

# Neo-Orientalism or Neo-Imperialism? Islamism in a Globalized World: Prayers for the Assassin as a Case Study of Contemporary American Novel

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## Abstract

This paper deals with some aspects of neo-orientalism in the modern American novel highlighted in much conventional political and literary studies and conceptualized both as a composite of cultural studies and a western ideology. When applied to the post 9/11 American novel analysis, neo-orientalism uses terrorism as a significant aspect of a much broader reaction to Islamists' threats living in the United States and Europe. It is common in neo-orientalist discourse about extremism to refer to Islamism as a threat to nations and therefore, it is important to find how the American novel represents the Muslims and how vigorously acts with the state in its fight against terror. This paper focuses on contemporary issues on Arabs represented in Robert Ferrigno's *Prayers for the Assassin* (2006), such as extremism, women's rights, hostility, and identity, common themes in post 9/11 novel on the Muslims. Moreover, this study attempts to answer two questions: Has there been a change in the representation of Muslims in the American novel after nineteen years from 9/11, and has American media coverage affected the representation of the Muslims in the novel? In the analysis of *Prayers for the Assassin*, Muslim characters are victims and victimized at the same time; they live out the contradiction of being victims of post 9/11 anti-Muslim representations and being arrogant and aggressive towards the non-Muslims.

**Keywords:** American novel, Islamists, woman, Islamic Republic of America

## Introduction and Theoretical Framework

*I consider them [the terrorists] people who want to show-off and nothing more. And, in the case of those who pray to Allah, [they want] a place in the Paradise of which the Koran speaks: the paradise in which heroes fuck the Uri.*

*Oriana Fallac (2004)*

There is history for everything. There is history, Ralph Emerson (1981) argues, for every word and image, too. To this effect, Emerson says, "as we go back in history, language becomes more picturesque," and the representations "approach each other in passages of the greatest eloquence and power" (p. 21). Further, a hierarchy of authority determines the dominance of images and representations that can better be called '*epistemological relativism*'.<sup>1</sup> This relativism is the solid ground for forming narrative forms in which images play definitive roles through all the forms of images; visual or verbal as the founding father of literary theory, Aristotle (1960), states in *Poetics*: "From childhood men have an instinct for representation...[M]an differs from the other animals that he is far more imitative and learns his first lessons by representing things. And then there is the enjoyment people always get from representation" (pp. 36-37). The question of 'image and representation' has long been vigorously under debates and scrutiny in critical theories and saved the study of identity from decline. This phenomenon of representing identity resulted in several approaches to identity, secured new trends in the study of identity, gave rise to many theories, and simplified their concepts. This area of study has become broader in the twenty-first century to include all the fragmentations of society: religion, gender, class, race, personal choice, sexuality, ethnicity, attitudes, and social practices. Further, this criterion gains its momentum by negotiating cultural differences and by the strong relationship it maintains with the status of identity:

‘As a keyword in contemporary politics it has taken on so many different connotations that sometimes it is obvious that people are not even talking about the same thing. One thing at least is clear-identity only becomes an issue when it is in crisis, when something assumed to be fixed, coherent and stable is displaced by the experience of doubt and uncertainty. From this angle, the eagerness to talk about identity is symptomatic of the postmodern predicament of contemporary politics’ (Mercer, 1994, p. 259).

Many studies refer to the early nineteenth century American writings on the Middle East as a point of departure for American scholarly writing on the orient (Said, 1977; Little, 2008 ; Altwaiji, 2014). This version of orientalism is defined by Meghana Nayak and Christopher Malone (2009) as "a style of thought about the distinctions between the "West" and the "East" that gave grounding to the foundational narrative of "America" (p. 253). It can be distinguished from European orientalism, the British and the French, in the following trends: (a) enforcing the concept of an autonomous nation that is free from the British influence, (b) building the national identity, and (c) focusing on orientals' religious features rather than body-physical appearance.

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<sup>1</sup> Epistemological relativism refers to a construct of knowledge on societies that is governed by variables such as culture, people, time, place, traditions and practices.

These three trends are the integrally common features that mark most of the American discourses enunciating attitudes, opinions, and perceptions of the Muslims in American writings.

