

THE MAIL ON SUNDAY night & day section

24 MAY 98

Page 45

GAZETTE BOOKS

PAPERBACKS FICTION



**Neurotica**  
 by Sue Margolis  
 Headline £9.99 (311pp)  
 ★★★★★

Anna Shapiro, a hackette with a hypochondriac husband and no sex life to speak of, decides to commit adultery for research purposes. Can women have affairs purely for sexual pleasure? Anna tests out this theory on a cosmetic surgeon, an attractive colleague and a handsome man she meets at a funeral. But really, she still loves her husband – a man struggling with the leftover effects of his dead Jewish mother. Robust, explicit and spattered with fairly appalling language, this is nevertheless a tremendously funny, colourful and gripping read. Michele Hanson



**No Lease on Life**  
 by Lynne Tillman  
 Secker £9.99 (179pp)  
 ★★★★★

This is a coruscating 24-hour chronicle of squalor and moral fury in a New York neighbourhood. Landlords ignore the crackheads in the hall and morons throw garbage cans around at dawn. Elizabeth, a proofreader, spends her life in seething paranoia at the things committed in this anti-social society. Roy, her partner, escapes from the dehumanising urban nightmare into sleep; insomniac Elizabeth meets her tormentors head on. The narrative is sprinkled with jokes whose black sparkle counterpoints the desolation of the streets. Funny, appalling, a *tour de force*. Sophie Hunter



**The Talk of the Town**  
 by Ardal O'Hanlon  
 Sceptre £10 (244pp)  
 ★★★★★

Surely not another dud first novel by a trendy comedian? Well, no, because O'Hanlon – best known for his surreal stand-up routine and his portrayal of dim Dougal in the *Father Ted* series – is also blessed with a genuine literary talent. Fluently written and excellently constructed, *The Talk of the Town* is set in Ireland in the early Eighties, when the novel's adolescent anti-hero, Patrick Scully, is in big trouble. Scully is a liar, a loser and a drunk. No matter how hard he tries, he can't run away from the mess he's made of his life. A funny, moving and finally horrifying tale. Harry Ritchie



**Day of Atonement**  
 by Jay Rayner  
 Black Swan £6.99 (412pp)  
 ★★★

'Like all success stories this one starts with a dead chicken' – which is made into the soup which, a few years later, makes a fortune for Solly and Mal (Solomon and Moses), two nice boys from Edgware who meet during the Jewish New Year. They build an empire out of fast food and kitchenware, marry happily but begin to lose touch with the energies that fuelled their careers. Solly gets heavily into cocaine, smokes crack in New York, smuggles drugs and serves time. A black comedy of business life in the Thatcher years, this is sharp, crude and over-the-top. Dorothy Power



**The Daisy Rock**  
 by Eva Hanagan  
 Warner £5.99 (186pp)  
 ★★★

After a somewhat disappointing life, Fergus and Flora have retired to Sussex. Fergus plays golf and attends obsessively to his salt-water aquarium. Flora used to love him, now she tolerates him. Their only child died at birth. Ostensibly, the story of a long-suffering wife, this seems to be more the tragic tale of a sad man, driven to ultimate despair by the mass death of his beloved tropical fish. In this moving and convincing book, Hanagan describes minutely and with gentle humour those domestic details and events which make for a quietly tormented retirement. Poppy Davidson



**Wyoming Trail**  
 by Cheryl Moskowitz  
 Granta £9.99 (234pp)  
 ★★★

Seattle, 1969: Francine's father is one of the 'thousands of other grown-up people' who feels young again, leaves his wife and kids, moves to London where everything's 'groovy', then beckons the family to join him. Francine's subsequent struggle to find a father figure in this keenly selfish (and immaculately drawn) pleasure-seeker forms the core of this thoughtful first novel. More, thankfully, than just another sane-kid-with-hippy-parents book, it's a truthful and disturbing exploration of the way reckless, off-hand parenting produces aimless and emotionally chaotic people. Fiona Gray

Night&Day Bookstore

All books reviewed or listed in these pages can be ordered at a discount and with free delivery. For example: *The Last Resort* £13.59 (RRP £15.99), *Personal History* £11.69 (RRP £12.99) and *Hilder, Marilyn* £11.69 (RRP £12.99). Call 01753 678888



**Valley of the Dolls**  
 by Jacqueline Susann  
 Warner Books £5.99 (467pp)  
 ★★

In 1968, this avid account of bitchiness, betrayal and pill-popping shot to the top of the best-seller list. It's a classic of the genre, a

even for internal purposes) or resold