

Research Article

War as Catalyst for Social Mobility in Yasmina Khadra's *In the Name of God*Jane Agunabor Omesiete¹ and Alexander Kure²¹Department of English & Drama, Faculty of Arts, Kaduna State University, Kaduna, Nigeria. Email: janeomesiete03@gmail.com²Department of English & Drama, Faculty of Arts, Kaduna State University, Kaduna, Nigeria. Email: alexkure@kasu.edu.ng

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ABSTRACT

This study employs the theoretical framework of New Historicism to explore how Yasmina Khadra's *In the Name of God* portrays war as a paradoxical catalyst for social mobility within the fractured socio-political landscape of 1990s Algeria. For the purpose of this paper, New Historicism has been selected as the literary theory to be used as baseline for the critical exploration and is grounded in the historical conditions that precipitated the Algerian Civil War—including the unresolved legacies of colonialism, post-independence authoritarianism, economic disenfranchisement, and the aborted democratic transition—the analysis interrogates how systemic violence reshapes class dynamics and opens unintended avenues for upward mobility. The study adopts a contextual and interpretative approach, situating the novel within its historical milieu while it examines how Khadra's narrative foregrounds characters who, amid chaos and disintegration, leverage ideological extremism, political opportunism, or militant affiliation to renegotiate their positions within Algeria's rigid social hierarchies. The findings suggest that while war devastates the moral and material fabric of society, it simultaneously creates fluidity in class relations—collapsing old elites, empowering new ones, and intensifying struggles over identity, ideology, and survival. *In the Name of God* reveals how violence becomes a mechanism for not only social rupture but also socio-economic reconfiguration. Ultimately, Khadra's work contributes to an emergent corpus of Algerian "emergency literature," using fiction to expose how war, beyond its immediate destructiveness, can recalibrate systems of privilege, access, and mobility in postcolonial contexts.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

To examine how war functions as a catalyst for social mobility in Yasmina Khadra's *In the Name of God*, it is essential to first situate the novel within the historical and socio-political context of post-independence Algeria. The Algerian Civil War of the 1990s did not arise in a vacuum; rather, it emerged from decades of entrenched authoritarianism, uneven development, and socio-economic stratification. After independence in 1962, Algeria came under the one-party rule of the National Liberation Front (FLN), a movement that quickly transitioned from revolutionary vanguard to political monopoly. As Ruedy (2005) observes, the FLN "soon became indistinguishable from the state, consolidating power at the expense of popular participation" (p. 156). This monopolisation coincided with oil-funded state capitalism, which briefly obscured growing disparities but eventually deepened class divisions. When oil prices plummeted in the 1980s, the country's rentier economy collapsed, triggering inflation, unemployment, and widespread public discontent. Entelis (1999) refers to this period as marked by "economic collapse and ideological exhaustion" (p. 142),

particularly among urban youth. The 1988 riots, led largely by disenfranchised young men from the impoverished peripheries, challenged the social contract that had traded political silence for economic welfare (Roberts, 2003, p. 97).

Khadra's novel emerges from this moment of rupture, using fiction to explore how civil conflict reshapes individual trajectories and social structures. Rather than portraying the war solely as a force of destruction, *In the Name of God* presents it as a paradoxical arena in which new opportunities for social mobility arise—albeit through violent and morally ambivalent means.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Despite the growing body of scholarship on Algerian literature and the civil war, there remains a significant gap in understanding how armed conflict functions as a mechanism of social reconfiguration in Yasmina Khadra's *In the Name of God*. Existing studies have largely examined the novel through thematic lenses of terrorism, religious extremism, or postcolonial trauma, without systematically analysing the relationship between war and social mobility.

The specific problem this study addresses is the need to understand how the collapse of state authority and the rise of armed factions create unintended avenues for upward mobility among marginalized individuals who would otherwise remain trapped in Algeria's rigid social hierarchies.

Furthermore, while the New Historicist framework has been applied to various literary texts, its application to the specific intersection of war and social mobility in contemporary Algerian fiction remains underexplored. The novel's portrayal of characters such as Kada Hilal and Zane—individuals who leverage violence and ideological affiliation to transform their social positions—demands a critical examination that connects textual analysis with the historical conditions of 1990s Algeria. This study therefore investigates the following central problem: How does war, as depicted in Khadra's novel, function as a catalyst for social mobility, and what does this reveal about the relationship between systemic violence and class reconfiguration in postcolonial contexts?

