

The Satanic Verses

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April 7-11, 2009

In Media Res. Two characters tumble to a certain (?) death from an exploding aircraft, among falling debris and engulfing visions. My heart sinks as well. Only on page two and there are five-hundred pages more and counting before the ordeal will be over. How will I ever be able to finish it all? How will I ever hope to finally reach ground zero, and not be caught in that eternal limbo which characterizes every abandoned book?

The book is notorious, the occasion for a fatwa which sent the author into assisted hiding, caused Britain to disrupt diplomatic relations with Iran, and echoed all over the world. The author was already famous, but only to a reading and discerning public. But his first effort, back in 1975, failed. A juvenile attempt at a Science Fiction story (as if there could be non-juvenile performances in that genre) was ignored by the public and critics alike. (But it was published nevertheless). With the second attempt he struck Gold. 'Midnight's Children' won a Bookers prize, and twenty odd years later, the bookers Booker, voted to be the best bookered novel anytime. I read it a few years ago¹ and was not particularly impressed. It was an imaginative retelling of Modern Indian History of which I had some reading acquaintance of already, so I was probably more prepared to appreciate it than most Western readers. Ten years earlier, in Warsaw as a matter of fact, I read 'Shame' and was rather disappointed. All that frantic writing bordering on the hysterical. Not my cup of tea. Both those books predate 'the Satanic Verses' maybe the author has evolved (or maybe I have myself as a reader, because much in life is in the nature of acquired taste, and maybe repeated confrontations have eroded instinctive defenses?). I recall when it came out that it had a reputation for being boring, because the notoriety of its appearance, made the author a household name even among those who ordinarily would not read.

What did the Fatwa do for Rushdie? It certainly propelled him into the status of a celebrity, something he, as it would so many other Bombay youths, truly must have savored, brought up as he was on Bollywood². It came with a price though, constant vigilance, a most onerous restriction of daily life (speak about being trapped in fame literally), and no doubt a constant worry. Some people associated with the venture, such as foreign translators, had their lives made attempts on, some of those attempts being successful. Yet, as he admits, none of his close relatives were ever targeted. Was it really in the interest of the authorities to have him killed, as opposed to have him constantly under the threat? On the other hand, the fatwa was not an act of terrorism, conceived and consciously directed and controlled; it was a call of inspiration and sanctified condonment directed to the Muslim fringe, consisting of madmen and adventurers, fanatics and holy

¹ reviewed in August 2006 in these collections

² He is reported to have confessed that had not his literary career panned out he would have pursued one in acting

fools, only a minority of whom able to take concerted action and do the dirty work. It failed, or, should we rather write, has failed so far, because the Fatwa is still not called off, such a calling-off can only be made by the one originally calling it, and that person is (somewhat ironically) dead, the Mullahs inform us somewhat disingenuously. But the hiding is a matter of the past, Rushdie has now set himself free to fully enjoy his enhanced status (although, tongue in cheek or not, he is a bit cheeked by the far greater adulation reserved for the rock musicians³) and have started to wed sexy models and Bollywood stars. So much for ancient wisdom and a life in ascetic contemplation. But Rushdie is a reaction to all that, a committed atheist, bent on the destruction of old, stupid, superstition that fetters literally billions of people to a life of material deprivation and futile violence.

First, what kind of book is this? It is written of course in the same style of exuberant verbosity and unrelenting logorrhea, which has not only become the trade-mark of Rushdie's writing but more to the point supposedly of a whole generation of Anglo-Indian writers taking up his cue. It is not writing innocent of predecessor, what writing is? Like all committed writers Rushdie started out as an avid reader, and no one would be better equipped than he to list the particular writers which struck him deep, be their direct influence on his style noticeable or not. One word that often comes to the mind is that of 'magical realism'. Rushdie may be a hard-nosed realist, eager to sweep the cobwebs of confusion and magical thinking, but of course his novel excel in it. Those two characters tumbling through the sky certain of an imminent death, yet miraculously avoiding the same ostensibly by frantic flapping of their arms, but more to the point by divine authorial intervention. An author creates like a God, and thus have complete control, to assume otherwise would be consenting to sentimental belief in magic, that novels were indeed real and not made up. Rushdie as a committed realist certainly knows that they are not, novels are magic, and it would be superstition to pretend otherwise. Thus magic is indeed free to expand beyond bounds and permeate the entire fabric of the telling. Either you accept the terms of admission without demurring, or you go along constantly being disturbed by the dreamlike tenor of the whole thing, a kind of post-logical porridge, in which the abolishment of contradiction is no longer upheld. But does this not mean relentless confusion? It is one thing for the reader, who can always opt out, but the writer? What does such immersion do for him? Does he sometimes pinch his cheek to find out whether it smarts and he is still alive and awake? I have often thought that the terror that awaits us at the moment of death is that of the rude awakening to the unrefutable fact that the world is not of our making after all, it is real, far too real, and not that soft illusion of a solipsists mind that has been our comfort all along. Something similar must also have been in the mind of Rushdie, at least when he wrote the novel, judging from comments such as *...for it is only at the moment of death that living creatures understand that life has been real, and not a sort of dream*⁴ or at the very end *The world, somebody wrote, is the place we prove real by dying in it*.⁵ Not surprisingly the novel ends with a death-scene (and the opportunity to rebirth that only death can provide). Incidentally a highly sentimental one, in which a life

