This talk focuses on a 2008 controversy that erupted around the acclaimed novel *Azazeel* in Egypt between Muslims and Christians. While literary critics hailed the novel as an artistic achievement, the Coptic Orthodox Church condemned it for defaming Christianity and fomenting Christian-Muslim strife. After the Church failed to get the novel banned, secular critics quickly cast the controversy as a battle between religious taboos and freedom of expression. Mahmood contests this diagnosis by elaborating a different set of issues that were at the heart of the *Azazeel* debate, including in commensurable conceptions of divinity, religion, history and literature.