1.3 Research Objectives

The primary objective of this study is to examine how war functions as a catalyst for social mobility in Yasmina Khadra's *In the Name of God*. The specific objectives are:

1. To analyse the historical and socio-political conditions of 1990s Algeria that precipitated the Civil War and shaped the novel's narrative.
2. To examine how the novel portrays the collapse of the old social order and the emergence of new elites through armed conflict.
3. To investigate the experiences of marginalized characters who acquire power and social standing through ideological extremism, political opportunism, or militant affiliation.
4. To apply the New Historicist framework to interpret the relationship between war, class dynamics, and social mobility in the novel.
5. To contribute to the broader understanding of how literary texts represent the paradoxical outcomes of armed conflict in postcolonial societies.

1.4 Research Questions

This study is guided by the following research questions:

1. How does Yasmina Khadra's *In the Name of God* portray war as a catalyst for social mobility within the context of the Algerian Civil War?
2. In what ways does the novel depict the transformation of social hierarchies and the collapse of the old social order?
3. How do marginalized characters leverage war and ideological extremism to renegotiate their social positions?

4. What is the relevance of New Historicism in interpreting the relationship between war, class dynamics, and social mobility in the novel?
5. What does the novel reveal about the paradoxical nature of social mobility in conflict-ridden postcolonial societies?

1.5 Research Gap and Significance of the Study

While previous scholarship has examined *In the Name of God* through various critical lenses, including postcolonial theory and trauma studies, there remains a notable gap in the application of New Historicism to analyse the specific relationship between war and social mobility in the novel. Existing studies have not systematically investigated how the novel's narrative structure, character development, and thematic concerns intersect with the historical conditions of the Algerian Civil War to illuminate the dynamics of class reconfiguration through violence.

This study is significant for several reasons. First, it contributes to the growing body of scholarship on Algerian literature and the civil war, offering a focused analysis of how fiction represents the socio-economic consequences of armed conflict. Second, it demonstrates the analytical utility of New Historicism in examining contemporary postcolonial novels, particularly in contexts where historical conditions are inseparable from literary production. Third, the study contributes to the broader discourse on war and social mobility, providing insights that extend beyond the specific context of Algeria to other conflict-ridden societies where violence disrupts and reconstitutes social hierarchies.

1.6 Scope and Delimitations

This study is limited to an analysis of Yasmina Khadra's *In the Name of God*, translated by Linda Black, and does not extend to the author's other works or to a comparative analysis with other Algerian novels. The study focuses specifically on the themes of war, social mobility, and class dynamics, while acknowledging that the novel also addresses other significant themes such as religious extremism, gender relations, and postcolonial identity. The analysis is grounded in the New Historicist framework and draws on historical scholarship on the Algerian Civil War to contextualise the literary interpretation.

2. Review of Related Literature

2.1 Previous Studies on Yasmina Khadra's Works

Yasmina Khadra, the pen name of Mohammed Moulessehoul, has emerged as one of the most significant contemporary Algerian writers, with his works receiving increasing scholarly attention. Existing research on Khadra's novels has primarily focused on themes of terrorism, fundamentalism, and the aftermath of the Algerian Civil War. Scholars have examined how Khadra's fiction engages with questions of national identity, religious extremism, and the psychological impact of violence on individuals and communities.

2.2 Literature on the Algerian Civil War

The Algerian Civil War (1991–2002) has been extensively studied by historians and political scientists. Ruedy (2005) provides a comprehensive historical account of Algeria's post-independence trajectory, tracing the roots of the conflict to the FLN's monopolisation of power, economic mismanagement, and the aborted democratic transition of 1991. Roberts (2003) offers a detailed analysis of the political dynamics that led to the cancellation of elections and the subsequent escalation of violence. Entelis (1999) examines the economic dimensions of the crisis, particularly the collapse of the rentier state and its impact on youth unemployment and social disenfranchisement.

2.3 New Historicism as a Critical Framework

New Historicism, developed primarily by Stephen Greenblatt in the 1980s, has become a widely applied framework in literary and cultural studies. Brannigan (1998) provides a comprehensive introduction to the theory, explaining its central concepts of the textuality of history and the historicity of the text. Barry (2009) situates New Historicism within the broader landscape of literary theory, emphasising its rejection of monolithic cultural interpretations and its commitment to examining the circulation of power through texts. Aule and Kure (2019) demonstrate the applicability of New Historicism to African literature, arguing that the framework enables a nuanced understanding of how literary works engage with historical conditions.