³ When Rushdie the great author is booked on an Australian promotion tour, he is of course checked in at first class suites; while Elton John and his entourage check in entire hotels.

⁴ Vintage paperback edition p. 364

⁵ *ibid* p. 533

time of animosity between a father and a son is miraculously melted in face of the ultimate. Our conception of death is too often a heroic one, in which the spirit of man is unquenched, our powers of reflection and identity being unimpaired to the very end, when the material props of our being are cut off from under our feet and we tumble into the vertiginous void. In reality, I start to understand, there is no such sharp transition, for the great majority of humans, death is not a brutal cessation, it is a slow strangling and atrophy of the mind⁶. Mind is after all a matter or matter, and as liable to decay as the latter. This is, however, a matter of an unforgiving materialism, most of us are unable to embrace, as illustrated by my own remarks above, prefigured by the writing of Rushdie, and no doubt formulated anew and anew during the so far brief tenure of the human race. The true terror of death is always with us, although we refuse to face up to it. The true terror of death is that there is no terror at death, pace the very sentimental reference that Rushdie makes to it *What did he see?...Why the horror?*⁷ and then adding mischievously *And whence that final smile?* the latter no doubt added more out of a desire for mystification than that of elucidation. Obviously Rushdie, as well as the present reviewer, and countless other people, still persist in believing, in spite of the most militant atheism which may be present, that death is the moment of our confrontation with God, with our maker. When we finally, as illuminated by the above quotes, will confront Truth⁸.

A novel used to have a plot. In fact the plot is the skeleton of a novel, without which its flesh would have no purchase. Without a plot there is no narrative, and without a narrative, that both makes sense of past multifarious experience by a judicious selection, and whets our appetite for what will happen next, we are unable to maintain an interest beyond that brief moment provoked by a mere evocation. A lump of flesh which is not articulated, connected to other pieces of flesh, lies inert, no matter how intensely it may have captured our passing attention. Poetry may enthrall us for the pleasure of its play on words and the evocation of some spurious truth. But poetry can never keep our attention for hundreds of pages, our mind will be distracted if not lulled to sleep already. Does 'the Satanic verses' have a plot, or could it be chopped off in small pieces and randomly rearranged and the readers would notice no difference?⁹. Indeed when I started reading this tiled brick of a book that was what I thought was in store. Was I mistaken? Or was I able by a pure effort of will to plod through a mass of writing, be it exuberant, intermittently clever and funny, yet ultimately pointless; just in order to prove a point, complete an assignment, exercise a self-imposed duty? Ultimately being enthralled by the notoriety of the novel, the desire to join in a fashion.

⁶ Maybe even more so in the modern western age, when the body more and more survives the deteriorating brain

⁷ *ibid.* p 532

⁸ Thus if death did not exist, we would be forced to invent it.

⁹ One of Aldous Huxley's novels (I have forgotten what title) presents such a chopped off and distorted chronology. I read, somewhat to my horror, that a critic actually had taken the trouble to rearrange all those pieces logically, finding to his surprise that the novel lost nothing in a regular telling, and thus that the experiment was a failed one. Why to my horror? At the time I was a dedicated mathematician and though that the effort of the critic was one of which the novel was not worthy, such intellectual dedication should only be applied to mathematics.

