping with its aftermath.

The first-person narrative voice provides a direct window into the narrator's inner thoughts, emotions, and reflections. This linguistic choice creates a sense of intimacy and authenticity, allowing readers to empathize with the narrator's personal journey and subjective experiences of war and trauma. It also underscores the ideological perspective that individual narratives are central to understanding the broader discourse on conflict and its consequences.

Discussion of the Findings

Kevin Powers represents the Iraq War in *The Yellow Birds* as a deeply human and profoundly tragic experience, exploring its physical, emotional, and moral dimensions with honesty, empathy, and insight. Through its nuanced portrayal of war and its aftermath, the novel invites readers to confront the complexities of conflict and the enduring legacy of its impact on individuals and society. *The Yellow Birds* clearly portray the psychological toll of war trauma on individuals, highlighting the enduring impact of conflict on the human mind. The novel immerses readers in the visceral realities of warfare, depicting the physical and emotional hardships endured by soldiers in combat. It delves into the aftermath of war, revealing the lingering effects of trauma on the protagonist as they grapple with memories of past experiences. The analysis of power dynamics within the extracts reveals the asymmetrical nature of warfare and the struggle for agency amid chaos and uncertainty. In the whole novel, war is portrayed as a formidable and relentless force that exerts control over individuals, shaping their experiences and perceptions. The focus shifts to internal power struggles as the protagonist wrestles with the psychological scars of war and the challenges of rebuilding life in its aftermath.

The text of the novel employs a variety of literary devices, including metaphor, imagery, and first-person narration, to convey thematic and emotional depth. Metaphors evoke the visceral realities of conflict, and symbolize the psychological landscape of trauma and memory. The use of first-person narration enhances the emotional resonance of the narrative, inviting readers to empathize with the characters' experiences. Despite the stark portrayal of war's brutality, the novel also conveys themes of resilience and redemption. The soldiers demonstrate remarkable courage and determination in the face of adversity, highlighting the indomitable spirit of the human condition. The protagonist's journey of self-discovery and healing offers glimpses of hope amidst the shadows of despair, underscoring the transformative power of resilience and the human capacity for redemption.

Through the lens of war, the novel offers broader sociopolitical commentary on the human cost of conflict and the complexities of the human experience. By exploring themes of trauma, power dynamics, and resilience, Kevin Powers invites readers to reflect on the universal truths of human suffering and the ethical implications of warfare in contemporary society. Through its masterful storytelling and evocative language, the novel challenges readers to confront the profound realities of war and the enduring resilience of the human spirit in the face of adversity.

Discursive Elements in *The Yellow Birds*

The novel engages with a wide range of discursive elements, offering a nuanced exploration of war, trauma, memory, power dynamics, existentialism, and language. These discursive elements

enrich the novel's narrative, inviting readers to contemplate its themes and grapple with its profound insights into the human condition.

The novel engages deeply with the discourse surrounding war, exploring its various facets such as the experience of war, the psychological toll on soldiers, the moral dilemmas faced on the battlefield, and the broader societal implications of conflict. Kevin Powers delves into the discourse surrounding trauma, particularly the psychological effects of war on soldiers. He explores themes of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), which is a condition characterized by persistent feelings of stress and fear among individuals even after the immediate danger has passed. It has a profound impact not only on the individual experiencing it but also on those in their social circle (Pham et al: 2004).

Moreover, Kevin presents the theme of survivor guilt and the struggle to reintegrate into civilian life after experiencing the horrors of war. The novel is structured around the narrative of a soldier reflecting on his experiences in Iraq, highlighting the discourse surrounding memory and storytelling. Powers explores how individuals construct narratives to make sense of their experiences and cope with trauma, as well as the ways in which memory can be fragmented or distorted.

Power dynamics play a significant role in the novel, both within the military hierarchy and in the relationships between soldiers. Kevin explores themes of authority, obedience, and rebellion, as well as the ways in which power can be wielded and abused in the context of war.

The novel delves into existential themes, such as the search for meaning in the face of suffering and death. Kevin grapples with questions of mortality, identity, and the nature of human existence, offering philosophical reflections on the human condition amidst the backdrop of war.

Kevin carefully crafts the language and dialogue in the novel to convey the experiences and perspectives of his characters. "*The war tried to kill us in the spring*" (Powers, 2012), this opening line of the novel sets the tone for the narrative and establishes the overarching theme of the war's profound impact on the characters. However, it also highlights the inadequacy of language in capturing the full extent of the trauma experienced by soldiers. Moreover, the line "*There are things you do for a cause, and then there are things you do for yourself*" reflects language limitations in representing the complexity of human motivations and actions, suggesting that language alone cannot fully elucidate the moral ambiguity inherent in war and its aftermath.

