

The Owl and the Hawk: An End to Terrorism

John Errett

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I believe with all my soul and intellect that Muslim fanatical terrorism poses the greatest threat to freedom the world has yet seen and unless defeated will ultimately conquer us.

—*The Owl and the Hawk* John Errett

The novel has often served as a platform to broadcast an agenda or ideology. But even if the author's only intention is to use the novel as a basis for propaganda he must adhere to some basic guidelines to capture readers. A well-written novel contains believable and interesting characters an appealing story with an interwoven carefully planned plot and a theme. Unless the novel is formulaic it is structured to be read on many levels.

John Errett's novel *The Owl and the Hawk* is little more than a vehicle for his ideas to end terrorism. Originally planned as a nonfiction piece his prose consisted of controversial but dry facts that hindered his message. So changing course he crafted a page-turner in the tradition of Tom Clancy and Clive Cussler.

Errett's hero is the billionaire businessman and philanthropist Alan Davis. Davis's personal and corporate world is torn apart when his best friend and right-hand man Dan Millar is killed in a terrorist attack. Millar is Errett's "everyman" character with whom the reader can strongly identify. Errett writes "The flight had been aloft for a half hour when the in-flight movie began...the actress in the scene reminded him of his darling Betty...his imagination painted a perfect picture of their future...growing old with the woman of his dreams." These sentimental images of love and marriage set the reader up for an emotional pounding. Errett illustrates without metaphor or simile and sparse use of adjectives how a random unavoidable moment of senseless violence can change lives. He writes "A Muslim woman...was nursing an infant...who could have anticipated the explosives wrapped in its blankets...she produced a cell phone. The phone triggered the explosives...wreckage of the aircraft...and body parts of its passengers were...strewn over a hundred miles of the Alps." The matter-of-factness of Errett's writing in this scene produces first disbelief then outrage. Errett uses this effect to drive his point home.

Alan Davis seeks revenge for Millar's death by financing a secret counter-terrorism hit squad and the novel enters the realm of James Bond. To make sure that his ideas are foremost Errett himself interrupts the story writing "Before writing the last sentence of this book the author has invoked his privilege of interjection." He then explains the logistics of his "POP Plan" (Privilege of Passage Plan) and literally ends his novel with one final sentence to wrap up his narrative.

The Owl and Hawk is successful as propaganda but not as a work of fiction. The reader will feel tricked into slogging through the author's personal views to get to a trite ending with no real resolution. This let down is a betrayal to the reader.

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