

Anna Ford v Martin Amis – the final episode (for now)

Latest letter adopts conciliatory tone over smoking at her husband's deathbed but Ford still claims Amis failed to help her

Charlotte Higgins, chief arts writer
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Article history



Anna Ford: agrees it was Christopher Hitchens who 'fugged up the room so densely with cigarette smoke I had to open the window'. Photograph: Claire Greenway/Getty Images

Just when you thought you had heard the last of the epistolary fisticuffs between Anna Ford and her late husband's friends [Martin Amis](#) and [Christopher Hitchens](#), we bring you a final open letter from Ford that, she hopes, will bring the row to an end. The original dispute, slugged out on the Guardian's letters page, involved the question of whether or not Amis had smoked at the deathbed of Ford's husband, his friend Mark Boxer.

Ford now admits she wrongly accused the novelist on that count. Instead, she agrees, it was Hitchens who "fugged up the room so densely with your 'one cigarette' that I had to open the window". Hitchens owned up to that in his own contribution, in another letter the Guardian.

But she does hit out at Amis and Hitchens for their failure to give support to her when she was widowed, shortly after the sickbed visit in question in 1988. She told the Guardian yesterday that she had received "not a letter, not a thing" from either of them. "Other people helped, but Martin and Christopher – not at all."

On today's letters page, she writes: "Of course you both loved him but odd that his other dear friends allowed their profound love to overflow towards helping his widow and very small children in the immediate aftermath."

Still, other parts of the letter have a conciliatory tone. Descending to the vernacular, Ford addresses Hitchens and Amis as "Dear chaps".

Hitchens did not hold back in his contribution to the fray. In his letter he called Ford's criticisms "spiteful and false".

Ford has refrained from retaliating in similar terms. She told the

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Guardian she did not feel bullied by Amis's and Hitchens' co-ordinated counteroffensive: "I don't mind that, because that's what they do." She even said that she feels "a tiny bit sorry for Martin".

There is a further, and yet more bizarre, twist in this saga. The Guardian has also received a letter from Trader Faulkner, an 82-year-old former actor and flamenco dancer. Amis borrowed Faulkner's name for a character in his novel *A Night Train*.

They had met, writes Faulkner, when Amis was a child actor on the Alexander MacKendrick film *A High Wind in Jamaica* (1964). He refused to take part in a rumba that Faulkner, who played a pirate on the film, had choreographed. "You stood apart with a mug of tea and absolutely refused to be any part of it." His point? "You are a good writer, but get over the chip and learn to laugh at yourself."

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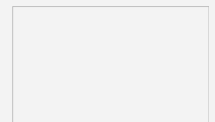
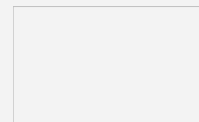
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