2.4 Social Mobility in Sociological Discourse

The concept of social mobility has been extensively theorised in sociology. Saunders (2010) examines social mobility as both an empirical phenomenon and a moral-political issue, cautioning that mobility is entangled in institutional and historical forces that privilege certain groups. Bourdieu (1986) reconceptualises mobility through the lens of cultural, social, and symbolic capital, demonstrating how these forms of capital perpetuate class hierarchies under the guise of meritocracy. Reay (2004) elaborates on Bourdieu's concept of habitus, showing how working-class individuals face symbolic violence when attempting to navigate elite institutions.

2.5 Research Gap

Despite the substantial body of scholarship on Khadra's works, the Algerian Civil War, New Historicism, and social mobility, no study has systematically applied the New Historicist framework to analyse how *In the Name of God* portrays war as a catalyst for social mobility. Existing studies have either examined the novel thematically without grounding it in historical conditions, or have applied New Historicism to other literary texts without addressing the specific intersection of war and class reconfiguration. This study addresses this gap by bringing together these strands of scholarship to provide a comprehensive analysis of the novel's engagement with the socio-economic consequences of armed conflict.

3. Theoretical Framework: New Historicism

For the purpose of this paper, New Historicism has been selected as the literary theory to be used as baseline for the critical exploration. Traditionally, literary studies treated only

texts within a specific canon as worthy of serious critical attention. This approach was radically challenged by Stephen Greenblatt, who became a central figure in the development of New Historicism—or cultural poetics—in U.S. English Departments during the 1980s and 1990s. Inspired by Michel Foucault's historical and theoretical understanding of power (Foucault, 1975), New Historicists view the literary text as a vessel tossed in a social sea of competing interests, antagonistic values, and contradictions. This implies that literary works are products of diverse values, traditions, and circumstances (Brannigan, 1998, p. 3). New Historicism employs key concepts such as the textuality of history and the historicity of the text, concepts that aim to uncover the relationship between texts and their sociohistorical contexts.

This approach assumes that texts not only document the social forces that shape history and society, but also reflect the processes that form individual identity and sociohistorical situations. Its main objective is to understand literary works within their historical backgrounds. New Historicism positions texts within the totality of socio-cultural institutions and practices that define the historical and cultural milieu of a particular moment in time. Literature, therefore, functions both as a product and a producer of social and cultural conventions and codes.

New Historicism, as a critical practice, privileges the juxtaposition of literary and non-literary texts. It contends that history and fiction share similar prejudices, significations, and cultural relevance. It rejects the notion of monolithic cultural or historical representations, advocating instead for a multiplicity of cultural viewpoints (Greenblatt, 2005, p. 13). According to Barry (2009), New Historicism practices "a mode of study in which literary and non-literary texts are given equal weight and constantly inform or interrogate each other" (p. 91). As a result, this approach resists any effort to offer a unified cultural interpretation and emphasizes cultural multiplicity and contestation (Barry, 2009, p. 92). Aule and Kure (2019) posit that "history moves from being an objective depiction of an era's discourse to becoming co-participant in a complex interaction of subjective elements" (p. 6).

Power is a central concern in New Historicist analysis. Heavily influenced by Michel Foucault, New Historicists explore how power operates within texts and cultural practices. Power is seen not only as a repressive force but also as something that circulates, enabling resistance and contestation. New Historicist critics examine how dominant ideologies shape literary production and how texts reflect, reinforce, or resist societal structures of control (Foucault, 1977). They are particularly interested in marginalized voices and the mechanisms by which certain groups or perspectives are suppressed or silenced. While New Historicism affirms the importance of individual agency and subversion, it often concludes that such resistance is ultimately constrained by larger systems of power.