American orientalism bridges the gap between the 'colonial' past and 'post-independence' uncertainty - between a colonized and an independent personality. The post-independence concept of building unshaken American identity assumed breaking free from all the bonds of the colonizer because the United States has long been "regarded as part of the old British Empire, and essential for the economic, military, and political control of the globe (Harvey, 2003, p. 20). The rise to power, however, changed the course of American orientalism to a more hegemonic and imperial form: "By the mid-1890s, a shift had taken place in American attitudes toward expansion that was sparked partly by a European scramble for empire" (Mintz & McNeil, 2005, p. 4). This transformative stage took place when "a growing number of policymakers, bankers, manufacturers, and trade unions grew fearful that the country might be closed out in the struggle for global markets and raw materials" (p. 5). As soon as the European grip over the Middle East loosened, America took the realm of knowledge production on the orient and its culture:

‘By mid twentieth century that is after the World Wars and during Cold War era Americans had started influencing the world politics in all its spheres so the Orientalist tradition is dominated by American scholarship in the 20th century...From the beginning of nineteenth century till the end of World War II America dominated the Orient and approached it as France and Britain once did but it is the British Orientalist tradition that left the most lasting imprints on the American field of Islamic Studies’ (Rafiq, 2014, p. 291).

However, modern American orientalism has largely been established by Bernard Lewis and Samuel Huntington's views, who mark the political relationship between America and the Islamic world and facilitated a teasing out of epistemological issues related to this academia. In *The Roots of Muslim Rage*, Bernard Lewis argues that Islam is incompatible with the Western culture and attributed the Muslims' rage to the failure to cope with the advancement and progress of the West: "a keen and growing awareness of the weakness, poverty, and backwardness of the Islamic world as compared with the advancing West" (1990, p. 57). Samuel Huntington interpreted the relationship between Islam and the West as a conflictual dichotomy and foresaw a transnational alliance between Islam and Confucianism against the West (1993, p. 30). Eight years later, America was attacked by a group of Arab terrorists allegedly identified as members of the Al-Qaeda network. In response to this unconventional threat, the United States declared Crusades on Islamic groups and some Muslim

countries<sup>2</sup>. This offensive terminology is emphasized by Franklin Graham, an evangelist preacher who conducts services at the White House and Pentagon, that Islam is a "very evil and wicked religion."<sup>3</sup> These statements have potentially helped develop literary writings and continued to give them momentum in their quest for new images. They, too, helped the reader juxtapose political and religious views and consider them as the force or the authority that governs literary work themes.

The literature on the neo-orientalism phenomenon has been a mishmash of old/classic orientalisms and suffered from a big confusion about the relationship between classic orientalism and neo-orientalism. One of the aims of this study is to remove this confusion. Twenty years ago, the term neo-orientalism was rarely distinguished from classic orientalism outside the United States; now, the term has become an encyclopedic research field in which scholars pore over from different angles. Books, articles, workshops, and discussions continue to multiply. The major part of this furor results from political writers and intellectuals' efforts to locate hegemonic inspirations. If Edward Said states in his seminal work *Orientalism* (1978) that the "Orient was almost a European invention" and "a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences," many scholars argue that neo-orientalism is a *mélange* of American cultural and imperial practices through which neo-colonial outlines are constituted; it is an imperial discourse in which politics and literature are closely integrated (Boehmer, 1998; Tuastad, 2003 & Samiei, 2010). As American imperial agendas in the Middle East unfold, readers need to understand these new hegemonic discourse patterns to overcome this cultural transformation. This study attempts to promote a critical reading of neo-orientalist narrative discourse marked by barbarianism. Wars, killings, assassinations, neo-colonialism, and exploitation are legitimate means

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<sup>2</sup> On September 12, 2001, Bush addressed the nation "But we need to be alert to the fact that these evil-doers still exist. We haven't seen this kind of barbarism in a long period of time. No one could have conceivably imagined suicide bombers burrowing into our society and then emerging all in the same day to fly their aircraft - fly U.S. aircraft into buildings full of innocent people - and show no remorse. This is a new kind of -- a new kind of evil. And we understand. And the American people are beginning to understand. This crusade, this war on terrorism is going to take a while. And the American people must be patient. I'm going to be patient. A transcript is available at: <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010916-2.html>

<sup>3</sup> Franklin Graham states at presidential inauguration of George W. Bush on November 16, 2001: "We're not attacking Islam but Islam has attacked us. The God of Islam is not the same God. He's not the son of God of the Christian or Judeo-Christian faith. It's a different God, and I believe it is a very evil and wicked religion...I believe the Qur'an teaches violence. It doesn't teach peace, it teaches violence."

because there are no internationalized means to care for equal partnership and peaceful solutions to the America-Middle East crises.

