

ISSN: 2278-9529



**GALAXY**

International Multidisciplinary Research Journal

January 2018 Vol. 7. Issue I

[www.galaxyimrj.com](http://www.galaxyimrj.com)

Editor-In-Chief- Dr. Vishwanath Bite

About Us: <http://www.galaxyimrj.com/about-us/>

Archive: <http://www.galaxyimrj.com/archive/>

Contact Us: <http://www.galaxyimrj.com/contact-us/>

Editorial Board: <http://www.galaxyimrj.com/editorial-board/>

Submission: <http://www.galaxyimrj.com/submission/>

FAQ: <http://www.galaxyimrj.com/faq/>



**Title of the Book:** Submission

**Original Title:** Soumission

**Author:** Michel Houellebecq

**Publisher:** Groupe Flammarion

**Genre:** Fiction

**Year of Publication:** 2015

**ISBN** 978-0374271572

**Reviewed by:**

**Subha Roychowdhury**

Department of Journalism and Mass Communication

Kidderpore College .

The news about the publication of the new novel by Michel Houellebecq was revealed shortly after a group of Islamist terrorists perpetrated the attack in which twelve members of the weekly Charlie Hebdo died. It was announced that Houellebecq's work would stimulate the controversy over Islamic fundamentalism, which led, of course, to suggest that the French writer would become a target of terrorists, a persecuted alongside Salman Rushdie. However, with everything and its indisputable reference to Islam and the dystopian vision it offers, one can say that *Submission* points in another direction. I would risk saying that he even formulates the idea contrary to the one that had circulated in the media.

Through ellipses that advance time in a politically heated France, *Submission* focuses on François, a professor of literature at the University of Paris III and an expert on Huysmans, whose life is emptied of interest in romantic relationships, by contact with colleagues and society and, mainly, by the political struggles that go happening around between parties of right, left, radical nationalists and the Islamic sector. We see that only literature can lessen the apathy of François until he becomes aware of the historical situation he is living: Mohammed Ben Abbas, leader of the Islamic Fraternity advances in his career to the presidency of France and, according to reports of other characters, to become the most influential person in European politics. Finally, Ben Abbas obtains the triumph and initiates a series of changes, which, judging by what François relates; they return France to a welfare state, despite representing a radical rupture, as it happens in relation to the role of women in society. The novel closes with the conversion of François to Islam.

Contemplated in this light, *Submission* reminds us of the thesis formulated by Harvard Professor Samuel Huntington in his controversial bestseller *The Clash of Civilizations and the Reconstruction of the World Order* according to which, after the collapse of Soviet communism, the new wars would be propitiated by cultural factors, not by the ideologies that were hegemonic



during the Cold War. To put it in concrete terms, the West, Huntington noted, had entered a phase of decline, while the East, especially the Islamic nations, began a progressive growth that, at the end of the day, would give way to a new world order. The data provided by Huntington were all the more worrisome as he compared this decline with that of different empires throughout history.

Similar to Professor Huntington's exposition, the philosophers Slavoj Žižek and Michel Onfray have shown concern for the decline of an increasingly determined West to indulge in material pleasures, lacking the conviction to undertake the great causes of humanity and driven to achieve maximum scientific and technological development. According to Onfray, who is converted into one of the evanescent characters of the novel, by the way, there are civilizations that aspire to different ways of consuming and spirituality, that is, transcendent forms of existence. The same idea is found in *The Art of the Novel*, where Milan Kundera maintains that the Cervantine Quixote, with its passion and its madness, emerges as an antidote against the prevailing scientism in Europe. In Latin America, on the other hand, the writer Leonardo Da Jandra realized that the Fiesta and ritual characteristic of Mexicanness represents the survival of Spain. For Jandra, as well as for Onfray, there is a notion of absolute that progressively moves away from the materialistic values that underpin Europe.

*Submission* puts on the wall a West whose agonizing values can only be replaced by those of the Muslim religion, which, by all accounts, are more stable and manage to amend various pitfalls of French society. An illuminating case is found in this fragment, in which François contrasts the previous state of the university where he worked with his current state: "In my time, the reception rooms of the Sorbonne, which had a certain historical reputation and a direction really prestigious, they were never used for university festivities, but were often rented, at indecent rates, for fashion shows and other mundane events ... "Arguments like this one are recurrent in the novel, or, at least, the reader elaborates them to measure who finds similar situations.

In his outstanding essay *Atheist Manifesto: The Case against Christianity, Judaism, and Islam*, Michel Onfray warns that the problem with the collapse of Christianity is that we have overlooked forming a new ethic. Instead, we have locked ourselves in a nihilism that nothing solves. I believe it is legitimate to apply this idea to the novel by Houellebecq because the decline witnessed by François gives way to new values that, to a great extent, represent a setback, as is the conception of women as housewives and the infliction of a veil over her expression.

It was immediately deduced that the terrorist attack on Charlie Hebdo was due to cartoons in which the weekly mocked Muhammad. Understanding this recession, possibly goes to complement the nightmare vision that *Submission* has drawn with another novel recently published and also set in France: *The party of insignificance*, Czech writer Milan Kundera, in



which we read these lines about a bitter joke that Stalin used to spend to the members of the nomenklatura: "He, the great hero of truth, spitting of contempt! It was a prophetic scene. He was really announcing a new time. The twilight of jokes! The era of post-hatred! "