There are two protagonists, a famous Bollywood star, by name of Gibrell Farishta, and another star, be it of less exalted proportions, a certain Salahuddin Chamcha, a London exile from India, making a living as a voice impersonator, and trying to assimilate fully the Britishness which so deeply fascinates him. It is tempting to see in the latter a character that has borrowed large chunks from the personal biography of the author, who was likewise torn out of his Indian background and replanted as a young man (age thirteen or so) on British soil, straggling to re-invent himself (and like many such efforts, strikingly if superficially successful). Those two protagonists we are introduced to not only in media res, but literally in mid-air. Maybe not the most propitious setting for an introduction, everybody involved is bound to be distracted. They survive the impact, as noted above, and are taken in by an old widowed lady. She dies, Gibrell escapes to enjoy the ecstasies with his latest lover - the Ice-queen, conqueress of Everest, tortured by flat feet; while Saladin (the westernized simplification of his name) is taken by the police, and in the process is turned into a goat, replete with horns, bad breath, curly hair all over his body and strong powerful hooped legs. Not to mention an impressive erection. He is taken into custody, escapes along with other misshapen figures, surprises his British wife shacking up with her new lover, an old college friend of his, who takes him to a pension, an Indian B and B establishment, where he arouses the fascination of two nubile teenagers ('caring for the Best as only Beauties can' the author is unable to resist remarking). His rather pointless metamorphism, of which he is never allowed to take advantage of in the novel¹⁰, comes suddenly to an end. His coworker in the advertisement business takes off with some con-man to New York, engaged among other things in the production of a new film. They are expelled and return to London, inviting him to a Dickensian party, in which he meets and becomes fascinated with the Ice-queen. This leads to a re-connection with his falling-mate from the exploding aircraft, involving a stay in their abode in the country (actually a converted 'Freekirk' designed to send down a shudder through the spine of even the most persuaded secularist). Out of frustration engendered of an impossible desire, he engages in anonymous calls to his gracious hosts, exploiting both his skill in voices as well as the betrayal of sexual confidences generously supplied to him by a not so much trusting as exuberant Gibreel, playing successfully on the jealous instincts of the same (giving winks to the knowledgeable reader by name dropping Strindberg), who goes on a rampage as a holy fool through the streets of London and is diagnosed as a schizophrenic. In the meanwhile one of the lodgers of the pension, a young up-coming lawyer, starts fucking one of those nubile daughters of the house, gets involved in community outrage against a conceived racist persecution of a black doctor suspected as the Granny Ripper (the fabled perpetrator of a series of murders of old ladies, their ripped-off organs artfully arranged around the body). Then the estranged wife of Salladin gets involved as well together with her lover, both having a past as left-wing activist. It ends in a blaze, consuming their bodies, and burning down the pension as well. In a heroic attempt at rescue, Saladin but expires himself save for the last minute intervention by his one-time friend Gibreel. Somehow the adventures result in the protagonist suffering a heart attack, convalescing for eighteen months, before being called home to the deathbed of

¹⁰ He obviously resents the fact, as his reflection - 'Do devils suffer in Hell? Aren't they the ones with the pitchforks', testifies.

