

The Challenger

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Diary of a Book Addict

"The phrase 'antiquarian book-sellers' scares me somewhat, as I equate 'antique' with expensive. I am a poor writer with an antiquarian taste in books and all the things I want are impossible to get over here except in very expensive rare editions, or in Barnes & Noble grimy, marked-up schoolboy copies." This is the opening letter of a wonderful book by Helene Hanff called *84, Charing Cross Road*, the address of a secondhand bookstore tucked away in London, where a New York writer sought to relieve her addiction for books and made friends with people 3,000 miles away.

This collection of letters between a bookseller and a writer spanned 20 years. With each letter, the relationship between them slid closer together and chronicled several important events at that time: post World War II London, the Dodgers in the 1955 World Series, and the 1960 U.S. presidential campaign. This book isn't for everyone. It's for people who appreciate the

power of language; it's for that person starving for the feel of pulp and yearning for the smooth cadence of ink. It relies on a reader's ability to absorb what's taking place between the lines and knowing what's understood, yet left unsaid.

After several months of correspondence, Cecily Farr—a secretary working for Frank Doel the bookseller—secretly wrote to Helene about how the staff had determined what she must look like. "We love your letters and try to imagine what you look like. I've decided that you're young, and very sophisticated and smart looking. Old Mr. Martin (an owner of the bookstore) thinks you must be quite studious-looking in spite of your wonderful sense of humor" (12). Helene laughed that off and modestly told Cecily to "... tell him I'm so unstudious that I never went to college. And I'm about as smart-looking as a Broadway panhandler. I live in moth-eaten sweaters and wool slacks" (13). What's amazing is Helene's grasp of language even though she's self-taught. Reading a large variety of books, she'd

Continued on the next page..

Yann Martel – 2001 Harcourt, inc. \$14.00; 319 pages
multiple best seller, including *Chicago Tribune & New York Times*.

Man Booker Prize Winner



Life of Pi has nothing to do with math. An Indian child grows up in an Indian zoo, and discovers a deep affection for God. But whoa! there, there; if your beliefs are not in favor of God or indifferent as a donkey, do not turn away for (I promise) there is nothing on deck trying to persuade. Because Piscine "Pi" Patel is nothing of an evangelist, but a passionate son of God the novel is far and vastly informative without that touchy pretext. The boy, of age sixteen at the time, uses Christianity, Hindu and Islam as freeways like a spiritual plexus to his God. In that, there is a point of rolling impor-

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84 continued from page 1

expanded her vocabulary and had only increased her hunger for more to read. She especially loved secondhand books since the previous owner left his own opinions about the novel, whether it's penciled scribbling in the margin, or a worn binding that opened to a passage often visited. Helene gleefully told Frank, "Savage Landor arrived safely and promptly fell open to a Roman dialogue where two cities had just been destroyed by war and everybody was being crucified and begging passing soldiers to run them through and end their agony. It'll be a relief to turn to Aesop or Rhodope where all you have to worry about is a famine. I do love secondhand books that open to the page some previous owner read oftenest" (7).

Throughout her letters, Helene wanted to visit Frank and the Charing Cross Road staff, but most especially London, stacked with its dusty history that's waiting to be read. It was often a sore point for Helene when her friends were able to see London, who were anxious to peek at her "family" that's 3,000 miles away. Her friends Ginny and Ed sent this postcard to her:

"You might have warned us! We walked into your bookstore and said we were friends of yours and were nearly mobbed. Your Frank wanted to take us home for the weekend. Mr. Marks came from the back the store just to shake hands with

friends-of-Miss-Hanff. Everybody in the place wanted to wine and dine us. We barely got out alive."

Frank Doel was Helene's drug supplier, as she was addicted to books. She relied on his vast knowledge and his ability to get them, if not immediately, then he knew where to find them. She demonstrated her loyalty by reassuring Frank, "Never wonder if I've found somewhere else anymore. Why should I run all the way down to 17th St. to buy dirty, badly made books when I can buy clean, beautiful ones from you without leaving the typewriter? From where I sit, London's a lot closer than 17th St." (15).

