



# The End of Manners

*Francesca Marciano*

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## **The End of Manners** Francesca Marciano

From the critically acclaimed author of *Rules of the Wild*, a thrilling, timely, and darkly funny story of friendship, human frailty, and war--and the role of outsiders in a country where they do not belong.

Maria Galante--rule-abiding, shy, a perfectionist--and larger-than-life journalist Imo Glass are on assignment in Afghanistan: Imo to interview girls who've attempted suicide rather than be married off to older men, Maria to photograph them. But in a culture in which women shroud their faces and suicide is a grave taboo, to photograph these women is to dishonor--and perhaps endanger--them. Maria and Imo must find their way among spies, arms dealers, and mercenaries, and through the back alleys of Kabul and into Pashtun villages, where the fragility of life stands out in bold relief. Before the assignment is over, Maria will have to decide if it's more important to succeed at her work--and please Imo--or to follow her own moral compass.

Stunningly evocative and richly observed, *The End of Manners* is a story of friendship and loyalty, of the transformative power of journeying outside oneself into the wider world.

## **The End of Manners Details**

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# From Reader Review The End of Manners for online ebook

## Azia says

Sebuah penugasan menawarkan pengalaman yang menantang bagi Maria, fotografer yang sedang menekuni kuliner. Ia mendapat tawaran menjadi fotografer menemani wartawan perang, Imo Grass, ke Afghanistan. Persiapan fisik dan mental dimulai. Sebelum terbang ke Kabul, Maria mengikuti pelatihan ketahanan di Inggris. Selama dua minggu Maria dilatih untuk menghadapi kondisi berbahaya.

Imo grass mempunyai agenda untuk mewawancarai wanita Afghanistan yang bunuh diri karena kawin paksa. Tidak mudah menguak sisi kehidupan wanita Afghanistan. Fotografi adalah hal yang tabu menyangkut rupa wanita. Imo dan Maria dibantu oleh Hanif, presenter tv lokal yang mempunyai pekerjaan sampingan penghubung orang asing di Kabul. Koneksinya cukup dikenal oleh jaringan orang asing.

Imo hanya punya 3 minggu untuk meliput dan masalah mendekati wanita Afghanistan tidak semudah yang ia bayangkan. Mereka berkendara ke luar Kabul untuk menemui Zuleya yang melakukan percobaan bunuh diri. Zuleya belum genap 17 tahun namun ia dipaksa menikah dengan pria yang usianya empat kali lipat darinya. Daripada menikahi pria pilihan orang tuanya, Zuleya memilih mati. Setiap Maria mengeluarkan kamera disertai dengan ketidaksetujuan dari kaum wanita.

"Kalian orang-orang asing mengira kami memperlakukan kaum wanita seakan-akan kami hidup di Abad Pertengahan dan ini merupakan sesuatu yang sangat memprihatinkan di Barat dan kalian selalu menulis tentang ini di koran-koran kalian".

Imo terlihat ambisius untuk mendapatkan wawancara dengan wanita Afghanistan yang mencoba bunuh diri. Ia melakukan bukan karena memang peduli tetapi untuk mengejar deadline dan santapan yang gurih untuk media barat. Dua wanita yang tidak mengerti dengan budaya lokal Afghanistan. Ketimbang saya mendapatkan simpati dua wanita barat yang melihat penderitaan wanita Afganistan, lebih banyak skeptis, rasa curiga dari dua orang asing yang tidak mengerti apa yang mereka lakukan di Afghanistan.

Indonesia sempat disebut dua kali di novel ini. Pertama, ketika Maria mengikuti pelatihan keadaan berbahaya di Inggris. Salah satu pesertanya akan pergi ke Indonesia untuk meliput pemilihan umum. Kedua, dituliskan demonstrasi di Jakarta hujan peluru. Kesan yang saya dapatkan Indonesia di novel ini sama berbahaya dengan negara-negara yang rawan konflik lainnya.