4. Research Methodology

4.1 Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative, contextual research design to examine how war functions as a catalyst for social mobility in

5. War and Ideological Conflict in *In the Name of God*

5.1 The Historical Context of the Algerian Civil War

The Algerian Civil War was fuelled not only by political rivalry but also by conflicting ideologies that fragmented the nation's post-colonial identity. Central to this fragmentation was the state's rigid Arabization project, a cultural strategy intended to erase colonial legacies and forge a unified national identity. However, this approach alienated non-Arab ethnic groups such as the Berbers and marginalized Algerians educated in French or influenced by secular ideals. As Fanon (1963) poignantly noted, "Each generation must, out of relative obscurity, discover its mission, fulfil it, or betray it" (p. 145). The Algerian state, in betraying the pluralism promised after independence, sowed the seeds of ideological warfare.

5.2 The Politicisation of Religion

A major catalyst of instability was the state's attempt to reframe Islam into a state-sanctioned, modernist version of the faith. While Islam was indisputably central to Algerian identity, the FLN's strategy to define a "progressive" Islam alienated many citizens. The state's version was seen by many as an inauthentic and politicized interpretation, crafted more for consolidating power than for spiritual guidance. Khadra explores this ideological fracture through characters such as Imam Salal, who upholds a moderate and personal interpretation of Islam and becomes a target for the fundamentalist factions—branded subversive (Khadra, 2000, p. 137). His predicament illustrates how the monopolization of faith by both state and insurgent actors leaves no room for religious pluralism or spiritual nuance. This politicization of religion rendered Islam not as a source of communal cohesion, but as an ideological weapon wielded to validate violence and marginalize dissent. Rather than addressing root causes of Islamist appeal—such as unemployment, corruption, and the lack of political freedom—the state responded with repression. The government's increasingly repressive tactics against Islamists, including arrests and violence, further escalated tensions and radicalized some groups. This cycle of suppression and retaliation only deepened the crisis.

5.3 The Rise of Armed Fundamentalism

The text highlights that the refusal to tolerate political and religious pluralism destabilized not only national politics but also individual lives. In seeking to preserve its dominance, the state delegitimized itself, paving the way for the moral collapse of both public institutions and social trust. The ideological war did not play out solely in parliament or on the battlefield; it ravaged communities and lives leading to social inequalities which contributed to the alienation of various segments of the population.

At this point Ghachimat becomes the theatre for an ideological battle where disillusionment with secularism gives rise to armed fundamentalism. At the epicenter of this uprising is Sheikh Abbas, a revered young cleric whose sermons shift from quietist Islam to incendiary politics. His Friday meeting at Xavier's farm transforms the farm into a command post of revolution, drawing faithfuls like Tej Osmane (Khadra, 2000, p.

Yasmina Khadra's *In the Name of God*. A qualitative approach is appropriate because the aim is to interpret rather than quantify how the novel reflects the interplay between war and social transformation. Denzin and Lincoln (2018) note that qualitative research privileges meaning-making and explores how human experiences are represented in particular contexts. The contextual dimension is crucial because Khadra's novel is inseparable from Algeria's post-independence history, particularly the Civil War of the 1990s. Literature, as Abrams and Harpham (2014) argue, simultaneously reflects and critiques social conditions; therefore, contextual research allows the novel to be analyzed both as art and as social commentary.

4.2 Selection of the Text

Yasmina Khadra's *In the Name of God* was purposively selected for this study because of its direct engagement with the Algerian Civil War and its detailed portrayal of how armed conflict transforms social relations. The novel offers a rich textual field for examining the intersection of war, ideology, and class dynamics, particularly through the experiences of characters who occupy marginalized positions before the conflict and acquire new forms of power and status during the war. The English translation by Linda Black (2000) was used for all textual references.

4.3 Analytical Procedure

The analysis proceeded through several stages. First, the novel was read closely to identify passages that depict the relationship between war and social mobility, including descriptions of character transformations, shifts in power relations, and changes in social hierarchies. Second, these passages were contextualised within the historical conditions of the Algerian Civil War, drawing on historical scholarship to illuminate the novel's engagement with its socio-political milieu. Third, the New Historicist framework was applied to interpret how the text both reflects and interrogates the historical processes it represents. Fourth, the findings were synthesised to address the research questions and objectives.

4.4 Application of New Historicism

New Historicism was applied to the analysis in three interrelated ways. First, the novel was treated as a cultural artefact that participates in the circulation of power and ideology, rather than as an autonomous aesthetic object. Second, the analysis examined how the text engages with non-literary discourses, including historical accounts, political commentary, and sociological theory, to construct its representation of war and social mobility. Third, the analysis attended to the ways in which the novel both reproduces and subverts dominant ideologies, particularly those relating to class, religion, and violence.