Much of the sound and fury in modern American novel is created by 'cultural dominance' and 'cultural resistance'; a schism and a cultural contention that determines the mainstream representations in post 9/11 American novel. In his trilogy, *Culture and Imperialism*, *Orientalism* and *Covering Islam*, Edward Said (1977) argues that the East is misshaped and misrepresented through unlimited extensions of "re-presentations" which are not based on actualities but fixed images: "The value, efficacy, strength, apparent veracity of a written statement about the orient therefore relies very little, and cannot instrumentally depend, on the orient" (p. 22). Emerson (1960) uses the corruption terminology such as "*corruption of man*" and "*corruption of the language*" to refer to the repetition of mages to make a distinction between reproduction and the original creation of the image. He argues that the corruption of the language follows the corruption of a writer. According to him, representation is a union of a writer's inner forces: the desire of idealization, desire of misrepresentation, desire of hegemony, and power in which duplicity and falsehood replace the truth and actuality:

‘...corruption of man is followed by the corruption of language...new imagery ceases to be created, and old words are perverted to stand for things which are not...But wise men pierce this rotten diction and fasten words again to visible things; so that picturesque language is at once a commanding certificate that he who employs it, is a man in alliance with truth and God’ (pp. 33-34).

### **Post 9/11 Context**

In contemporary criticism, scholars refer to Islamism - to be distinguished from Islam - as a totalitarian movement based on political Islam. It is an ideology of contemporary transnational movement that has assumed new totalitarianism (Tibi, 2007, p. 45). As a political doctrine, Islamism is followed by Jihadists, ideologues, and fundamentalist Imams, and therefore, it is important to stress that analysis will refer to Islamism as a threat to world order and Islam itself. The term has become more frequent in the writings of western Islamologists, political scientists, and neo-orientalists. Therefore, the use of Islamism or any Islamophobic expression to refer to Islam would be intellectual dishonesty. In post 9/11 representation of Muslims, American literature comprises numerous fiction and nonfiction books that deal with inquiries into Islamism, the history of Islam, and terrorism. This tendency to produce more informative literature than aesthetic and pleasant one has been and continues to be a major trend in the post 9/11 American novel. The predominance of these

themes was referred to by Andreas Huyssen, that the focus on this variety of themes "seemed as if the entire twentieth century was marked under the sign of 'history trauma'" (2003, p. 8). These themes in a plethora of novels are not solely due to the 9/11 attacks but a reflection of both history and politics; and even if 9/11 is a factor to play, which is, at least, to have special analysis, it rapidly recalls representations through the lenses of previous images.

Post 9/11 appropriation of the Islamic world has marked several aspects of Islamic culture and promoted neo-imperialism agendas in the narrative context to provide credence to America's hegemony on the Middle East. In several post 9/11 American novels like *Terrorist* (2006), *At Risk* (2006), *The Scorpion's Gate* (2006), *The Last jihad* (2006), *Falling Man* (2007), *The Jewel of Medina* (2008), *The Submission* (2011), American novelists have embraced the state's official frame of the 'War on Islamic Terrorism' (Nabers & Patman, 2008). In these novels, common themes include Islamic culture, the Prophet of Islam, the Islamic way of life, Muslim woman, and human rights in Islam are situated in the larger framework of the American neo-imperial agendas in the Middle East. The fact is that American writers broadly accepted the division between the post 9/11 rivalries of East-West cultures and developed the "imperial feeling" and the "structures of feeling" that Williams called "empire as a way of life" (Williams, 1980, p. 92). It has become a general attitude in representing Islamic culture, and such feelings reflect the "complex of psychological and political belonging to empire" (Maira, 2000, p. 319). Hence, Critics accept that this racial hereditary can boost imperial behaviors and racial disparities in the future and decrease the spawning of equally racial nations in favor of establishing a unipolar world.