Frank and Helene share a passion for history and for books themselves. After his death on December 22nd, 1968, Frank's wife Nora wrote a description of him to Helene that spotlighted his gentle nature. "I only wish that you had met Frank and known him personally, he was the most well-adjusted person with a marvelous sense of humor, and now I realize such a modest person, as I have had letters from all over to pay him tribute and so many people in the book trade say he was knowledgeable and imparted his knowledge with kindness to all and sundry" (93).

There are several points within *84, Charing Cross Road* that give historical references to important milestones of our past. Upon hearing from her friend that meat was rationed, she felt outraged and sent over parcels to those at the

bookstore. Its value was well appreciated. While there was an imposed meat ration set at about 20 cents per person per week in 1951, British government aggressively proposed an increase in weapons spending in the billions because of the conflict with Korea and the threat of communism. She told Frank, "Brian told me you are rationed to two ounces of meat per family per week and one egg per person per month and I was appalled" (7). In 1955, Helene asked Frank to cheer for her favorite team, the Brooklyn Dodgers while they were about to play against their most intense rivals, the New York Yankees. "I shall be obliged if you send Nora and the girls to church every Sunday for the next month to pray for the continued health and strength of Messrs, Gilliam, Reese, Snider, Campanella, Robinson, Hodges, Furillo, Podres, Newcombe, and Labine, collectively known as the Brooklyn Dodgers" (61). In 1960, Helene spoke of her political leanings when she commented on newspaper stories that spoke of the Democratic presidential upset over the Republicans. The Democratic nominees were: Lyndon B. Johnson, Stuart Symington, Hubert H. Humphrey, and John F. Kennedy. She says, "I belong to a Democratic club, there were fourteen men over there the other night, eleven of them lawyers. came home and read a couple of newspaper stories about the presidential hopefuls—Stevenson, Humphrey, Kennedy, Stassen, Nixon—all lawyers but Humphrey" (79). Reading these letters connected me to an amazing and personal sense of history.

It's easy to see the power continued on page 3...

84 continued from page 2

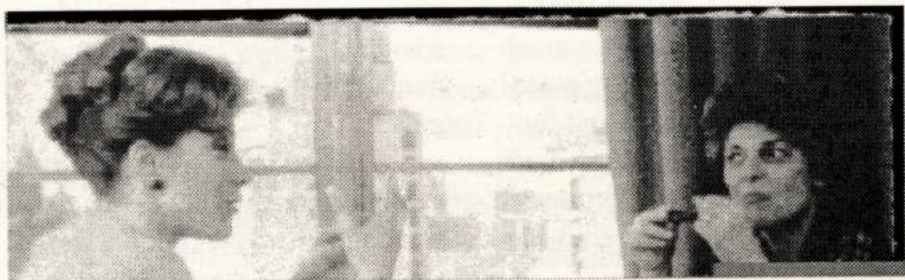
that language has in this work. In a letter to Frank, Helene was appalled over the abuse of the English language that she saw everyday. Since her self-education enlightened her about what the words actually meant, she's horrified that words were contorted and stretched to do things that they weren't meant to do. For example, while she's looking for a new apartment she read a sign that naively stated, "One and Two Bedroom Apartments at Rents That Make Sense." She rightfully pointed out "Rents do NOT make sense. And prices do not sit around being reasonable for anything, no matter what it says in the ad. I go through life watching the English language being raped before my face and like Miniver Cheevy, I cough and call it fate and go on drinking" (69).

Helene's descriptions are so dense with meaning and color that every time I read *84, Charing Cross Road* I gag on it, having to slow down and chew on it slowly and digest every meaning. Whenever I read the description of The Shop by Helene's visiting friend Maxine, I get fat. I can just picture Helene's wistful demeanor with her eyes closed each time that Maxine describes it. "It's dim inside. You smell the shop before you see it; it's a lovely smell. I can't articulate it easily, but it combines must and dust and age, and walls of wood and floors of wood.

The shelves go on forever. They go up to the ceiling and they're old and kind of grey, like old oak that has absorbed so much dust over the years they no longer are their true color" (28). Woe is me, and wistful sigh! I can picture myself there, running my fingers over the tips of the dust-blanketed shelves, glancing at titles in languages unknown, and hearing the creak of the oaken floorboards beneath me.