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## Jane says

The End of Manners tells the story of an Italian photographer, Maria Gallante on assignment in war-torn Afghanistan. Her task is to photograph women who have attempted suicide in order to avoid arranged marriages to men many years their seniors. This proves to be difficult since it is illegal for these women to show their faces and suicide is taboo.

Maria is on assignment with Imo Glass, a larger than life Columbian-born reporter who writes for a London-based newspaper.

Francesca Marciano has some beautiful descriptions of Afghanistan, even though the subjects she describes are at times not so beautiful (ie. the destruction caused by war.) As a matter of fact, some of the things she discusses are downright terrifying and no doubt a reality. I actually had to stop myself and look at the cover to make sure I was reading fiction because it all seemed so incredibly believable.

At 256 pages, *The End of Manners* is a very easy read. I finished it in 4 sittings.

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### **Linda says**

Not the kind of novel I usually read, in that the first part of the book takes place in a "hostile environment" training camp called *The Defenders* in which you get trained to do things like shove someone's intestines back in their body after they've been attacked. Nevertheless, I'd already read "*The Other Language*" by Francesca Marciano and had decided that I loved her writing and trusted her as a writer. So...I continued. I was home sick and read the book in two days. I found it thought provoking, and very moving, and will now get another book by this author.

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### **Catherine Mustread says**

*The End of Manners* leaves me thinking about what and why I read – in this case a story within a story with more kernels of stories inside that. Are the outer and the inner story both superficial? The characters or the story? Isn't all fiction superficial? Perhaps reading is mostly a substitute for thinking? Must be time to become immersed in a different book! Questions aside, I did enjoy this novel about a writer and photo-journalist who travel to Afghanistan to do a story on young women who have attempted suicide to avoid a forced marriage.

Other thoughts while reading this book: Manners and respect vary not only by culture but by perspective and gender. Shifting power in relationships can happen intentionally or accidentally. Ethics of journalists and photo-journalists.

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### **Ioanna says**

*The End of Manners: A Novel*. Marciano is a new writer I've discovered probably from some review somewhere; I like every book she's written, I think there are 2 or 3 others. This one was particularly good; it has her usual set up, a female narrator who has been wounded, by family or a lover, who seems fragile but actually turns out to be capable, after some tribulations, of taking care of herself. What's interesting in this book is her paralleling of the strong journalist female friend who turns out to have developed a persona for getting by in the tough male world they are both ensconced in because of their professions (journalist and photojournalist)--and also her paralleling of herself and the journalist with what goes on under the Taliban and Afganistan: it seems on one level that there's a lot of similarity in a way, between the raping and abuse and shutting up of these women and some things that happen to the two western women in this book. For example in this inn they are staying at, none of the men acknowledges either of them as existing. That's what interested me most. I always identify with her narrator, she's always beautiful and thin and smart, something we all want to be, but she's also a person you can like and feel that her plight whenever it is fleshed out or however it occurs is something you can connect with. In other words, she's always falling apart, keeping

herself together by the thin straps of her slip: in other words, that feels like you, and you're always rooting for her.

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### **Mita Oktavia says**

Menutup buku ini dengan perasaan lega dan bahagia. Karena untungnya buku ini memberikan kesan yang tak terduga bagi saya.

Meskipun terjemahannya kurang luwes sehingga agak sulit memahami beberapa maksud yang ingin dijelaskan dari ceritanya dan masih ada beberapa typo. Dari segi ceritanya, dari awal saya merasa ceritanya bergerak lambat dan Maria dengan POV 1 terlalu bertele-tele menceritakannya apalagi sebelum mereka berangkat di Kabul, saya pun sempat bertanya-tanya sendiri, "jadi mana perempuan-perempuan tak berwajahnya"? Kok nggak diceritain? Malah lebih ke catatan harian seorang Maria Galante (dan Imo Glass aja) dengan kegalauan-kegaluannya, tapi begitu memasuki pertengahan sampai akhir baru deh fokus ke tentang "perempuan-perempuan tak berwajah"nya itu sendiri, dan mengesankan bagi saya, hanya saja porsinya kurang banyak aja sih. But It's Okay.