Robert Ferrigno is an American author of crime and speculative fiction novels. His post 9/11 '*Assassin trilogy*' is set in the fictional United States after having nuked and dominated by two groups; a major Muslim group and a small Christian group. This trilogy is comprised of *Prayers for the Assassin* (2006), *Sins of the Assassin* (2008), and *Heart of the Assassin* (2009). Terrorism, crime, and death are common themes in the work of Ferrigno, who spent years living in a high-crime town in South Florida, an area populated by criminals, thieves, drug dealers, alcoholics, and starving artists. Ferrigno's strong taste for menace, dark humor, and conspiracy makes a bold, imaginative leap as reflected in his *Prayers for the Assassin* where Islamic fundamentalists fill the spiritual vacuum caused by the nuclear destruction of the United States in 2040. Ferrigno's actual world is represented in *Prayers for the Assassin* where "drugs sold on street corners. Guns everywhere... Births without marriage, rich and poor, so many bastards you wouldn't believe... A country without shame. Alcohol sold in supermarkets... There were politicians who voted to allow this" (Ferrigno, 2006, p. 366). In his community, readers come across alcoholics like

the Christians, the extremist Muslims like Kidd, the lovers like Sarah and Rakkim Epps and educated people who suffer like Soliman.

*Prayers for the Assassin* is a political thriller and a speculative fiction. It takes the reader to 2040 when the United States collapses and a new state named the Islamic Republic of America is founded in place. The novel opens during the second American Civil War that resulted in fractioning the country into two states and a territory: "Islamic Republic outlined in green, the Bible Belt in red. The red states included all of the old Confederacy...Southern California, Arizona, and New Mexico were green states politically part of the Islamic Republic" (p. 19). This division takes place after three simultaneous nuclear attacks destroy New York, Washington, D.C., and Mecca: "The photo from ground zero at Mecca was less dramatic, but equally devastating. The device detonated at the height of the hajj had been a suitcase nuke...Over a hundred thousand who had made the pilgrimage died" (p. 18). The fragile peace agreements between the Islamic Republic and the Bible Belt to end anarchy and disorder are at risk, and people's lives are at stake. The third fraction, Las Vegas, supports the latest peace agreement, "an independent and neutral territory" which plays "a broker between the two nations" and manages to restore the peace for the two major states (p. 29). Ferrigno represents the American fear of the Muslims who reject the American demand of becoming Muslims of America instead of acting as Muslims in America. In other words, Muslims are requested to re-elaborate their cultural heritage to become citizens of America, including Islam.

Prayers' incipit presents a synthesis of images of self-proclaimed Muslim pundits who explain their movement in an unsatisfactory manner; ideology derives their motivations and their interpretation of Islam. Their Islam is a politicized faith in which the division of the United States is an inevitable decision ordained by Allah: "the transformation of the former United States into two nations, a Muslim republic and a Christian Bible Belt, as preordained by Allah, a separation of the faithful and the faithless prior to Judgment Day" (p. 19). Though the main characters Rakkim and Sarah are well educated and westernized enough to be part of the western phenomenon, they rely on selective use of Islamist interpretations and prove to be dogmatic and narrow-minded of being intolerant towards others. The book that Rakkim always prefers to read *How the West Was Really Won: The Creation of the Islamic States of America through the Conquest of Popular Culture* is authored by Sarah: "The book had originally been Sarah's Ph.D. thesis, rewritten and published for a mass audience two years ago. It became the bestseller, but her premise was so controversial that the publisher had been wise not to use Sarah's photograph on the jacket." (p. 22). It is on the mechanisms that determine the future of the state and its official policy. In this book, Sarah explains the relationship between the state and submission to Allah: "Islam meant submission, but it was a submission to

Allah...The Islamic caliphate of a thousand years ago had conquered much of the known world, but it had also been a garden of science...Those days would come again" (pp. 284-85). The premise of Sarah's philosophy is that only Sharia, Islamic laws, can fairly govern the new state, and its principles can provide security for the citizens who are defined only based on submission to Allah, the God of the new Islamic Republic of America:

‘Historians had debated the transformation of the former United States into an Islamic republic...Most historians credited the will of Allah... In the midst of such chaos, the moral certainty of Islam was the perfect antidote to the empty bromides of the churches, and the corruption of the political class’ (p. 23).