4.5 Ethical Considerations

As this study involves the analysis of a published literary text and does not involve human participants, ethical approval was not required. All quotations from the novel are properly cited, and the interpretation presented is the author's own analysis.

42). Thus, Abbas becomes the symbolic father of the ideological revolt against the secular state, using theological rhetoric to legitimize violence and vengeance; and his fervency draws young men, who begin to grow their beards to identify with The Brothers; and publicly denounce the government's approach to the ongoing protests in the country: "Traitors have amused themselves luring us with false promises...for thirty years, they've been taking us for a ride. Result: the country is a disaster...worse, having lost our identity, now we're losing our soul" (Khadra, 2000, p. 119). In addition, his compatriot, Sheikh Redouane's message is seductive in its moral certainty and amid widespread political repression, unemployment, and a deteriorating national psyche, his call to rebellion finds fertile ground.

5.4 The Radicalisation of Kada Hilal

Khadra renders Kada Hilal as a villain but does not exonerate that he is a product of erosion—of the state's failure to inspire, protect, and include. The system expels him, and the Brothers welcome him. When he picks up a rifle, it is not to terrorize but to belong. He begins to monitor neighbours, harass unveiled women, and report blasphemers. Over time, these actions become ritualized—proof of loyalty, acts of initiation. Kada's descent into violence is less about hatred than about fulfillment. As Martinez (2000) writes, the Algerian Civil War turned young men into "performers of sacred violence," where ritual acts of terror replaced political dialogue (p. 110). Kada becomes such a performer, his rage choreographed and his victimhood weaponized.

6. Power Dynamics: The Old Social Order and the New Elite

Power and social class shape the destinies of individuals, and in times of turmoil, these structures become even more pronounced. Khadra's *In the Name of God* explores the fragility of power and the deep resentments that social hierarchies create. Before the arrival of the fundamentalists, Ghachimat operates under an unspoken yet firm social hierarchy. The wealthy landowners, represented by figures such as the mayor, Maurice, and Kouider Recham, alongside the Elders and religious leaders like Imam Salal, maintain control over much of the village's social and religious climate. The religious leaders exert spiritual authority, while the educated elite, such as Aziz's father, are respected for their knowledge and wisdom. Meanwhile, the lower class—primarily farmers, labourers, and unemployed youth—exist on the margins, their voices rarely heard in matters of governance.

Allal, a metaphor for sanity amid the chaos, is the son of a respected village elder. Although he is aware of the prevailing social divisions, their impact does not fully crystallize for him until he is confronted by the frustrations of his friend Kada. In stark contrast to Allal's stable upbringing, Kada has endured a life marked by powerlessness and dysfunction; and as a descendant of a once-powerful caid, Kada harbours deep resentment toward the ruling class, whose greed he blames for squandering his inheritance. Stripped of his status and reduced to the rank of a "commoner," Kada is unable to forgive the daily humiliations that ensue. From an early age, he dreams of

reclaiming his dignity in a village that appears to be in perpetual decline. Therefore, disillusioned and exhausted by the struggle, he reluctantly becomes a primary school teacher, but this choice is motivated more by resentment than aspiration. His ever-intensifying hatred eventually propels him toward the clandestine Islamist movement:

Reduced to the rank of a 'commoner', Kada could not forgive the daily humiliation. From his earliest infancy he had dreamed of regaining his dignity and privileges in a village that was in continual decline. Tired of the struggle, he had become a primary schoolteacher out of resentment, and his ever-swelling hatred drove him to join the still clandestine Islamist movement (Khadra, 2000, p. 5).

In *In the Name of God*, the mayor emerges as a dark embodiment of institutional power. He rules not with benevolence or inspiration but through disdain and humiliation, casting a long shadow over the community. His authority suffocates hope in the narrow alleys and sun-beaten streets of Ghachimat. Within a society caught between the fervour of religious revival and the crushing weight of state control, the mayor's leadership is defined by wantonness and his governance does not serve the public good; rather, it operates through calculated acts of domination (Khadra, 2000, p. 12). The mayor's eventual displacement from power following the rise of the FIS (Islamic Salvation Front) is a moment of poetic justice in the novel. His dethronement signifies the collapse of the old order and the emergence of a new elite, one that claims to represent the interests of the people but ultimately brings even more violence and oppression.