84, Charing Cross Road was adapted to a play. It was also made into a full-length film in 1987. Directed by David Hugh Jones, it starred Anne Bancroft, making a perfect Helene; Anthony Hopkins, as the impeccable Frank Doe; and Judi Dench, who played Frank's wife, Nora. The film is available on DVD and VHS. The book is enhanced by the movie. It's best to read the book first, and then rent the video. The chemistry between Anne Bancroft and Anthony Hopkins is visual sugar for the soul. It's an easy read, about an hour. However, with each additional reading, I noticed one more phrase, or one more nuance, that I hadn't seen before. The feelings that blanketed me while I read the book and saw the movie stayed with me for hours afterwards, much like a rich tiramisu.

written by Jason Winston



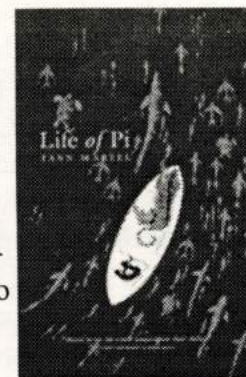
Anne Bancroft as Helene in the film adaptation of *84, Charing Cross Road*.

PI continued from page 1

tance.

But to write more on that would be misleading; the religious aspect is only about a third of the tale.

Zoo keeping heads up a great deal of the novel, mostly to teach animalistic relations, but also to show an ani-



mal's attitude towards a domestic enclosure. One may consequently be convinced zoos are not bad places, assuming no mistreatment.

The third part of the tale is survival when Pi is stranded on a 26-foot lifeboat with an orangutan named Orange Juice, a zebra with a broken leg, a hyena and a Richard Parker on water clouded with sharks. (Sometimes the elements turn a horrible trick on the company.) Not too briefly the company is whittled down to the two strongest. How will it end? can the two ruling personalities coexist? which story do you believe?

Martel tells this story with a clean simplicity that neither shelters nor insults the reader, imperative for the reader to believe the fact within said novel. It is an easy read, one for an otherwise busy week, but not to write a busy essay on, unless one wishes to expound on Pi's zoo to religion comparison (which is not wholly invalid).

Besides...

I am reading *Tropic of*

Continued on p. 5...



She Said Yes

For this report I read the book She Said Yes. This book was written by Misty Bernall, Cassie Bernall's mother. She wrote it in hopes that it would help parents and kids connect. It is a *New York Times* best seller and has sold over a million copies. Misty received the coveted Christopher Award for the book. There are Dutch, German, Italian, Korean, Swedish, Danish, Norwegian, Slovak, Romanian and Spanish translations of the book with more on the way.

Answering a question is a simple task to most. Answering important questions take more thought, but one never imagines they might lose their life over the answer. Cassie Bernall did. She Said Yes is the story of the unlikely martyrdom of Cassie. On April 20th, 1999, at 11 a.m., Cassie walked in the library at Columbine High School to work on her English homework. Within the hour, two gunmen would go on a shooting rampage, killing 14 people, including her. When they spotted her, they asked her if she believed in God. She answered, "Yes." Then they killed her.

The book starts with Misty telling her side of that horrific Tuesday, how the hours dragged and what she went through to find out that her daughter was dead. I would never be able to imagine how that must have felt, but Misty paints such a raw picture that it rips at your heart; you can put yourself there, panicked along with her. Then Misty devotes a chapter to Cassie and her relationship with

her father, Brad. Called "Daddy's Girl," it outlines all the good times they had and some not so good ones.

There are Cassie's cats, algebra, swimming, fishing and rock climbing. There is a vivid recollection of Cassie's dirt bike accident. Misty then details the nightmare she experienced after Cassie's death, and how she felt Brad coped so easily, and how she chose Cassie's final attire for the casket, not a "nice dress", but shirt, jeans, puka shell necklace and the Doc Martins Cassie always wore. She was upset that the lining was pink, she said *no pink*; Cassie was her daddy's girl.

