

Time Out

London's weekly guide

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From down under...
Crowded House hit the road
...to over easy
The good brunch guide

SUMMER BOOKS SPECIAL

THE NEW BRUTALITY

FICTION GETS NASTY
WITH TALES OF SEX,
DEATH AND OBSESSION

Plus:

How to write a
blockbuster & the
pick of summer's
hottest reading

Complete
8 day

TV

Pages of sin

Angst, violence, and alienation are the latest literary obsessions vying for a place on our holiday reading lists. In this summer books special Maria Lexton (below) analyses the zeitgeist reflected by the sharpest new writers, Yvonne Roberts tackles Catharine MacKinnon, this year's loony American feminist, Sophy Kershaw gives tips on writing a totally cynical blockbuster (p30) and Karen Moline shares her bleak vision of life in our chilling extract (p24). Brutality and the beach, anyone?

Summer reading

Our selection of the hottest holiday books.

'The Mexican Tree Duck'

James Crumley, Picador
£15.99 hb

First novel for ten years by leading contemporary cult crime novelist Crumley features CW Sugrue, anti-hero of 'The Last Good Kiss', on the trail of a kidnapped woman. His only clue – the hollowed-out sculpture of a duck.



'Bardot: Two Lives'

Jeffrey Robinson, Simon & Schuster £17.99 hb

A detailed portrait of the child who started life as 'a homely little girl' with glasses, braces, thin hair and bad eczema and became the internationally famous sex kitten of the '60s who now devotes her life to caring for animals.

'Every Woman Deserves an Adventure'

Yvonne Roberts, Macmillan
£9.99 hb

Kay, bored with being respectable, responsible and reliable, infuriated with her husband's infidelity, embarks on a sexual odyssey, intent on proving that the female of the species is equally capable of playing Casanova.

Art imitates life... or does life imitate art? Do novelists only reflect or can they actually direct the moral chaos of society? The literature of the '60s, freed from censorship by the 1960 court case which cleared 'Lady Chatterley's Lover' of charges of obscenity, was characterised by explicit sexual scenes. The '70s saw the surge of female liberation and women's vociferous demands for equality in the bedroom and boardroom, while the fiction of the greedy '80s placed sex with money and power as a commodity for barter. But just as society is caught in the grip of mass alienation, '90s writing has become synonymous with nihilism, its exponents intent on exploring a New Brutality.

You could trace this trend back to 'The Secret History', Donna Tartt's '92 Nietzschean exploration of gratuitous murder which stormed the bestseller charts on both sides of the Atlantic. That in turn was dedicated to Bret Easton Ellis, author of the infamous 'American Psycho' of the previous year, a tale of designer mass murder which provoked a debate between those who found the book senseless and sickening and those who saw it as an analogy for the decline of Western civilisation. The decline is now official.

The voice of the dispossessed can be heard in the prose of Edinburgh-based Irvine Welsh. His first novel, 'Trainspotting', was hailed as the sound of punk grown up, and the eloquence of his debut is echoed in 'The Acid House', a collection of stories released earli-

er this year. The characters are, variously, depraved, vicious, cowardly and manipulative, as caustic a comment on modern urban living as Roddy Doyle's Charlo in the bleak TV drama series 'Family'.

Bleakness features centre-stage in Martin Millar's 'Dreams of Sex and Stage Diving', in a desperate depiction of London inhabited by the hopeless, ruled by the heedless. Success and wealth can't always shield society's victims from their fate. In 'Exposure', Kathryn Harrison's disturbing first novel, we encounter Ann Rogers, a thirtysomething society photographer with a prosperous husband and a dream loft for a home, who is out of control, juggling destructively with drugs and diabetes, compulsively lying and stealing, her mind and body screaming out in revolt. Helen Zahavi, author of 'Dirty Weekend', makes an attempt at a twentieth-century 'Story of O' with 'True Romance', a hypnotically paced tale of sex and submission in Little Venice, west London. Sex and obsession form the driving tension at the heart of Simon Becket's 'Fine Lines', a menacingly sinister analysis of passion and possession that is as cold as an arctic landscape.

Sex, submission, obsession and possession make an irresistible combination in Karen Moline's novel 'Lunch' (extracted on page 24), an erotic shocker that portrays with a deadly accuracy the dues exacted for decadent indulgence, '90s style. 'And as things fell apart/Nobody paid much attention.'