Ferrigno recalls Lewis's thoughts of the Muslims' intolerance, rage, and failure. This ideology leads the Muslim scholars astray and makes them fail to build a stable Islamic state and comprehend the Islamist movement and its goals. Modern America is transformed into a landscape marked by religious incompetence of the Islamic Republic of America with a flag "identical to the banner of the old regime, except for the gold crescent replacing the stars" (p. 8). It is a symbolism of the end of the modern world order and the rise of Confucianism. China becomes the world's only superpower and maintains neutrality with the new-born Islamic Republic during the turmoil and after: "[T]here had never been a military attack on China by the Islamic Republic. China, the world's only superpower, had maintained strict neutrality during the turmoil" (p. 43). It, however, does not mean that the two powerful countries have a good relationship. General Kidd, the Jihadist leader and the Fedayeen commander who believes in what Sayyid Qutb called a 'world revolution of Jihad', the idea of remaking the world, informs his army commissioner: "if the Chinese ever signed a pact with the Russian Bloc, or attacked nearby Muslim countries for their oil, he had a list of prime targets ripe for destruction" and he will "cripple the Chinese economy overnight" (p. 83). Religiosity in the new Islamic Republic is emblematic of a larger problem facing scientific geniuses who are fired from their jobs for being "insufficiently Islamic" (p. 224). Modern technologies, swimming pools, music, and beer are banned. People can only dream of "loud music, cold beer, and beaches" (p. 233). According to the senior Imam of the republic:

‘The Holy Qur'an is quite clear that music is forbidden. One of the messengers of Allah said, ‘There will be a nation who will make music their lot, and one day, while enjoying their music and alcohol, they will awake with their faces transformed into swine.’ In fact, this messenger said he was sent to destroy all music instruments...Instead of music, rather listen to the Holy Qur'an’ (pp. 122-23).



Fedayeen Islamists embody the ugliness of radicalism and represent the short-sighted Imams who never understand eminent moderate Muslims' criticism. Marian, a liberal Muslim woman and woman's rights activist, tells Sarah, "as a sociologist, I'm troubled by what I see...We used to lead the world in science and technology" (p. 74). According to her, the Islamic Republic incarnates the fall of modernity and technology: "Now, every year we have fewer graduates in engineering and mathematics. Our manufacturing plants are outdated, our farm productivity falling, and the patent applications are only forty percent of what they were in the old regime" (p. 74). Fedayeen literally refers to the Muslim groups who are willing to sacrifice themselves for God's sake and carry out military actions against the enemy; they are the authority of Sharia and enforcement of Islamic law: "The Fedayeen were the elite troops of the Islamic Republic, used mostly on a small unit, covert operations against the Bible Belt" (p. 7). Another group of Islamist characters is the Black Robes, who aspires to enforce strict Islamic laws of "the ayatollahs" and struggles for "public virtue" and "budgets for mosques and religious schools" (p. 6). These groups prove to be fanatical to the point of being hysterical in Islamizing the landmarks, Institutions, and warships. The nuclear-powered aircraft carrier *USS Ronald Reagan*, for example, is renamed the *USS Osama bin Laden*, Coca-Cola becomes Jihad Cola, and Seattle's Stadium is named *Khomeini Stadium* (p. 240).

Similarly, the highest scholarly prize becomes "the D.C. Qur'an" that "had been the great prize for the Islamic Republic" (p. 111). These new titles symbolize the victory of the Islamists. They are essential to Islamists to set in motion the process of self-definition and Islamization. *Prayers for the Assassin* share the concern of any post 9/11 American speculative novel where Islamism and Islamists can turn society's social and economic status upside down. The following excerpt, from the book's jacket copy, describes the society under Islamic Sharia laws:

‘SEATTLE, 2040. The Space Needle lies crumpled. Veiled women hurry through the busy streets. Alcohol is outlawed, replaced by Jihad Cola, and mosques dot the skyline. New York and Washington, D.C., are nuclear wastelands. Phoenix is abandoned, Chicago the site of a civil war battle. At the edges of the empire, Islamic and Christian forces fight for control of a very different United States’ (2006).