Pada kenyataannya, sejak perjalanan mereka untuk bisa sampai ke desa terpencil dan segala kejadian yang terjadi bahkan sampai di halaman terakhir, saya begitu sangat menikmati. Tentang kegalauan-kegalauan Maria, saya cukup bisa memahami. Ya begitulah jurnalis, antara dituntut harus mendapatkan hasil terbaik untuk tugas mereka, di sisi lain ada hati kecil mereka yang berteriak pilu. Tidak sedikit pertentangan-pertentangan yang terjadi. Dan betapa menyakitkan ketika harus melihat penderitaan orang lain secara nyata, sementara yang kita tahu bahwa ternyata kehidupan kita begitu luar biasa jauh lebih beruntung. Bersyukur, itulah yang harusnya kita--sebagai manusia lakukan. Cukup mengesankan ceritanya, terlebih tentang perjalanan, perjuangan dan makna-makna yang berhasil Maria dapatkan selama perjalanan liputannya di Afghanistan.

Saya nggak menyesal, karena begitu menginginkan buku ini dan membacanya meskipun ini masuk ke kategori buku fiksi ya. Saya semakin kecanduan baca-baca buku dengan tokoh utama jurnalis di dalamnya. Hahaha. Semoga ada buku lain yang dapat menghibur, sekaligus bisa memberikan makna bagi saya. :))

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### **Kc says**

There was something about this book (the Goodreads description is the wrong book) that captivated me. Perhaps it was the humanity of the main character, the way she experienced the world around her and her reactions to all the new and different things she was seeing and feeling. Maria actually grew as a person before your eyes. That is a difficult and wonderful thing to find in a book. Also, the devastating and heartbreaking world of Kabul created here is so good you can almost understand why one character just chooses to stay.

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### **R-Qie R-Qie says**

Maria Galante, fotografer 32 tahun, sosok perfeksionis dan pemalu keturunan Irlandia-Spanyol. Wanita yang

mengalihkan objek fotonya ke makanan setelah sekian lama terjun di dunia fotografi jurnalisme, diminta sang agen untuk penugasan ke Afghanistan bersama seorang penulis andal yang berbasis di London, Imo Glass, wanita supel dan pandai bergaul. Mereka akan mengangkat kasus bunuh diri para gadis Afghan yang dipaksa menikah dengan pria-pria yang jauh lebih tua. Pengalaman pertamanya mencari objek foto di negara konflik, dengan kultur yang melarang wanita untuk dipotret, membawanya pada petualangan mendebarkan, pelajaran moral, serta perubahan pandangan dalam hidupnya.

Menggunakan sudut pandang orang pertama, Maria, novel ini diawali adegan dirinya dan Imo beserta Hanif, penghubung yang membantu mereka selama di Afghanistan, berada di bandara menjelang kepulangan keduanya usai penugasan. Alur kemudian bergerak mundur. Menceritakan tentang Maria dan permasalahan pribadinya, tawaran penugasan ke Afghanistan, mengikuti pelatihan di sebuah pedesaan di Inggris, lalu petualangannya selama di Afghanistan. Gaya penulisan yang mudah dicerna, sedikit muram—yang merupakan bagian kepribadian Maria—dan jalan cerita yang cukup bisa dinikmati. Konfliknya tidak begitu 'wah' seperti yang saya harapkan terjadi pada cerita dengan latar negara yang tengah dilanda konflik. Bisa dibayangkan kisah ini lebih menyoroti pergulatan batin Maria dalam memenuhi tuntutan profesi atau mengedepankan sisi moralitasnya. Serta mengatasi kekhawatiran, ketakutan, dan bayang-bayang masa lalu yang menyakitkan. Budaya lokal serta pandangan Barat diramu dengan cara berimbang dan menyentuh kepekaan moralitas pembaca. Endingnya cukup menyentuh. Tiga bintang.

