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978-1-107-43604-6 - Biblical Blaspheming: Trials of the Sacred for a Secular Age

Yvonne Sherwood

Frontmatter

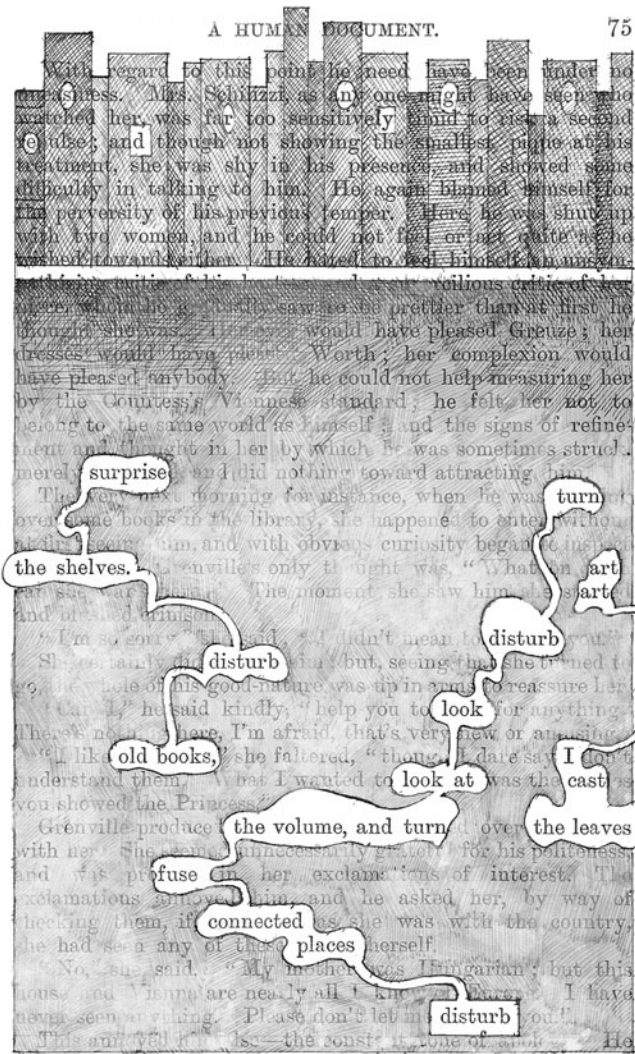
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BIBLICAL BLASPHEMING

This book explores the strange persistence of ‘blasphemy’ in modern secular democracies by examining how accepted and prohibited ways of talking and thinking about the Bible and religion have changed over time. In a series of wide-ranging studies engaging disciplines such as politics, literature and visual theory, Yvonne Sherwood brings the Bible into dialogue with a host of interlocutors including John Locke, John Donne and the 9/11 hijackers, as well as artists such as Sarah Lucas and René Magritte. Questions addressed include:

- What is the origin of the common belief that the Bible, as opposed to the Qur’an, underpins liberal democratic values?
- What kind of artworks does the biblical God specialise in?
- If pre-modern Jewish, Christian and Islamic responses to scripture can be more ‘critical’ than contemporary speech about religion, how does this affect our understanding of secularity, modernity and critique?

YVONNE SHERWOOD is Professor of Bible, Religion and Culture at the University of Glasgow. She is author of *A Biblical Text and Its Afterlives: The Survival of Jonah in Western Culture* (Cambridge, 2000); *Derrida’s Bible: Reading a Page of Scripture with a Little Help from Derrida* (2004); *The Prostitute and the Prophet* (2004) and, with Stephen Moore, of *The Invention of the Biblical Scholar: A Critical Manifesto* (2011). She is co-editor of *Sanctified Aggression: Legacies of Biblical and Post-Biblical Vocabularies of Violence* (with Jonneke Bekkenkamp, 2003) and, with Kevin Hart, of *Derrida and Religion: Other Testaments* (2004).



A page from *A Humument: A Treated Victorian Novel*, by Tom Phillips.

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'Ceci n'est pas une Bible.' Image courtesy of A. K. M. Adam.

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CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

32 Avenue of the Americas, New York NY 10013-2473, USA

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It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781107436046

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First published 2012

First paperback edition 2014

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data

Sherwood, Yvonne.

Biblical blaspheming : trials of the sacred for a secular age / Yvonne Sherwood.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-107-00786-4 (hardback)

1. Bible--Controversial literature. 2. Bible--Criticism, interpretation, etc. I. Title.

BS533.S35 2012

220.09--dc23

2012014482

ISBN 978-1-107-00786-4 Hardback

ISBN 978-1-107-43604-6 Paperback

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*To Richard and Adam, who occasionally make me
curse/blaspheme, but mostly bless and thank my lucky stars.*

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Acknowledgements

Since one of these chapters is co-written with a former doctoral student, now a flourishing academic in his own right, this seems the perfect place to celebrate Ph.D. students, past and present. In particular, I'd like to mention Susan Brown, Mark Brummitt, Bradley Johnson, Robert Kuloba, David Mitchell, Benjamin Morse, Malachie Munyaneza, Abigail Pelham, Norma Stewart, Hannah Strømmen and Samuel Tongue. Working with such courageous, industrious, and creative individuals has been a source of great inspiration and not a little dubiously 'maternal' pride.

The chapters of this book have been tested and honed in various contexts including the University of Georgetown, Drew University, various meetings of The Society of Biblical Literature/The American Academy of Religion, the Netherlands School for Advanced Study in Theology and Religion, the Society for Old Testament Study, and the Zentrum für Literatur und Kulturforschung, Berlin. I am deeply grateful for all the invitations and conversations that lurk between the lines. I am grateful to Laura Morris and Anna Lowe at Cambridge University Press for taking the project on so enthusiastically and diligently ushering the book into print. Tom Phillips generously entered into some witty and mischievous correspondence on blasphemy towards the end of this project. I am also indebted to Roxanne Claxton and Jane Clarke for being so generous with their time – and in Jane's case, her Bible.

This book finally gives me an opportunity to dedicate a book to Richard Davie: 'in-house (actually live-in) editor' (as I put it in my first book, back in 1996) – and to our son, Adam. Richard, heartfelt thanks for everything: in particular, for the double joy of being able to play mum and academic without dropping the 'baby' (or not too often) – not because

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I am a consummate juggler but because between us we have four hands. I am, I know, hugely lucky to have been able to keep all loves – including writing – running at the same time. Adam, this is what mummy really does when she says that she is going off to the castle to see the giant. I hope you don't find the revelation too disenchanting.