Tunnel vision

Catharine MacKinnon and Andrea Dworkin are the Cagney and Lacey of the feminist thought police. In 'Only Words' MacKinnon tackles the subject of female sexuality, but Yvonne Roberts finds her ideal of a porn-free Utopia a ridiculous, chilling prospect.

Peter Sutcliffe, the Yorkshire Ripper, didn't have a cellar full of porn. What really turned him on was a waxwork museum which displayed pregnant women and those infected by venereal disease. As Elizabeth Wilson has written, 'It is the imagination which is pornographic, not the image.' Tell that to American feminist Catharine MacKinnon. In her writing since the '80s, she has consistently refused to acknowledge the versatility of the

human mind in her effort to cage the beast of rapacious male lust.

The best form of attack on the manifestations of this corner of the imagination is not suppression, as MacKinnon advocates, but subversion. If we confront the complexities and contradictions of the darker side in all of us, we will learn more about our true sexuality and what distorts it.

Catharine MacKinnon is an American professor of



Pen and kinks

Karen Moline talks dirty with Maria Lexton.

They say size doesn't matter. And in the case of the book billed as 'the most erotic novel of '94' it's true. Karen Moline's 'Lunch' (extracted, left) is as aesthetically pleasing as a sheer silk stocking. The book is endowed with slick typography and a clean, minimalist layout. The text lies between silken covers depicting a naked woman. 'Yes,' smiles Karen Moline. 'It's a one-hander, as certain men I know have told me.'

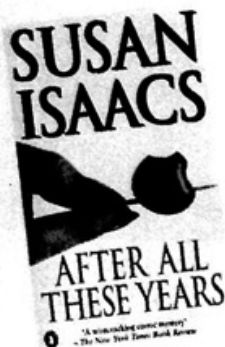
This, her debut novel, is a graphic tale of sex, obsession and subjugation which skirts the limits of pornography. 'I don't consider it porn. I think it is erotic,' Moline says. 'But why is it a *topic* when women write it? Why shouldn't we be able to write blatant sex?'

Moline is a New York-based working journalist, specialising in the celebrity interview, and has interviewed hundreds: 'I got completely fed up with the cult of celebrity: who these people are, where they came from, and what happens to your psyche when no one ever says no to you.' From the detritus of these assorted characters she's culled Nick Muncie, superstar and A1 hunk: 'sleekly dark and chiselled... he is top of the pops at the box office... he just has to open his mouth and bare his pecs and flash the butt shot, there, and with those few seconds you've packed a few million more in the cinemas, squirming with wet desire.' But it is *his* desire for portrait painter Olivia Morgan, who appears oblivious to his charms, that drives the momentum of this *folie à deux*.

'I wanted to write about Americans in London,' says Moline, 'because I wanted to give the story a sense of dislocation.' 'Lunch' is indeed imbued with a sense of disorientation, its prose etched into the page with the strength of a knife carving granite, taking the reader into a dark labyrinth of sexual perversity. 'And it would never have happened had she not been late for lunch.' ■

Dave Thompson, Pan £4.99 pb
Thompson, author of a biography of the Red Hot Chili Peppers and a forthcoming book on Depeche Mode, focuses on the short life and fast times of Kurt Cobain, tracing his childhood in Aberdeen, north of Seattle, where he was passed from relative to relative after his parents divorced, to his position as the driving force of Nirvana, responsible for converting grunge from an underground sound to a global success, leading to his increasing drug intake and suicide.

'A Season in Purgatory' Dominick Dunne, Bantam £5.99 pb
America's leading chronicler of the transgressions of high society, Dominick Dunne's latest novel concerns a prominent, rich, ruthless, dynastic Irish Catholic family not unlike the Kennedys, their wayward son, a covered-up murder in the past, and a protracted courtroom battle.



'After All These Years' Susan Isaacs, Penguin £4.99 pb
Richie Meyers left his wife Rosie the morning after their Silver Wedding celebrations, only to reappear four months later - flat out on the kitchen floor with a knife in his back. When Rosie realises she is the obvious, and only, suspect she runs to Manhattan to hunt the murderer and finds more than she bargained for.

'Lasher' Anne Rice, Penguin £5.99 pb
This is the witch-dynasty sequel to 'The Witching Hour' and rivals Rice's shopping 'n' sucking vampire chronicles in sweep and scale, whizzing through an exhausting roll-call of cities and centuries populated with eye-flashing villains and heaving young bosoms.

Route of all evil

As Olivia prepares for her date, she little suspects the nightmare that awaits her, a carefully set trap designed to humiliate and excite. We present an exclusive extract from Karen Moline's novel, 'Lunch'.