his long since estranged father. And so the book ends with the death scene briefly alluded to above. Of course any summary of a plot is bound to reveal it as ridiculous, a cheap trick often exploited¹¹, what matters is the artful way it is being told. Of course the main narrative is not only being chopped up in suitable pieces and appropriately permuted, all to heighten suspense; but also extended and padded with all kinds of digressions, such as the Argentinean past of the old lady by the beach, the antics of left wings agitation and activism of the 70's, intimations of perfect sex (the alluring possibility of which being one of the remaining tasks of reminding readers of left to the novel?), modern high-jacking by desperate and confused Muslim fundamentalism (very much on the minds in the 80's) in which it transpires (already politically correctly?) that the women are far more effective and ruthless than the men. Even Darwinism gets its nod, ridiculing a come-on appearance of an American creationist (whose tip of tongue is conveniently cut off as his lower jaw is being slammed against his upper, the source of his verbal inanities being literally cut off by the female high-jacker), as well as hinting, with no credits given, to the punctuated equilibria in evolutionary development, so touted at the time by S.J.Gould. Then of course everything is told with an unstoppable breathless verbal flow, reminiscent of Saul Bellow, or more to the point, Philip Roth. Rushdie has a voice, but as already remarked, not a voice that suffers in social isolation. It is a lava flow that brings with it the jetsam and flotsam of disconnected thoughts and reflections, which the author is not only permitted to drop into the brew, but is actually encouraged to do so, not to say ordered, to keep up the relentless momentum. We all know them, they pop up while we are lying in bed about to fall asleep our mind appearing unusually lucid before our eventual descent. Demons in a way, that startle us with their cleverness and sagacity, pearls of wisdom that are doomed, like the dreams soon to succeed them, to dissolve into thin air or be dispersed wholesale into dark wells of oblivion. An author can ill afford to waste such free material. He needs them to pad and cushion. One could make a list, like a poor fisherman on the edge, using his hoop to net them in as they swirl by, and string them along to dry, but I will abstain. Suffices it to pinpoint a few examples of a writers wry humor. What do we need to set up a star? *Fruit, starlets, paparazzi, talk-shows, rumors, little hints of scandal: ..Flowers, personal security, zillion-pound contracts. Make yourself at home.* The mountaineress is being reassured about the future of her lover Gibreel. Or his off-the-head remarks of the scornful gazes of sons watching their fathers throw boomerangs and frisbees incompetently. More seriously one may enjoy his fantasy about turning London to a tropical town. All that moral fuzziness of the English being meteorologically induced. *When the day is not warmer than the night, when the light is not brighter than the dark, when the land is not drier than the sea* then clearly people will lose the ability to make distinctions and commence to see everything as much-the-same, be it political parties, sexual partners or religious beliefs. Now the author is clearly making an outrage against post-modernism, which fails to appreciate that Truth is extreme, letting his Gibreel wage a threat '*I am going to tropicalize you*'. Or his regrets, shared by many of his contemporaries, of the fast-forwarding instincts of modern youth. Their fear of the dull moment, the boring transportation stretch, going fast-forward from one action-packed climax to the next. Or why not his satire about late evening news, and his colorful image of a helicopter hovering

¹¹ cf. Tolstoy in 'What is Art'.

over a night-club urinating light in long golden streams, all for the benefit of the camera.

Plot is important, but plot is not everything. In a good novel, just as in philosophy that truly grips, there needs to be evocation. Salman Rushdie is an Indian writer, not only as most writers aspire to become, an universal writer. Being an Indian writer does not mean being confined to India, but on the contrary of being able to bring India into the world, of being able to depict with pungent accuracy what it is being Indian, being in India. To make you literally smell the country. This is what you expect from a writer, to have a particular perspective, to be rooted in a specific sensuous reality. To evoke the subtlety in the accidental and particular, not just the general and widely applicable. The truly universal voice is not that of a writer but that of a philosopher, and you do not read novels to learn about the universe, but to become privy to specifics. Does he succeed or does he fail, in the same way a Kundera fails in truly conveying the quotidian grayness and tedium of post-war socialist societies such as that of his Czechoslovakia? India is a colorful country, many travelers exalt it as the last vestige of the magical fairy-tale country left on earth. A land still steeped in true magic, allowing the western visitor to step back in time and encounter what supposedly is a far more authentic reality, a reality of poverty and basic human needs. Slumming? Yes of course, yet not just slumming, but an encounter with an overwhelming reality, made up by numbers of souls astronomical. How far is he able to bring the smells of India through the pages and into the living rooms of countless readers?

And even more to the point, what has caused such furor over the book, those charges of unforgivable blasphemy? Nothing which I have so far presented gives much of a clue to such a reaction. True there is irreverence in the writing, and extra-marital sex, the more blissful for its transgressions. But yet that is standard fare in almost all modern novels, why single out poor Rushdie, and if so why single out this particular book, after all, irreverence and sex is surely to be found in 'Midnight's Children' as well, how could it otherwise have won the Booker prize?