The next part of the book was heartbreaking to read. It was all about Cassie's problems before Columbine. How she plotted to kill a teacher with her best friend, and wrote how she hated her parents and family. There were many notes discovered by Misty about the occult and death and dying, how her friend urged her to kill herself. Misty knew her friend, Mona (not her real name), was a bad influence from when they met in the fifth grade. But she didn't know how to deal with it because, she said, you want your child to have friends and be liked and connect with someone. Misty and Brad confronted Cassie and after much yelling and argument, they pulled Cassie out of her school and forbade her to see Mona. They made the decision right there to transfer Cassie to the Christian Fellowship School.



The next chapter describes the struggles early on they had to endure. Cassie would scream in rages and argue every day. Misty and Brad played emotional "tag team." They forbade Cassie to do anything: no

phone calls, no going out. If Misty went out for an errand, Cassie would pick up that phone and call Mona. So Misty and Brad installed a recording device into the phone and searched her backpack and her room frequently. Cassie wrote an essay a few years later and said that she hated being at CFS and that the other kids hated her. Misty recalls the process of rebuilding their relationship: regaining her trust, being more the parent, not the friend, and being with Cassie. Then Cassie made a friend, Jamie. She wasn't what Misty expected a nice Christian girl to be, but found out she was really warm. Jamie recalls that at first Cassie was really closed off, hopeless, angry, and suicidal. Misty felt Cassie was becoming less loyal to her old friends, but they harassed them so much that they were forced to move.

Then there was a u-turn. At a youth retreat in the spring, Cassie went and changed. People from the retreat saw it too, and her par-

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YES from previous page
ents saw it, but weren't completely convinced. Misty says that the most growing happened after that turning point. Cassie wanted to go to Columbine to "witness" to many other kids. After her death, peers stated how what happened didn't surprise them. Cassie standing up for what she believed in was who she was. As Cassie changed, so did her tastes. She now loved photography, poetry and nature and LOVED Shakespeare. Cassie at times missed her old friends and hoped they could find what she found. Misty shares notes Cassie and her friend wrote. Cassie mentions God in all of them and her faith and her struggles with her faith. She was really open about it to her friend and the youth group.

Cassie is called the "martyr of Littleton." Misty isn't sure if Cassie should have that title. She says it's unlikely she is labeled that because before she was a martyr, she was a teen. Misty says that Cassie was a stronger woman than she herself will ever be. She says how Cassie wouldn't be comfortable with the label. Misty says that the world looks at Cassie's "yes" of April 20, but we need to look at the daily "yes" she said. Cassie's story isn't just Misty's and Brad's, it belongs to whoever reads it and what they do with it to give it meaning.

I have shared parts of it, and have truly taken it to heart. I'm touched by the true emotion that pours out of the book. I thought it was one of the best books I ever read. It made me think what I would do in her situation. It makes me thank God

everyday that I have to live for him. It made me thank him for listening to me, the teenager, the less than holy, for believing in me. It made me realize how small I was, and yet how I can make a difference. This book will touch me every time I read it, and I hope if you chose to read it, it will touch you too.

written by Kristen Kleinau

Tender is the Night

Barnes and Noble \$14.99

Gatsby's not the only great

Tender is the Night, by F. Scott Fitzgerald; quite possibly has it all. It has murder, mystery, intrigue, romance, action, suspense and charm. The book from start to finish has an air of aristocratic wit that paints a vivid picture of the procession of action. The opening scene starts the reader in the French Riviera, but the characters, being wealthy socialites, move all over Europe and the United States with each change of scenery creating more suspense until the culmination.

The book is written with the narrator as omniscient. He sees all, knows all. There is also a lot of dialog spliced into the depictions of the narrator. This style of writing is very poignant because the reader is able to see the contrast between what a character is saying and what that character actually thinks of the situation. The narrator pays particular attention to the three main
continued on next page...

PI Continued from page 3

Cancer at the time of this writing. Every printed character is the best book I've read, but would anyone but a writer know that, so...so what? I don't know how many of you already know that this is not writing, probably not enough. To accomplish that, one still has to lose their humanity, become inhuman- Henry Miller's idea, not mine.