The soft layers of tissue paper in the box are a delicate mauve, the colour of hyacinths.

There is a lovely small jewelled handbag on top in the shape of a miniature panther, encrusted with jet crystals and rhinestones, its eyes glowing green emeralds, lined in ultramarine velvet, a small pouch inside filled with make-up: porcelain foundation, black mascara and eyeliner, deep crimson lipstick. She applies it carefully, her face an ashen mask with darkly stained lips, then dabs on perfume from the tiny vial also found in the pouch, a strange, pungent scent, invigorating and bittersweet, she has never smelled before.

Next is a bra, long enough almost to be a bustier, of the finest shimmery black silk, like velvet against her skin. Its only peculiarity is the straps of the narrowest strips of silk, detachable, she notices, bound in leather. It fits her perfectly. Olivia marvels at the fine stitches, fingering the meticulous workmanship, wondering who Nick had paid to make such a beautiful, odd thing, wondering how he had taken her measurements quite so precisely, not just the bustier but the knickers in matching black silk, no more than whispers embroidered with black roses, and the silk suspender belt, edged in the same narrow leather, with leather suspenders.

It is such a cliché, this outfit, she tells herself as she rolls up the smooth silk stockings, trying not to snag them on her fingernails, and she finds herself laughing unexpectedly in nervous reaction. It is all so typically over the top, so much like Nick, this drama, so fragile and so tough, like the strange perfume, and as undeniably erotic as it is ridiculous.

The shirt is a simple white Egyptian cotton button-down. The skirt is equally simple, lined black silk, flowing fluidly down to her calves, fastening with one large button at her hip.

Down at the bottom of the box is a thin black leather belt, coiled snake-like in its mauve tissue paper, its buckle glistening with the same jet beads of the panther bag. The shoes are butter-soft and slender, with heels higher than any she'd ever worn. They make her much taller, her calves painful slim knots, and she wishes she could kick them off, wishes she could run barefoot down the stairs and into the street, run barefoot across the frozen dull grass of the park, run down Queens Gate, frozen the corner, tripping over the slick cobblestones of the mews, her body shivering, her feet cut and bleeding, leading her home, into her studio, locking the door behind her as she slides down to her own floor, exhausted, panting for breath, home, alone, safe.

He won't hurt you. I won't let him.

Her body is shivering, here in the flat, she realises as she looks at herself in the gilded mirror by the fireplace. A shiver of dread or a shiver of anticipation, she cannot tell the difference, dressed in the deliberate ritual of Nick's instructions, and she sees herself as an apparition in black and white with pale strained eyes.

She moves closer to the mirror, unsteady in her heels on the thick carpeting, still mesmerised by her appearance. My eyes do not leave her as I quickly adjust the focus.

It is a stranger's gaze, she tells herself, it isn't me, this provocative creature, this costumed alien dress-

ing up in someone else's clothes on the way to a ball where she and Nick will be the only dangers on a sprung floor, sweeping round the candlelit room, intoxicated with each other even as they spin faster and faster, out of control in a dizzying waltz, while I lurk behind the violins and the cellos, watching, mute.

She has never looked more alluring, more expectant, more vulnerable. More terrified.

She stretches out her fingers and touches the mirror. She is staring at her reflection, her soul full in her eyes, confused, brave, loving, staring straight at me, so close I can almost hear her breathing, just on the other side of the mirror. Gently, I place my fingers up next to the lens, careful not to jar it, or make a noise.

If the wall dissolved, we would be touching.

When the buzzer sounds she nearly jumps out of her skin.

When, finally, she'd turned away and gone to sit on the bed, nervously expectant, careful not to muss her outfit, I shut off the equipment and hurried out, cautiously silent in the hall lest I made a sound she'd not heard before in the flat, down to the Daimler Nick had waiting. I nodded to him and he slipped out of the driver's seat, clad in his leather biker gear, pulled on a helmet, quickly mounted the Harley I'd already parked a few doors away, and turned the bike around to wait at the corner, out of Olivia's sight line, till she came outside.

He wants to see her get into the car, just to be sure.

I press the buzzer, open the back door of the car, and get behind the wheel. I see Olivia in the driver's side mirror, and when she slides in and pulls the door shut, I once again throw the locks and pull away.

It has started to rain, and the inside of the car is very dark. Olivia sits so still, rigid, near the door she thinks she can open, that a few moments pass before she notices a small box, identical to the one I'd given her the day before, on the armrest in the middle of the seat. She holds it in her lap, afraid to open it.