I have not told the whole story. In addition to the main plot, there are subsidiary plots, whose relations to the main one are most tenuous. And it is clearly here we need to look for what has (supposedly) given such offense. First there is the plot of a failed pilgrimage. An entire village is seduced by a young beautiful girl to pilgrimage by foot down to the Arabian Sea and then have that sea open up, just as it did for Moses and his chosen people once upon a time. The story is told in a way reminiscent of the short stories of Tagore. There is the rich zamizdar, who loves his wife, but is nevertheless stricken by desire for the young girl Ayesha, whose only nutrition is that of butterflies that flutter into her open mouth. (Later she abandons clothing and is shrouded only in a swarm of butterflies as she determinedly leads the march towards the Sea). In addition to the zamizdar there are other stock characters, the mother-in-law, the casteless boy with his bullock and cart, the toy-salesman. It is very nicely evoked, especially the contrast between the timeless quality of an Indian village as it would have appeared to a Tagore a hundred years ago, and the modern intrusions like a Mercedes-Benz and VCR's, yet both accommodating each other effortlessly. The onset of mammarian cancer of the wife precipitates the events, the vision of going to Mecca and be cured. The husband, the wealthy zamizdar is aghast. If you want to go to Mecca, why walk, why not fly? He cannot understand. But walking all the way is

integral to the experience, so he joins and not joins at the same time, by traveling in his Mercedes (soon to have its windshield fractured into tiny diamonds of sherds due to the impact of a coconut shell casually thrown out from a passing bus) he sets himself apart. People die on the road, hastily buried, because the show must go on. The Zamizdar slowly gains a few dissidents, including that of his disapproving mother-in-law, but not more than can join him in his car. And they come to the sea, and they are being welcomed by thugs, and saved from slaughter only by a tremendous downpour. The moment of truth, will the fateful enter the sea. The triumph of the Zamizdar is close. He offers Ayesha an offer she cannot refuse. If she just chose the most fervent of her disciples (including that of his sick wife, the ostensible reason for the whole trek) he will have them flown to Mecca. Ayesha is down on luck, does she really have any options left? She waivers, wants to consult with her angle, the Archangel Gibreel (and now the reader surely starts to see what is up and what makes everything hang together) . In the end she decides she cannot make a choice. Everyone or no one. She leads the faithful into the sea and they walk to their drowning death, pursued by the dissenters devoted to their rescue. The faithful drown, while the dissenters are saved and nursed back to life. And each one of them, with one significant exception - the Zamizdar, has the same story to report. Just as they went out of reach, the sea did indeed open up letting them walk to Mecca. But the sea did not open up to the unfaithful. It is a good story, in fact it stands out in the book, and could of course have survived beautifully on its own. It is a true narrative, it has a plot, it provides suspense, and in so doing it does convey a sense of India, a physical as well as a spiritual, the two are hard to separate, that is absent from the rest of the book. Just to take one example ..- *when the pilgrims felt the city's asphalt turn gritty and soften into sand, - when they found themselves walking through a thick mulch of rotting coconuts abandoned cigarette packets pony turds non-degradable bottles fruit peelings jellyfish and paper* -... As anyone who has visited India, this is India, its inescapable reality, not mystical, not magical, but surreal.

So is it this story that gave offense? It surely can be read as a parody of religious fervor, but also as a parody of sorts of secularism and Indian dithering between the old and the new. I doubt that this story alone would have brought the wrath of the Mullahs and so inflamed Muslim sensibilities. Surely there must be hundreds of similar stories being published in the East. What really must have incensed the religious right is something far more direct, namely the story about Manhound and his divine inspiration. Manhound actually becoming a character in a novel, that by itself is an act of blasphemy (just as the caricatures of a Muhammad caused an uproar among the fidels). That Manhound is shown as human, with a love of tender flesh, consorting with twelve wives, all of them dutifully named - *Ayesha, Hafsah, Ramlah, Sawdah, Zainab*¹², *Maimunah, Safia, Juwairiyah, Umm Salamah the Makhzumite, Rehana the Jew, and the beautiful Mary the Copt*. Those names are also adopted by twelve prostitutes in the brothel of Jahilia, an establishment allowed a temporary reprieve after the city had submitted to the might of Manhound and his revelations. Those twelve prostitutes chose as a man, the unlikely character of a fugitive hiding in the compound, a former satirist and poet, who had invoked the fury of Manhound. So in the last months of his life, this poor forlorn figure will at last enjoy the

¹² That later name actually repeated in the book, an undisclosed typo?

enthusiastic, but surely not undivided, attentions of desirable women. Of course this is making a mockery out of Manhound. And of course, the greatest sin of all, is to intimate that the revelations that Manhound receive from the archangel Gibreel, are not divine. That Manhound at some stage played with the idea of allowing, for political reasons, the continued divinity of three idols, three female idols to boot¹³. And that, even more damning, that the holy script actually was written down by a Persian scribe (Salman [sic]) who willfully distorted the dictation of Manhound, without the latter noticing it. The casting in doubt of the divinity of the Quaran is truly the blasphemy of all blasphemies. There is nothing more effective in undermining the authority of a religion than to give a prosaic historical explanation for its origin. Outright denial is one thing, that is just one word against the other, but a rational explanation is a usurpation against which there is no defense but physical extermination.