He explores the ways in which language can be used to communicate or obscure truth, as well as its limitations in capturing the full complexity of human experience. He represents the communication of truth when he says: "*I wanted to be inside where the truth was, where I belonged, but I couldn't get in*" (ibid). This excerpt illustrates the protagonist's desire for truth and belonging, highlighting the importance of honesty and authenticity in communication. Another example is found in the line that emphasizes the meticulous nature of language and the importance of context and tone in conveying meaning and truth: "*Words are just words, what matters is the tone that they're said in*" (ibid).

For the obscuring truth, private John Bartle says: "*I didn't have anything to say to him. I didn't have anything to say to anyone*" (ibid). This passage reflects the protagonist's struggle to articulate his experiences and emotions, highlighting the limitations of language in expressing the full extent of trauma and suffering. Another example for the obscuring truth is: "*Sometimes the most powerful things you can say are nothing at all*" (ibid). This line suggests that silence can sometimes convey more truth than words, indicating the difficulty of verbalizing deeply personal or traumatic experiences.

Through the above examples and others throughout the novel, Kevin Powers demonstrates a keen awareness of the power and limitations of language in conveying truth, while also exploring the intricate nuances of human experience and communication.

Conclusion

The critical discourse analysis of *The Yellow Birds* illuminates the profound ways in which language and narrative construct meaning and shape the understanding of war, trauma, and the human experience. Through a meticulous examination of linguistic choices, metaphors, narrative structures, and thematic elements, the study has gained insights into the complex discursive layers embedded within the novel.

Kevin Powers carefully crafts the language and dialogue in the novel to convey the multifaceted experiences and perspectives of his characters. He explores the ways in which language can both communicate and obscure truth, revealing its power to shape perceptions and influence narrative interpretation. Through evocative imagery, vivid descriptions, and introspective reflections, Powers invites readers to empathize with the emotional journey of his characters and confront the harsh realities of war and its aftermath.

Moreover, the CDA reveals how *The Yellow Birds* transcends mere storytelling to engage in a broader socio-political discourse on the human cost of conflict. By critically examining power dynamics, moral ambiguities, and existential themes, Powers challenges conventional narratives of heroism and patriotism associated with war, offering a nuanced portrayal of its devastating consequences on individuals and society. However, the analysis of the novel underscores the transformative power of literature to interrogate dominant discourses, amplify marginalized voices, and provoke critical reflection on the complexities of human experience. Through its rich tapestry of language, narrative, and symbolism, the novel compels readers to confront uncomfortable truths, grapple with moral dilemmas, and ultimately, strive for a deeper understanding of the human condition in times of adversity.

In *The Yellow Birds*, Kevin Powers masterfully navigates the harrowing terrain of war and its aftermath, weaving a tapestry of human experiences that delve deep into the complexities of trauma, memory, and resilience. The study examined shed light on the thematic and narrative underpinnings of the novel, offering poignant insights into the psychological and emotional landscapes inhabited by its characters. Metaphors emerged as potent tools employed by Powers to convey the existential threat and dehumanizing nature of war. The metaphorical portrayal of the war as an entity actively attempting to "*kill us in the spring*" personifies the conflict, setting the stage for a profound exploration of its destructive force and enduring consequences.

Kevin plunges readers into the heart of conflict, capturing the visceral realities of warfare and the profound impact it has on individuals' lives. Through vivid imagery and evocative language, Powers portrays war as a relentless force that shapes perceptions, tests resilience, and leaves indelible scars on the human psyche. The exploration of power dynamics within the novel highlights the asymmetrical nature of warfare and the struggle for agency amid chaos and uncertainty. He transports readers into the aftermath of war, where the scars of battle continue to haunt the narrator long after the guns have fallen silent. Through introspective reflection and nuanced storytelling, Powers delves into the internal struggles of the protagonist as they grapple with the lingering effects of trauma and the dissonance between past and present. The use of first-person narration amplifies the emotional resonance of the narrative, inviting readers to empathize with the narrator's journey of self-discovery and healing. Through the lens of war, Kevin Powers confronts readers with the stark realities of human existence, challenging them to reckon with the complexities of shared humanity and the enduring reverberations of conflict. *The Yellow Birds* stands as a testament to the power of literature to illuminate the darkest corners of the human soul and offer glimpses of hope amidst the shadows of despair.

Implications for Future Research

This study not only fills a current void in the literature but also has broader implications for future research in the field. The identification and analysis of linguistic and discursive strategies can serve as a foundation for scholars interested in exploring similar themes within a diverse range of war literature. By acknowledging and addressing this gap, the study opens avenues for further investigations into the role of language in shaping ideological perspectives, not only in war narratives but also in other literary genres dealing with trauma, conflict, and societal issues.

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