No one saw me leave, she is saying to herself, this is completely crazy, what am I doing, no one in the world knows where I am and where I'm going, except Nick. Except M, if it is indeed he who is driving, I can't tell, the partition is up.

He won't hurt you. I won't let him.

She opens this box to find a weightless object nestled in the same delicate mauve tissue, and unwraps it to find a simple oblong of black silk, many layers sewn together to make it opaque, edged with the narrowest strips of black leather. At first she thinks it is a scarf, until she sees Nick's embossed cream card pinned to its bottom.

Twice round your eyes, it says.

A nameless core of dread has begun to throb deep inside her, and her only means of containing it is to press her legs together, tensing her in place, tingling, she cannot stop the tingling, one hand on her knees, the other on the wide armrest as the car twists smoothly through unfamiliar streets. What is he going to do to me that he hasn't already done, she is wondering, trying not to panic, I don't want to not see. What can he do that he doesn't want me to see? The silk is so soft, a harmless piece of fabric, growing damp with sweat in her fingers for so long that I am getting even more nervous myself.

He is asking her to blind herself, she realises, an ir-

revocable gesture of acquiescence more significant to him than any other, to offer herself as a willing accomplice, a faceless slave, deprived of her eyes, her true self.

She had seen through him with those eyes, and this is his vengeance.

After an interminable moment she finally bends forward so her hair falls down over her head, and winds the silk twice round her eyes, finishing with a large knot in the back.

Her chest is heaving when she sits up, and I drive faster to the rendezvous. He is waiting, on the bike, at the far, deserted end of a large parking lot, and when he sees the car he stands up, ready, poised, pulling off the helmet only at the last second in case anyone should recognise him.

Olivia feels the car turn, slow, and stop.

Her door opens, and she turns her head towards the noise. The other door opens. She is confused, but it is only me, following instructions, opening the door and shutting it again.

There is an arm around her neck. She hasn't the time to call out before a strip of tape covers her mouth. She can't help panicking, desperate, but the weight of the man who moves so quickly is crushing her, his legs pinioning hers so she can't move, she can't see, this can't be Nick, he smells of acrid cigar smoke and leather, she has forgotten Nick came to her once as a biker, she cannot think, or remember, she can barely breathe, he smells far more frightening, a sickening animal perfume of lust and anger. In a flash he handcuffs her wrists together, lifting up the armrest to attach them to the long, strong chain he had securely fastened there the day before, then shoves her down on her back, unbuckles her belt and whips it free, pulls off her shoes, unfastens her skirt and pulls it down and off, unhooks the stocking from her garters and zips them off her legs, rips off her knickers, rips off her suspender belt, swiftly ties the leather belt round her ankles, yanks her rudely upright and rips the shoulder seams of her shirt so it falls nearly in two pieces, the front still buttoned, then unhooks the thin leather straps and the back fastening of her bra, leaving her sitting as she'd been, panting, unable to scream, or move, suffocating in sheer terror, completely nude, stripped of everything but the ruby cross dangling between her breasts and the blindfold wrapped twice round her eyes.

It has taken less than a minute.

She feels him watching, although she cannot see the smug panther's smile of satisfaction curving his lips, before he finally moves away. She hears the door open and shut, and the car starts moving again.

The acknowledgement of her terror is unendurable. I'd squeezed my eyes shut, my hands clamped so tight on the steering wheel my arms were shaking, even though I couldn't really see anything, Nick's back blocking her from sight. He wouldn't divulge any details of what he'd planned, only that I should drive exactly where he told me to, highlighting my route in the A to Z street guide, and not dream of trying anything that might screw up his warped intentions.

I have to drive. I can't stop this, I don't know how. I have to keep my eyes glued forward, through the windshield, on the road, while Olivia is a helpless captive, pinioned in the back seat of a Daimler, creeping through London.

She has been helpless before, but always in the haven of the flat, their safe house, hidden from the world, not like this, moving through nothingness, uprooted and suspended, blind and disoriented, through a dark void into the unknown, unearthly and terrible, far from anyone or anything she's ever experienced, her self debased, nothing more than an object waiting to be taken.

That is the horror of it.

And I let him do it.

I only drive a short distance, stopping and turning, once around the parking lot, actually, long enough to confuse her further, as if she could possibly be more confused, and let Nick strip off his leather gear, which he will hand to me through my window.