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### **Karen says**

It was a little hard to get going with this book about a journalist and a photographer who team up and head to Afganistan to interview girls who attempted suicide rather than being married off to much older men. The story makes you believe something horrible will happen and though I will not give out spoilers, I was a bit disappointed. The ending, however, was worthy of reading the entire book.

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### **KOMET says**

"THE END OF MANNERS" is a story focused on the experiences of 2 Western women in war torn Afghanistan --- Imo Glass, a self-assured, successful British journalist and Maria Galante, a self-effacing, award-winning Italian photographer who had been content to stick to the straight and narrow by specializing in taking photographs of fine cuisine for magazines --- who have been given an assignment to highlight the plight of Afghan women who've attempted suicide rather than be married off to much older men.

In reading this story, the Afghanistan I was seeing in my mind's eye was very much like that depicted in the movie "Whiskey Tango Foxtrot", which I had watched in the cinema a couple of years ago. And that is a country riven by internecine conflict where past and present often collide. As well as a country in which its people bravely go about the business of everyday living with the prospect of death hovering nearby.

Francesca Marciano does a very skillful job as a writer in sharing with the reader the inner conflicts and complexities of some of the novel's main characters. Examples: Hanif, an Afghan who acted as a protector, driver, and guide for both Imo and Maria during their journeys to neighboring villages outside Kabul; and Shirin, a young Afghan woman who acted as interpreter for Imo and Maria in their interviews with women in these distant villages.

On the whole, this was a compelling novel whose writing kept me engaged throughout. I look forward to reading more of Marciano's works.

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### **Joanna Mieso says**

Interesting fiction about two women, Imo, a journalist, and Maria, a photographer, who travel to Afghanistan to do a story on Afghan women who commit suicide rather than be forced into arranged marriages. The detail of the journey itself, the culture, the standard of living, the presence of foreigners, is an eye-opener. Imo is meant to be larger than life, get out of my way, I don't-care-if-I-have-to-rip-off-your-veils-I'm-getting-this-story-and-the-world-will-know-the-truth-thanks-to-me. She does get tiresome and her insensitivity to the Afghan women's plight at the cost of getting her story was a problem for me. This story is narrated by Maria, whose own life and career is worth a book itself without Imo and the Afghan story. This was well-written and presented thoughtful aspects of the Afghan conflict - life goes on, with war or without, and why do Westerners always assume that a culture must be "fixed."

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### **Anne says**

Prior to picking up this book, I read a number of amazing reviews. The book is described as "brilliant" and "courageous and painful, not to be missed." And, of course it has a wonderful cover suggesting that it is full of literary treasures. So, perhaps my expectations were a bit high, but sadly, they definitely were not met. The main character, Maria, is a young photojournalist who after suffering anxiety attacks has taken herself off her fast-track career path. While Maria's reaction to her work is realistic given the subject matter she covers, right off the bat, I felt Marciano did a poor job capturing this and made Maria seem flighty and unprofessional. Maria is then suddenly paired with an aggressive female journalist, Imogen Glass, for an article about women who commit self-immolation in Afghanistan - primarily in response to being married off to much older men. Maria takes part in a militaristic survival retreat, again consistently making her look whiny and pathetic, and she finally flies off to Kabul, where Marciano makes clear over and over again, the women do not appreciate being photographed and that gaining such personal access to them will prove quite difficult. The book is then a series of dangerous encounters, Imogen consistently ignoring cultural mores and offending people in an attempt to get her story. Maria, on the other hand, remaining aware of the difficulties, but standing passively by watching her co-worker blow the assignment. This book dealt with interesting issues - I'm always up for a commentary on the treatment of women in deeply religious cultures and their attempts to exercise their independence. But, I did not understand the point Marciano was trying to make with respect to journalists in foreign countries - whether getting the story at any price is important to educate the rest of the world, and that people who risk their lives to do so should be commended, or whether such an approach is properly viewed as invasive and disrespectful. There is another journalist character in the book - a woman from France who has spent years in the country getting to know the women and developing a relationship with them - she is the one with photographs and real stories. But, her character is not much developed, and there is a question of how much she will eventually do with the years she has spent on a single issue. While *The End of Manners* raised interesting questions given the chosen subject matter, I did not feel as if there was much to be impressed by in the execution.