Why, then are you reading words in black ink on white paper? If they've not been written, what are you reading? Type. ob-la-di. Typing my opinions without much desire, there is little meaning here to you or me. Truthfully, I'd rather be reading Miller than citing him, and have everyone else do **similarly**. But that's not going to happen, because writers are always a dying lot, and our era wants not just life but youth and not just speed but pleasantries. Granted, the reader-writer relationship, that bond Holden Caulfield describes as a pick-up-the-phone-to-call relationship is hard to find in any generation. Yet here you read an article written in another formula to an **end**, with little concern for the process.

All of this is to be reflected on Mr. Martel's work; he is a high-end average writer, and you might read his book, *Life of Pi*, and you would probably enjoy it, which is an assumption based on my own informal survey. But, you should also read Henry Miller's books, too; he is a Writer. Don't be offended by the profane lifestyle that he is; he's inhuman.

written by rachel shine

PRODUCE, WERE IT BUT THE INFINITESIMAL FRACTION OF A PRODUCT... 'TIS THE UTMOST THOU HAST IN THEE; OUT WITH IT! UP, UP!

NIGHT from page 5



F. Scott in 1926

characters of the story: Rosemary, Dick, Nicole. The story is told from each character's stance to the point where it feels like that character is telling the story.

The book is divided into three parts giving each character their own book, in a sense. The first section is defined by the events that a young Rosemary Hoyt encounters. Rosemary is a budding starlet from California who ventured on vacation with her mother to Europe. The story starts with the pair checking into the Gause's Hotel. Rosemary is quite unsatisfied with her surroundings and expresses this to her mother, but her opinion changes when she encounters the charismatic Dr. Dick Diver. Diver is already married, but Rosemary, with the encouragement of her mother, decides to pursue Dick anyway.

Rosemary is a very innocent character in the beginning of our story. She has just finished her first starring role in a movie, *Daddy's Little Girl*, which describes her to a T. She is still quite young, just turning eighteen as the story begins. She is not used to being famous and, for that matter, is just getting her legs as her own woman. The encounter with Dick Diver is a piv-

otal point in young Rosemary's life because it is the point at which her mother does not solely retain her affection.

The story shifts from its focus at the beginning of book two when Dick Diver, just out of medical school, first meets his future bride Nicole. The scene is set in Zurich in 1917. Dick is visiting a friend and fellow psychologist Franz Gregorovius at the Zurchsee's clinic. Upon leaving from the visit Dick noticed a beautiful young woman, Nicole, in the garden of the hospital. They walk and talk, and Dick leaves an address at where he can be reached. Over the next year Nicole writes vigorously to Dick and it is in the letters that he finds she is a patient at the hospital and wasn't just visiting. Dick becomes intrigued and when he returns he consults Franz about his predicament. Dick decides to court and eventually marry Nicole. At the beginning of the courting Dick finds out that Nicole is quite wealthy. Dick is a noble man and wants to provide for his house, so in the beginning of the marriage the money is kept separated, Dick's and Nicole's. As time progresses the couple starts living a more elegant life off of the wealth acquired by Nicole.

Fitzgerald also delves into the psychotic mind of Nicole Diver as a part of book two. This is a very intricate picture because Nicole suffers from Schizophrenia. The narrator goes into depth of some of Nicole's thoughts, and through this view the reader gets a chilled and somewhat disturbing view of what

it feels like to have voices in the head.

Nicole stars in book three. She is starting to realize that she has what it takes to be her own woman. She no longer needs Dick as a crutch to which she leans on for her own sanity. As Nicole gets better it seems that Dick gets worse and eventually loses self-control with help from the massive amounts of alcohol he drinks to escape. Nicole and Dick start to drift and Nicole finds refuge in the arms of another man.

This is a must read for those seeking "The Great American Novel." It is full of twist and turns that keep the reader guessing and the story interesting. The story does have its happier moments, but for the most part is dismal. It leaves the reader with the belief that true love doesn't exist.

written by Joe Meister Jr.

