

SAD AT THE EDGES
by Jo-Anne Richards
Stephan Phillips
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IN HER third novel, Eastern Cape-born author Jo-Anne Richards takes readers to Johannesburg, set in the edgy uncertainty of 1996.

It's been two years since the miraculous democratic transformation of South Africa -- two years that have seen the hopes and idealism of its people begin to fray and pessimism creeping in.

It is into this atmosphere that Megan flies from London to stay with her older cousin Francesca, who is in a tense marriage with a slightly impaired child.

Francesca was detained in the struggle period and, as Megan falls in with her group, she begins to struggle with her identity.

Too young to have taken part herself, she romanticises and envies her experiences, and simultaneously throws herself headfirst into Jo'burg's new society.

In doing so she fails to see the darkness that Francesca is battling and the cracks appearing in her cousin.

The story jumps, sometimes jerks, between the two cousins and the voice of an unknown man which proves rather intriguing for the reader. Within the greater story, the two women are caught up in their own crises and it is here that Richards excels by making mundane, ordinary lives come across as personal and relevant. The themes of fear, love and unanswered questions are common, everyday realities for South Africans and make the story accessible.

Look out for the descriptions of the white ex-lefties who now drive BMWs -- they are brilliant.

Poignant with flashes of humour, Sad at the Edges is an interesting look at how the effects of apartheid lingered even among those whom it did not directly harm. But more than that, it's a warm story about anyone.

<http://www.amethyst.co.za/GHS1976/Others/Jo-AnneRichards.htm>

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