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## Julie Christine says

As a western journalist I have to decide each day which portion of these people's suffering is going to be my theme of the day and which is the portion I'm going to have to ignore so it doesn't get in the way.

This statement comes in the final pages of *The End of Manners*, but it is the theme around which this intense, resonant novel rotates, as it circles in and out of the boundaries of professional ethics.

Maria Galante is living quietly in Milan, shooting photographs of food for high-end lifestyle magazines, when she is offered the opportunity to reclaim her former glory as a photojournalist in some of the world's most treacherous places. A bout with anxiety and depression took her out of the field and into the safety of a well-lit studio, but her agent presses. The assignment is for a woman photographer and writer Imogen "Imo" Glass has requested Maria, believing she can best capture the delicate situation.

That situation is the plight of young women in Afghanistan who have attempted suicide to escape forced marriages. Imo intends to track down one young woman in a remote village who survived self-immolation. But it is the mid-2000s and Afghanistan is a place so dangerous, Maria must spend a week at a survival training camp outside London, learning how to patch together bodies shredded by bullets and shrapnel and how to respond if she is kidnapped.

The characters of Maria, Imo Glass, and Hanif, their Afghan "fixer"—the guide paid for his connections to government officials and villagers alike, who will shepherd the women through checkpoints and hostile encounters—are three points on the story's triangular frame, distant but connected, at angled purposes that run together and pull apart. Maria and Imo are physical and emotional opposites: distant, circumspect Maria is a bony, pale, red-headed reflection of her Irish mother. She cringes at the antics of her colleague, the darkly voluptuous, scented, euphuistic, worldly Imo. Hanif is diligent and seemingly unflappable, even when his eight-months pregnant wife is sent to the hospital. These three spend a mere week together, chasing an impossible story, driven by Imo's ambition and Hanif's tottering old Ford sedan. The shift in tone and regard between them is subtle, until it isn't. Maria is initially spellbound by Imo's confidence and comfort in the face of danger, until the woman's absurdity is fully exposed; Hanif's devotion to his clients becomes a tragic question that forces Maria to tilt her own moral compass for an answer.

For all its action, including the harrowing week of orientation; a wretched bout of Afghanistan's version of Montezuma's Revenge for which Maria seeks treatment by text with her ex—a physician—in Italy; a trip deep into the wilderness, past fields where hundreds of tiny green flags mark the graves of fallen mujahideen and red stones mark the presence of land mines; and an imminent attack that closes the airport, stranding Maria in a country she is desperate to leave, *The End of Manners* is a quiet, thoughtful book. For all its depiction of war, of Western men displaying their testosterone and arrogance and Afghans their restrictive cultural mores, it is also a deeply humane and warm story. The opportunity to see two female journalists navigate a war zone is rare and enlightening, and for this reader, a profound coda to the just-read memoir, *A House in the Sky* about a young journalist's eighteen months in captivity in Somalia.

There is a consummate, assured artistry to Francesca Marciano's writing that is so absorbing. Her dialogue is natural and her characters are knowable and true, that even in the most foreign settings, you are present and engaged.



The author holds us up to the window of external and internal conflict, but doesn't tell us what to see or how to interpret the events. She shows us the great and terrible beauty of Afghanistan and lays out the moral ambiguities of war and journalism, where best intentions run afoul of ambition, and it is always the innocent who pay the highest price.

Highly recommended.

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### **Corrie says**

Interesting read. Is there really training to prepare you for traveling in hostile countries? Makes sense that there would be. While I enjoyed reading this book, it seemed disconnected in parts, where I felt like the author could not decide, which direction they wanted to go in.