The newly-born State, which is propagated to be a beacon of light, has failed to survive. It is facing an internal religious crisis that threatens its unity and stability: "...there was a constant, low-level conflict of probes and feints, deadly combat" (p. 7). Religious institutions fail to function, and people show less interest in attending the mosques: "The mosques themselves seemed sad and neglected, their outer walls cracked and dusty, and the call to prayer just completed had been a recording and

not a good one at that, the muezzin's voice weak and distorted" (p. 157). Rakkim, who had been an important Islamic scholar and political leader, loses his commitment to religion. His faith in God weakens due to his contacts with the unbelievers and apostates in the Bible Belt. He gets addicted to alcohol and starts his own business in a night club in a small Christian area in Seattle where liberal Muslims and Christians do illegal business: "Rakkim drank deep... Rakkim admired the bottle. Who could imagine something this good would be illegal?" he asked innocently" (p. 36). Human rights, freedom of expression and other civil liberties are thwarted by Islamists: "the imam of Redbeard's own mosque issued a fatwa condemning the immorality of popular culture, calling modern music and fashion acts of social terrorism as dangerous as any threat from the Bible belt" (p. 48). The tensions between Islamist groups increase to affect the non-Muslims portion of the country:

'The Black Robes had authority only over fundamentalists, but lately they had begun hectoring Catholics on the street, hurling stones at moderns for public displays of affection. Fundamentalists who left the fold were considered apostates - they risked disfigurement or death in the rural areas, and even in the more cosmopolitan cities their families ostracized them... the Black Robes had so freely used their flails. Usually they were more concerned about appearances' (p. 60).

It is to be pointed out that Muslim women's image is closely interlaced with the mainstream agendas of neo-orientalism; it encloses the theme of oppression and sexuality. When Rakkim Epps, the protagonist, quarreled with Sarah, his girlfriend, he asked the Imam in the presence of Sarah: "According to Islam, are women lacking in intellect compared to men?", the Imam's answer explains the position of woman in the Islam: "Blessings upon you, my son. The teachings assure us that women have less intelligence than men; therefore, it is the husband and not the wife who heads the family... final authority lies with the husband" (p. 124). Sarah symbolizes her oppressed nation; although her relationship with the elite in the republic is good, she represents the suspicion, unfaithfulness, and the least reliable part of the society. She is a symbol of the female character of her own country at this particular historical moment; an era of transition and an abode beyond the civilized world: "I have been accused of being a woman, and a modern woman at that, doubly unworthy to speak" (p. 20).

Often highlighted is the notion that virgin women are offered to Islamist Jihadis in heaven while representing the Muslims in modern American novel. Virgin in heaven, from the Islamist perspective, is secured for Mujahideens/Jihadis who fight in God's cause and attain martyrdom while fighting the non-Muslims: "Muslims expected the

full measure of ecstasy in Paradise, virgin lovers and perfect mates, the joys of the flesh in rapturous and infinite varieties, a suitable reward for devotion in this life" (p. 209). Muslims should not be spoiled by material life and luxury of modern time; and instead they have to think of the eternal enjoyment: "Those who have fear of God will have gardens wherein streams flow and wherein they will live forever with their purified spouses and with the consent of God" (p. 119). Islamists' teachings and practices are intermingled with the mainstream Islamic faith: their fanaticism is a part of the Islamic upbringing and becomes a part of national identity: "Dying for the faith meant he got all kinds of virgin brides in Paradise" (p. 3). Identity is one of the difficult conundrums for the Islamist state; it goes beyond the Islamists' concerns by claiming that the movement will found an Islamic form of global politics that once enlightened the world: "The Islamic caliphate of a thousand years ago had conquered much of the known world, but it had also been a garden of science and learning, a flowering of all the arts. Those days would come again" (p. 285). At stake is not just a religious cruelty but a political challenge resulting from the unity of the state and religion that introduces itself as a controller of vices and a defender of personal freedoms:

‘... it was grim. Drugs and desperate people beating each other's heads in for reasons they couldn't even explain...Muslims were the only people with a clear plan and a helping hand, and everyone equal in the eyes of Allah...The United States becomes a moderate Islamic Republic. Within the new Islamic States of America there are various degrees of freedom and religious oppression, depending on the religion’ (p. 138).