Literal Starvation

"In 1990 the number of illiterates in the Arab states was 61 million, representing 48.7% of the population at the age of 15 and above." This statement was reported at the regional Arab conference on education this year in Cairo and reported on ArabNews.com. It is still over 68 million people today, 38 percent of the Arab community. Individual countries do have their own statistics, and some have virtually eliminated the problem of illiteracy. ArabNews.com reports Jordan, Palestine, United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Kuwait have

Continued on page 7...

"YER SELF AS STEAM"

Continued from page 6

reached this point.

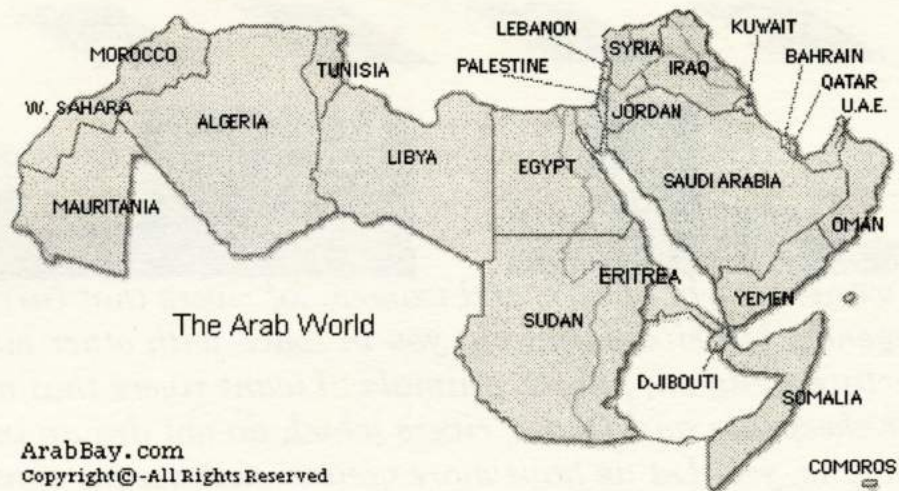
Places where illiteracy is a large problem harms the educational system and thus tampers with the inter-country relations without capacity or drive towards diplomatic problem-solving. Morocco, Iran, Yemen, Algeria, Oman and Egypt are among the countries in that situation, wrote ArabNews.com.

Wednesday, November

12th, the *Chicago Tribune* ran an article concerning the nearly unbelievable low literacy habit in Arab countries.

Authors, teachers, intellectuals of every developed nation complain people do not read enough these days; in Arab countries like Egypt, a best seller sells 5,000 copies in an area of 280 million people, and most books never print more than 1,000 copies.

It is not entirely that they cannot read; the Arab population simply doesn't anymore. Publisher Ibrahim al-Mowallem blames the depression on the prevailing feeling of hopelessness. Their economy is so stagnant that people cannot afford to pay 25 Egyptian pounds (\$3.50 in American dollars) for a book said Cairo University professor and translator Ahmed Mostageer. Was that not a problem, "reading and writing are impaired by censorship, poor education, religious fundamentalism and war," reported the article from the first UN report on the subject, written by Arab scholars. Islamic fundamentalism is on the rise, only to restrict publishing in a direct relation. Though five percent of the world's population is Arabic,



only 1.1 percent of the world's books are published there. And, it takes much longer for a book to be translated into Arabic; five times as many books are translated into Greek each year, though Greek is spoken by almost 270 million people less than the population of the Arab world.

The scholars reported the amount of red tape writers and publishers must please. To be published in all Arab countries, 22 countries' censors need to approve. "The noose is so tight that very little squeezes through," said Nader Fergany, the report's head writer. Aficionados searching for rare and any person looking for a title congregated at the Ezbekiya gardens over a decade ago. Since then, the city put a parking garage and subway stop there, and drove away the culture. Though the gardens have re-opened, the businesses have never recovered.

"We have the Ministry of Culture on one side, and the fundamentalists on the other," said Gamal Al Ghitany author and editor of the literary journal, al Akbar al Adab "Culture is caught in the middle."

Books are not the single sufferers, either. Today newspapers are printed in quantities of 5 per 1,000, whereas in "developed nations" 285 per 1,000 are printed.