The car stops, turns around, the back door opens and shuts, she feels him there, she cannot see that he is silently taking off his cashmere sweats but she smells the animal lust rolling off him in nauseating waves, and instinctively tries to pull away, unable to scream, trembling uncontrollably, dreading what must be coming, but there is nowhere to go.

This isn't Nick, this can't be Nick.

'Are you afraid?' a voice says, low and whispered into her ear as the man moves closer. 'Afraid of me? Afraid of what I am going to do to you?'

She has heard this voice before, somewhere, she cannot think in her panic.

'Afraid you might like it? Like it too much?' The voice so sweet, tender pleading, a cruel whisper in her ear, mocking her helplessness.

'Are you afraid?' The voice is insistent, imploring. He hasn't yet started to

touch her, his voice is like a small puff of wind running through her hair. 'Nod your head if you are.'

She nods, even more scared not to.

His hands are in her hair, fistfuls of it, pulling her head closer to him, she can almost hear his heart, skipping wildly.

'I want you to be afraid,' he says, his voice still a whisper, hoarse, rasping. 'I wanted you to live through one moment of undiluted, inexpressible terror.' His hands clamped in her hair, lowering her head on to his lap. She can feel his eyes on her, and her panic cowering beneath them in abject dread, dark and bottomless, she can feel him, gigantic, she knows this is exactly what he wants her to feel, terrorised for what seems like an eternity of cruel suspense, exulting in his mastery, how hard he is, how strong, how despicably determined to take her, scornful and inexorable.

She is nothing.

'I want you to be afraid,' the hideous voice is still saying, 'I want you to know how it feels, because that's how Nick feels, all the time, without you.'

If Nick hadn't taken so much pleasure in this unforgivable brutality, I might almost have pitied him.

'Afraid,' he says. He is trembling almost as much as she is, tense, quavering, not in fear, trembling with the anticipation of the long-awaited gratification of the most genuine expression of his desire, the sublime descent into evil, the need physically to overpower so strong in him, so warped, that it drowns all rationale, obviating all he'd never dared reveal to Olivia, knowing she would rebuff it, and him, disgusted.

He no longer cares, he has nothing to lose. He will risk it, risk all for a few minutes of supremely venal indulgence, unmerciful, ruthlessly inhaling the essence of Olivia. She is nothing but a body imprisoned beneath him, cuffed and bound, obedient to the brutality of whatever he will demand from her.

Let her try to fly away. Let her try to end it. She is unhaveable, and will escape no matter what he does to her now.

But he will not let her go without one last savage farewell.

In a swift, cruel gesture he suddenly rips off her gag, tumbles her over, pushing her down before she can open her mouth to scream, pushing into her till she is choking and the tears are streaming down her cheeks and just as suddenly pushing her back up, sitting her on his lap, one hand replacing the gag with a slap and the other cupping her breasts, pinching them, his hands a frenzy of motion, uncontrollable.

'Not Part of the Package: A Year in Ibiza'

Paul Richardson, Pan £5.99

pb

An excellent account of both the island that tourists see and the land that still supports a colourful rural lifestyle – home to hippies and artists from all over Europe. Richardson manages to create a vivid picture of how the island changes throughout the year in both character and appearance.



'America'

Robert Crumb, Knockabout £8.99

'Keep on Truckin'; 'Fritz the Cat'; 'Mr Natural'; the melting-faced dope smoker: icons of the '60s that established Robert Crumb as one of the great underground cartoonists of his day, but did nothing to prepare his public for what followed. For two decades, Crumb alienated just about everyone, especially the hippie generation, with his bizarre sexual fantasies and his depressive misanthropy. It's only recently, thanks to compilations like these, that he is becoming justly recognised as one of a handful of comic 'artists' who fully deserve the second term. He is now revered in his new home of France, where he moved for reasons that become abundantly clear when you read this book.



'Milk and Cheese'

Evan Dorkin, Slave Labor £7.99

As serialised in *Deadline* magazine and worn on Darleen's boyfriend's T-shirt, this tale of dairy products gone bad is about the funniest tale of cartoon-sized ultra-violence ever committed to paper. Do yourself a favour: catch up with these cereal killers before they catch up with you.

'Felidae'

Akif Pirinçci, *Fourth Estate*
£4.99 pb

When feline narrator Francis, together with doting owner Gustav, moves into a dilapidated wreck of a house that smells of death, he is barely surprised to discover the putrefying corpse of a cat in the garden... and soon learns that a serial cat killer is on the prowl.

'What A Carve Up!'