It has been a short time since 'Muslim terrorists' became a dominant theme in American novels forgetting, entirely if not deliberately, about relating the Islamic point of view on terrorism and aggression. Anthony Rainone who reviewed the novel notes that "[t]he Muslim world has taken the centre stage in the U.S... Yes, one result has been a greater understanding of Islam and the Muslim culture" (2008). Ferrigno's narration, however, is a slight transformation in the course of this dominant style; it clashes with contemporary media that focuses on Islamic terrorism and leaves terrorism of other groups unrepresented. This is achieved by introducing a combination of anti-Semitism and Judeophobia; an idea expressed in the ideology of contemporary Islamist philosophy: "Israeli government struck targets in the United States, and the holy city of Mecca, attempting to blame the actions on radical Jihadis and discredit all of Islam" (Ferrigno, 2006, p. 104). Richard Goldberg, a Jew, and his group who bomb the US are "Zionist terrorists" who "were born and raised and trained in Israel, and they confessed on live TV... The whole world has seen it" (p. 105). The FBI spokesperson states: "the FBI captured one of the Zionist conspirators who was truly responsible, and he led them to the others involved in the plot. Their

confessions were broadcast internationally" (p. 18). The implication of the image of Zionist ideology reflects the conflict of interests between the United States and Israel; and their complications: "The United States immediately withdrew the defense umbrella that had helped protect Israel since its creation, and within a month the Zionist state was overrun by a Euro-Arabic coalition" (p. 19). The political symbolism is quite plain; the capitalist pole has become an impotent entity whose downfall is brought about by a strange union between two seemingly unconnected poles: the Islamists and the Zionists.

When discussing how the trope of the 'Muslim aggression' is represented, it is important to attend the various relationships that crumble the state in which "desperate people beating each other's heads in for reasons they couldn't even explain. Man against man, black against white, and God against all" (p. 138). Muslim groups in the new republic introduce Islam in a self-congratulatory manner as a religion of peace and co-existence, however, the fights between the different Muslim groups for power and enforcing different laws and code of ethics articulate a religion that aspires to create a social order based on strict Islamist codes: "enforcing Allah's laws...not playing politics" (p. 48). Islamists in *Prayers for the Assassin* position themselves within the wider framework conceptualized by post 9/11 media and inflict serious threats to others: "Muslims were the only people with a clear plan and a helping hand, and everyone equal in the eyes of Allah. That's what they said, anyway" (p. 138). The novel is a critique of the Islamist preoccupation with oneness of faith and dynamics of Jihadism. It is also possible to understand it as a cultural appeal against Islamic radicalism not only from security perspective but from a moral standpoint as a threat to the western values - as an assault on Judaism and Christianity alike.

## Conclusion

Ferrigno's main concerns are two principal issues posed by Islamists: first is the totalitarianism in its Islamic attire and second is its impact on the United States and the West in general due to the waves of migration. While on its surface *Prayers for the Assassin* appears to be a novel about the fall of the United States, narrative invokes a good number of images and reproduces classical ones on Islam and the mindset of radical Muslims using myriads of terminologies. Narratives in *Prayers*, with its deployment of issues on Muslims, represents the essential and the long-standing conflict between Islam and the West. Analysis of the narrative connotation has elucidated how dangerous, barbarous, and wicked are the radical Muslims; and when they are not so as is the case of Rakkim, liberal Muslims are represented as

loose, careless and lecherous characters. Ferrigno's use of media representation is effective in unveiling the complexity of the interlinked approach of American media and literature in scripting the image of the Islamists. Such an approach is welcome in cultural studies. It has become common for American media and novel to share common themes. This cultural studies approach "bears witness to the unequal and uneven forces of cultural representation involved in the contest for political and social authority within the modern world order" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 171). From a neo-orientalist standpoint and, above all, the Muslim woman is represented by interlinking religion and subjugation from a western symbolic perspective. Sarah symbolizes all those repressed and less feasible Muslim women, and Rakkim represents the Islamic values that are as repressive towards women's freedom as they are repressive towards political and religious freedoms. Ferrigno's has a personal message, too. It is a call for countering Islamising the country through Americanising Islamic thoughts.

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