Now we all agree that it is an outrage. Not the blasphemy of course, but the truly disproportionate reaction to it. That religious sensibilities should not be given an unlimited freedom of expression. That we need to draw the line somewhere. Surely ancient religions need to come to term with the Modern Age (to use a hackneyed expression) not only to accommodate technological advancement (which it has done successfully, too successfully many could argue) but also to become tolerant, to acquire a sense of proportion not to say humor, And above all to submit to secular rules.

Yet blasphemy is a real thing. It is a real thing because there is something to blaspheme! Something that is taken seriously. An act of blasphemy is thus powerful, just as a blast of dynamite. An act of blasphemy is an act of erosion, it translates potential energy collected during centuries of toil into dynamic kinetic energy. Rushdie did benefit from that kinetic energy. Without this blasphemy the novel would have made rather little impact, by attacking and scorning what many people held dear and sacred, it reverberated. The artistic value is to a large extent coincident with its blasphemy. Thus in order to really appreciate the novel, and also to be truly scandalized by it, you need to know the Quaran, and not only that, you need to have appropriated the Quaran deeply, artistically as well as religiously, and it is sometimes hard to make the distinction. You need to have taken it to heart in such a way that it can no longer be separated from it. Of course repeated blasphemy, unaccompanied by rebuilding, will in the end totally dismantle holy structures. Is this what we want? Or is it just a matter of rebuilding other holy structures of our choice, later to be the object of a new kind of blasphemy, new in the sense of attacking other holy structures, yet old in the sense of once again converting potential energy into kinetic.

How does it feel to be blasphemed against? One natural example is 9/11. It caused an outrage in the Western World as it surely was meant to. It was an affront to all our deeply held convictions, the inviolability of life, especially innocent life, the freedom of travel, the sanctity of property, you name it. In short the breaking of the ground rules of a secular, liberal society, for which the U.S. assumes itself to be the spearhead and guarantor, not to say patron saint. So this is what is meant by blasphemy, this is what it really means to be on the receiving end. No wonder we want those perpetrators heads severed and placed on dishes (save that they out of cowardice perished along with their victims), thus no wonder,

¹³ As one character remarks. With us the gods are female, and the female are goods.

deprived of our rightful bounty we want to kill anyone connected to the outrage and to which some responsibility might be attached, even if remotely. But should we not view this act as an artistic one? It did have many of the trappings of art, it certainly was artfully crafted and executed, the image of burning toppling towers is now branded in us (thanks to the collusion of the media) as icons, heralding the new millennium. After all, why not Art? Art proudly claims that it knows no boundaries, that it cannot be confined by bureaucratic rules, that its essence is transgression, and clearly this was an act of transgression. If we do accept some measure of reciprocity, can we truly blame the injured for their lust for blood? Should we rather not admire their restraint?

In the hysteria that followed the attacks, there indeed appeared a polarization, Us against them, with the tacit assumption that Muslim societies were on the other side. That it was indeed an act of revenge and retribution. A tit for tat. But of course the outrage was as much an outrage against Muslim religious sensibilities as against Christian (and liberal secular ones). And to claim some sort of reciprocity is indeed absurd. And if so, this prompts us to ask the real probing question. Was the 'Satanic Verses' really an act of blasphemy at all? Were religious people really offended and hurt? Or was it just a political ruse engineered by Mullahs and other political people clinging to religion as a ladder to power? Perhaps no one really was deeply hurt? Truly religious people having a faith that deep that mere mockery can have but little impact? Perhaps the whole thing was just a hysteria whipped up for ulterior if cloudy purposes. If so we are not only depriving the faithful of their faith and its objective nature, but even their faith in their faith as a subjective fact. Are we entitled to go that far? To not only eradicate the thing itself, but even the shadow it casts? I do not really know, but I am more and more inclined to take that extra step, and more and more leaning towards the latter explanation of political machination, having little to do with real outrage and blasphemy, but just a hysteria. A shadow of a shadow.

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