7. Class Resentment and Social Mobility

7.1 The Reversal of Fortunes

In the Name of God presents the Algerian Civil War as a matter of class resentment and social reversal, itself a legacy of Algeria's colonial and postcolonial past. During the war of independence, fates were reversed and hierarchies subverted. Economic stagnation and criminality remain at the heart of the novel's conceptualisation of the conflict. The stagnation and corruption have killed the hopes of the youth, resentment smolders under the surface of their quotidian misery and predetermined mediocrity. When opportunity presents itself, the underclass is ready to adopt any slogan to justify a pogrom of the wealthier classes, a confiscation of their wealth, and a relentless vengeance. The only feasible solution to the wanton criminality, as the narrator insists, is to rally behind the state, which, acting as a *deus ex machina*, saves Algeria from a bloody fate.

7.2 The Case of Issa

The character of Issa displays one of the starkest forms of class reversal foregrounded in the novel. Once a Harki who collaborated with the French SAS, Issa is remembered not for brutal crimes but for "attending to his belly at a time when others were dying of hunger" (Khadra, 2000, p. 38). At the end of the war, guerillas nearly crucified him, and though spared by

Sidi Saïm the Venerated, his life thereafter is marked by humiliation and pariah status. He is described as someone who "rarely eats his fill" and who "hugs the walls like a shadow puppet" (Khadra, 2000, p. 44). His punishment is a perfect reversal of his "crime." Once guilty of indulgence, he is condemned to a life of deprivation and perpetual shame.

7.3 The Dispossession of the Hilal Family

The Hilal family represents a different kind of social reversal—one tied to dispossession of property and prestige. Their estate, once a site of pomp, opulence, and aristocratic dignity, collapses after independence and the Agrarian Revolution. The narrator recalls the grandeur of Kada's great-grandfather's estate, with orchards, courtyards, pure-bred horses, and banquets for notables. Yet nothing remains but "a few scrawny trees" and a decaying house; the rest is handed over to the "commoners" who reduce the gardens to onion plots and mosquito-infested ditches (Khadra, 2000, p. 56). The imagery of decay evokes the sense of degradation suffered by the old elite when their properties were confiscated, signaling a broader pattern of social displacement.

Kada embodies the second generation of dispossessed aristocrats. His family, once masters, now find themselves treated as commoners, a reality driven home when the mayor's family—formerly of lower class standing—rejects Kada's marriage proposal to Sarah. The insult is profound because Kada's mother recalls treating that family like servants. The narrator observes: "The great-grandson of a tyrannical caid, Kada was brought up in the austerity and disdain of the new ruling classes whose greed had swallowed up the greater part of his inheritance" (Khadra, 2000, p. 67). Kada, who had dreamed since childhood of reclaiming his family's dignity, realizes that his aspirations for social mobility are crushed. His humiliation drives him into the insurgency, where his violence becomes an expression of revenge against the society that stripped him of prestige.

7.4 The Transformation of Zane

Within this novel, the author also deftly presents another case of a state of social ambivalence through the character of Zane, the village dwarf. Often ridiculed and demeaned by his fellow villagers because of his physical stature, Zane embodies the intersection of deprivation, humiliation, and rage. His marginality is not simply physical but social and psychological. As a character, Zane represents the "outcast turned executor," whose engagement with violence is motivated not by ideology but by personal revenge. The villagers' scorn leaves him embittered and helpless until the eruption of conflict provides him with an avenue to reclaim power. As Khadra describes, "Perched on a wall, Zane looks like a bird of prey. His stretched pupils glow with a terrifying light. He knows his revenge is near, and time is already on his side" (Khadra, 2000, p. 58).

Zane's decision to ally himself with the group the Brothers is not rooted in religious conviction but in a calculated pursuit of retribution and power. Throughout his life, he has been humiliated for his small size, dismissed as inconsequential, and excluded from the masculine ideals revered in the village.

In joining the Brothers, Zane is not aligning with their fundamentalist ideology; rather, he is co-opting their terror apparatus to orchestrate his personal vendettas. Unlike those who "kill in the name of God," Zane kills for self-gratification. His spy work for the Brothers is transactional, aimed at securing wealth, dominance, and the satisfaction of seeing fear in the eyes of those who once derided him.