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### **Trish says**

This book felt as real to me as a letter from a friend. A photographer goes to Afghanistan for work and tells of her experiences. Has everything to do with the killing of aid workers and the confusion and harrowing conditions there. A very good effort describing a real situation by a natural storyteller.

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### **Nicole G. says**

I recently started an International Book Club, and this is our first selection. I wanted something from Afghanistan that wasn't by Hosseini; he is a good writer, don't get me wrong, but he is generally the go-to person when "books about Afghanistan" are mentioned.

I have never read anything by Ms. Marciano before, but she has a good style and is eminently readable. Although this is a work of fiction, the ground situation described in Kabul felt very real, as if I were actually traveling with our protagonist, Maria, an Italian photographer who ends up quickly thrown into an assignment with a English journalist named Imo Glass. The subject - arranged marriages and the high rate of suicide among Afghani women. Danger is everywhere and will they even be able to do what they set out to do, given how cloistered the women are?

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### **Beth G says**

Another beautifully written Marciano novel. The only reason that it didn't achieve that fifth star for me is that my brain was still stuck in the Alice Hoffman book I had just finished. I was also not entirely willing to give myself to the streets of Afghanistan and the plight of the women there.

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## **Bonnie says**

Although fiction, this book gave me great insight into the country of Afghanistan, perhaps even more so than Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* and *A Thousand Splendid Sons*. For instance, an amazing fact I learned is that real estate in Kabul is much more than in Manhattan, and the real estate in Afghanistan is usually pockmarked and ravaged from war rather than a gleaming loft atop a building soaring into the skyline of the city. A second insight was the difference a cell phone these days makes in war mongering.

An Italian photographer, Maria, who has left photojournalism because of feeling unauthentic when capturing people's heartbreak and capitulating on the sadness that makes for a great photo, for the field of filming food as art, now returns to the field to accompany a journalist from London's *The Observer* researching an article on young Afghani girls/women who are turning to suicide by self-immolation rather than be coerced into an arranged marriage, usually with a man as much as three times their age.

Though the book does not really even scratch the surface of this women's social issue (the reason I picked up the book) it still teaches some cultural sensitivities that are very important for the modern world that not only doesn't understand but judges the women behind their veils. And in fact, one gets more look at the foreigners and mercenaries and those making money off of the unrest than the actual Afghani people.

A bit anti-climatic but still a good read.

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## **Jenny Younker says**

Like other reviewers of this book, I too initially wanted to rate it 3 stars. I share the frustrations about the characters, especially the careless journalist, and was also disappointed in the end. I changed my mind when I thought about my feelings and how the author was able to write in a way that magnified each of them and the reasons for my disappointment in how the story ends. I realized that none of my negative feelings towards the book came from a poor style of writing nor a lack of plot nor lack of strong characters. The author did a wonderful job on presenting the story and a foundation for her readers to establish opinions and feelings about the characters and controversial subject matter. While it did lack intellectual depth, it did make me check my own habit of quick judgment as well as ignite an interest to study further. This book absolutely deserves 5 stars.

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## **Kate says**

Maria Gallante was a photojournalist; she had a nervous breakdown and now photographs food-porn for a living. One day, her agent calls her; he wants her back in journalism, and he wants her to go to Kabul to photograph young women who have chosen self-immolation over arranged marriage. She does. Moral dilemmas abound.

I don't know how I feel about this novel: Is it a half-hearted attempt or just too reserved? The scenery could use a little fleshing out, but then, the inability to do just that is sort of the point. Characters could be developed better, but to do that, you would have to know them well, and the point seems to be that you can never know them well enough. Reading this novel was not what I would call an 'enjoyable' experience, but novels that force us into examinations of conscience rarely are. I can't stop thinking about it, and I feel

compelled to put it back in the 'to read' pile.

This novel has left me with a lot of questions; questions like: what do I want from a novel? What do I want from the news that I read? Have I started treating novels and news like products to be consumed instead of sources of artistic and factual enlightenment? When did that happen and how do I stop?

Recommended.

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