Jonathan Coe, *Viking* £9.99 pb

A contender for book of the year, a complex, funny and panoramic narrative combining social satire, political rage and personal rites of passage. Characters include Sid James, Shirley Eaton and Yuri Gagarin. No mention of sport though.

'Janice Gentle Gets Sexy'

Mavis Cheek, *Penguin* £5.99 pb

A satire so vicious it would make even Mike Leigh squirm, with a heavy dose of slapstick hilarity thrown in, this story of a bestselling author slaving away at a series of chaste romances in order to earn enough money to go in search of an oak who felt her up years ago, is infinitely readable and highly entertaining.

► I am driving carefully through the traffic. I don't want to get a ticket.

He is holding her right on his lap, impaling her, too tight, his arm across her chest, she cannot breathe, and then shows her down so she falls, the long chain coiling beside her, with a muffled cry to the carpet where he can take her like a dog, inhuman, the pain merciless, the sight and feel of her suffering more potent than any aphrodisiac he could ever concoct.

He won't hurt you — but he is hurting her, unbearably, she cannot breathe, she is limp beneath him, barely clinging to consciousness but he is not through, no, he lifts her up on to the seat, lying on her back, pulling her arms up over her head, and running his tongue over her skin, a glistening trail lapping up her shivering terror. His first delirium stilled, he becomes less frantic, his weight propped on his elbows, biting at her nipples, pinching her, moving inside her, relentless still, the car rolling forward, slowing, turning a corner, he moves with it, she is falling down a tunnel, screaming soundlessly.

One hand strays between her legs, fingering her, the sweet meandering gesture she used to love when Nick did it, perverting the tender motion into a captor's taunt, her fear feeding it, the last, lingering lunch of the depraved.

This can't be Nick.

Who else can it be?

It takes him forever to come with a hugely violent shudder, grinding into her, suffocating, and he stays sprawled on top of her, unwilling to let it end. She feels

his eyes upon her, through the blindfold, raking her sprawled, humiliating, violated helplessness as if his gaze were sharpened fingernails, a trace of blood following their piercing path over her skin. She feels him still, his persistent fingers unyielding, crawling up

'She feels his eyes upon her, his persistent fingers unyielding, crawling up and down her like savage ants.'

and down her like the savage nips of ants even as he pulls away slightly to reach into a pouch he'd placed by the door, one he'd kept buried in the bottom of the vintage Vuitton trunk, down where she never thought to look, then pulls out a syringe that he fills with the contents of a glass vial. Olivia feels a

sharper pinch in her hip but she barely minds it, too terrified is she by those hideous fingers.

He won't let go of her, that's all she knows, devouring her skin, he is taking her as he pleases, again, his breath hot, sucking the very life out of her.

He will never let her go.

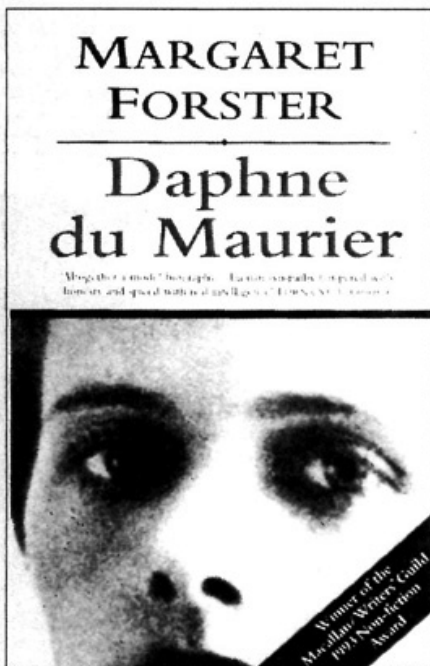
The drugs work quickly. When Nick sees her dizzy, long rolling waves of sleep making her droop, he moves away, calmly pulling up his sweats.

Nick taps on the partition. It is my signal to drive him back to his bike, and when I pull up beside it, he clambers out.

I look at him, waiting impatiently for me to hand him back his leather gear, his hair dishevelled, the madness of his frenzy still alight in his eyes, and I must say something. Even now, after I'd let him do it, I could never have envisioned such craven, unremitting brutality. I'd told her I wouldn't let him hurt her — I'd told her — she'd believed me —

'Lunch' is published by Macmillan on June 19 at £9.99.

MARGARET FORSTER
reveals the hidden
DAPHNE DU MAURIER



'Wonderfully interesting read'
FAY WELDON, *Mail on Sunday*

Everyone's reading