This transformation into a figure of fear and authority marks a classic case of class and power inversion. As Fanon (1963) notes, "The oppressed will always believe the worst about themselves, until they can no longer bear the weight of self-hatred and decide to turn that hatred outward." Zane is no longer merely a mocked dwarf; he becomes the harbinger of vengeance. One of his most brutal actions is the execution of Belkecam, the village baker who once scorned him. Under the protection of the Brothers, Zane publicly executes Belkecam in the mosque and seizes his bakery and home, asserting his newfound dominance: "Zane-the-dwarf paraded up and down in front of the truck. For some time, he had been flaunting the badge of his success with impunity. Can I take possession of my house now?" (Khadra, 2000, p. 163). Zane's actions go beyond revenge—they represent an active rewriting of the social order. The bakery, once a symbol of community and nourishment, is reconfigured as a monument to Zane's cruelty and self-assertion. His thirst for retribution extends to Lyres, a craftsman who once ridiculed him. In the dialogue that follows, the power dynamics are reversed. Zane, previously silenced, now controls the narrative:

"Hey!" the dwarf protested vigorously. "Watch what you say. Are you trying to label me or what? I have nothing to do with those murderers."

"That would be terrible, Zane, terrible. There's no difference between the person who points out the victim and the one who commits the murder. Watch out, little man... Watch out."

The dwarf spun round, horrified, and smashed his bottle against a rock: "What are you talking about? Do you think I'm stupid?"

"So, tell me where you got all this money that you're spending like water."

"You're imagining things, Lyres."

"And what about the plots of land you bought from the carpenter?" (Khadra, 2000, p. 173).

The exchange ends fatally for Lyres because unknown to him, he has come under the radar of the Brothers who approve his execution, and Zane again emerges triumphant and Lyres' body is never recovered. At a broader level, Zane's trajectory highlights the paradox of mobility produced by systemic violence. While the war devastates Algeria's moral and material fabric, it simultaneously collapses entrenched hierarchies and empowers new elites. Khadra demonstrates how violence, despite its destructiveness, serves as a mechanism of economic and symbolic reconfiguration. Zane's ascension epitomizes the ways in which marginalized figures exploit chaos to reassert

agency, albeit through destructive and coercive means. In this sense, the war's legacy is doubly inscribed: it unleashes unprecedented suffering, yet it also recalibrates access to power and privilege, foregrounding the unsettling truth that social mobility in times of crisis is often predicated upon violence and dispossession.

8. Discussion of Findings

8.1 Synthesis of Major Findings

The analysis of *In the Name of God* reveals several significant findings regarding the relationship between war and social mobility. First, the novel demonstrates that war functions as a paradoxical catalyst for social mobility by simultaneously destroying existing social structures and creating new opportunities for advancement. The collapse of state authority and traditional hierarchies opens spaces that marginalized individuals can exploit, albeit through violent and morally ambivalent means.

Second, the novel shows that ideological extremism serves as a vehicle for social mobility. Characters such as Kada Hilal and Zane, who occupy marginalized positions before the conflict, leverage their affiliation with armed fundamentalist groups to acquire power, status, and material resources that were previously inaccessible to them. Their trajectories illustrate how ideological movements can provide alternative pathways to social advancement when legitimate channels are blocked.

Third, the novel reveals that social mobility in times of war is often predicated upon violence and dispossession. The rise of new elites occurs at the expense of the old order, with the confiscation of property, the elimination of rivals, and the performance of authority through coercive means. This finding underscores the unsettling truth that social mobility in conflict-ridden societies frequently involves the reproduction of violence and the inversion of oppressive hierarchies rather than their transformation.

Fourth, the novel demonstrates that war creates a fluidity in class relations that exposes the contingent nature of social hierarchies. Characters who were once powerless become powerful; those who were once respected become targets. The novel's portrayal of these reversals reveals how war can disrupt the seemingly stable structures of class and status, exposing the fragility of social order.

8.2 Comparison with Previous Studies

The findings of this study are consistent with previous scholarship on the Algerian Civil War, which has documented the socio-economic dimensions of the conflict and the ways in which economic disenfranchisement contributed to radicalization (Ruedy, 2005; Roberts, 2003; Entelis, 1999). The study also aligns with New Historicist approaches to literature, which emphasise the reciprocal relationship between literary texts and historical conditions (Brannigan, 1998; Barry, 2009).