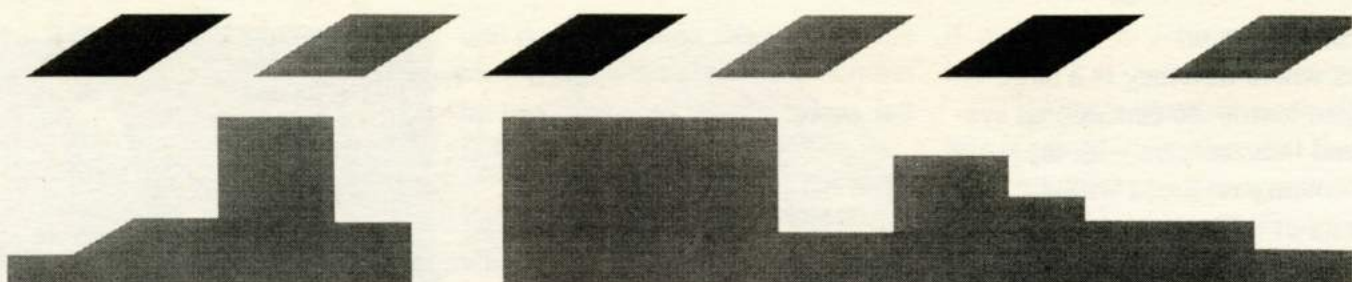
Ahmed Al-Shahawi is an Egyptian poet whose book *Commandments for Loving Women* was banned by Al-Azhar University in Cairo, the highest authority of Sunni Islam on the grounds that, in the opinion of the University, the passages desecrated Islam.

The poet intends to promote his book regardless of the ban. "I will challenge them and publish the book ten times over" Al-Shahawi declared in a room full of years of old newspapers.


Banned and censored books have their fighters, though the danger arguably outweighs the end. Dismissing the religious declarations, or *fatwa*, has resulted in death for some.

Mahfouz, an Egyptian who won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1988, was stabbed by a militant group who cited the fatwa of Al-Azhar as the catalyst of the attack.

written by Rachel Shine



I want a world of men and women...of rivers that carry you places, not rivers of legends, but rivers that put you in touch with other men and women, with architecture, religion, plants, animals...I want rivers that make oceans like Shakespeare and Dante, rivers which do not dry up in the void of the past. Oceans, yes! Let us have more oceans, new oceans that blot out the past, oceans that create new geological formations, new topographical vistas and strange, terrifying continents, oceans that destroy and preserve at the same time, oceans that we sail on, take off to new discoveries, new horizons. Henry Miller Tropic of Cancer



Local News...

CREATIVE WRITING CLUB

Did you know we have one?

Every Friday, 2:00, L220.

Staff-Students-Faculty-friends-of-students- no one to be excluded!

bring five copies of *anything* you've written to be commented on, courteously critiqued.

((tentative))

SPRING 2004 HONORS

CLASSES

are posted in the office (L334):
 ENG 102 ("The Beats")
 SPE 101 w/ Jeff Pryzbylo
 AST 101 w/ Paul Sipiera
 HUM/HST 105 w/ R. Johnson
 PSY 228 w/ Linda Campbell
 LIT 115 w/ Andrew Wilson
 MKT 245 w/ Maria Coons
 IDS 290 *Challenger*

PTK Food Drive

Met and exceeded their target amount!

-aim was 6,100 items
 -projected final count is 8,000 items.

Next:

Red Cross Adopt-a-Family

will be collecting **new** clothing, (non-perishable) food, and toys. call LAURA with questions at 847-845-8875.

* "yer self as steam" is a Mercury Rev album

* the quote @ the bottom of page five is a fraction from a piece of artwork in the Krannert gallery at the University of Illinois.

...til the sky turns blue.

Point of View

calls for creative works, two and three dimensional artwork, fiction, poetry, photography, screenplays, essays for Harper's independent publication.

again,

students, faculty, staff, administration and board members are all asked to submit their work

by: December 10, 2003

to: Anne Davidovicz

-office L324

!CASH PRIZES to those chosen!

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