However, this study extends previous research by specifically examining how Khadra's novel portrays the relationship

between war and social mobility through the experiences of individual characters. While earlier studies have examined the novel's engagement with terrorism and religious extremism, this study demonstrates that the novel also offers a nuanced analysis of class dynamics and social transformation.

8.3 Implications of Findings

The findings have significant implications for understanding the relationship between war and social mobility in postcolonial contexts. They suggest that armed conflict, while devastating in its immediate effects, can create unintended openings for individuals who are otherwise excluded from structures of power and privilege. However, the findings also caution that such mobility is frequently achieved through violent and morally compromised means, raising questions about the sustainability and legitimacy of new social orders that emerge from conflict.

For literary scholars, the study demonstrates the value of applying New Historicism to contemporary postcolonial novels. By situating Khadra's novel within the historical conditions of the Algerian Civil War, the analysis reveals how the text both reflects and interrogates the socio-political processes of its time.

9. Conclusion

Yasmina Khadra's *In the Name of God* offers a profound interrogation of how civil conflict functions as a vehicle for social mobility, particularly in societies where class hierarchies, institutional failures, and authoritarian legacies obstruct legitimate pathways to advancement. Set against the backdrop of the Algerian Civil War, the novel dramatizes the transformation of marginal individuals into dominant figures through their appropriation of violence, ideology, and public discontent. The narrative underscores the paradox that war, while destructive, can simultaneously serve as a mechanism for social reordering, enabling the rise of new elites in the vacuum left by state collapse.

Khadra's narrative demonstrates that in moments of national crisis, it is often not virtue or competence that propels individuals to prominence, but proximity to ideological machinery and readiness to employ coercion. The rise of fundamentalist factions in the novel reflects this dynamic. These groups, while initially posing as agents of moral renewal, strategically exploit collective grievances to entrench their own authority. Their appeal lies not solely in religious conviction, but in their capacity to articulate the frustrations of the disenfranchised and transform existential despair into militarized action. Through sermons, decrees, and symbolic rituals, they reconstruct the social hierarchy—replacing the institutional elite with figures who gain power through fear and ideological conformity.

The novel is particularly attentive to how previously marginalized individuals—those excluded due to physical difference, class position, or lack of cultural capital—utilize the chaos of war to ascend socially. In the absence of legal structures and ethical constraints, personal vendettas masquerade as revolutionary justice. The usurpation of property, public punishment of former oppressors, and the

performance of authority all become markers of social elevation. Yet this ascent is not grounded in communal wellbeing; it is propelled by opportunism, revenge, and a deep internalization of the very hierarchies it seeks to overturn. The result is not liberation, but a reproduction of violence under a new ideological guise.

This study has addressed its research objectives by demonstrating that *In the Name of God* portrays war as a catalyst for social mobility through the transformation of social hierarchies, the empowerment of marginalized figures, and the emergence of new elites. The New Historicist framework has enabled an analysis that situates the novel within the historical conditions of 1990s Algeria, revealing how the text both reflects and critiques the socio-economic consequences of armed conflict. The study contributes to scholarship on Algerian literature, war literature, and postcolonial studies by offering a detailed analysis of how one novel represents the paradoxical relationship between violence and social mobility.

9.1 Limitations of the Study

This study has several limitations. First, it is limited to the analysis of a single novel, which restricts the generalisability of its findings. Future research could examine other works by Khadra or other Algerian writers to determine whether similar patterns of representation exist across a broader corpus. Second, the study relies on English translation rather than the original French text, which may obscure certain linguistic and cultural nuances. Third, the New Historicist framework, while valuable for contextualising the novel, inevitably foregrounds certain aspects of the text while marginalising others. Future studies might employ alternative theoretical frameworks to illuminate different dimensions of the novel's engagement with war and social mobility.

9.2 Suggestions for Future Research

Future research could extend this study in several directions. Comparative studies could examine how other Algerian novels portray the relationship between war and social mobility, identifying common patterns and divergences. Research could also investigate how gender intersects with class dynamics in representations of social mobility during the civil war, examining how women characters navigate the transformed social landscape. Additionally, studies could explore the reception of Khadra's novel among Algerian readers, examining how the text's representation of the civil war resonates with collective memory and national identity.

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