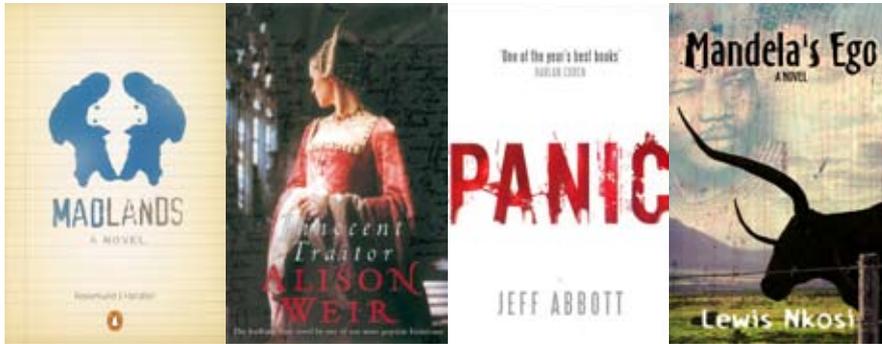


Books

This month's chic lit



Madlands: a novel

Rosemund J Handler (Penguin Books, R95)
Carla is beautiful, blonde and bipolar - and Rosemund Handler holds nothing back as she takes you on the wild ride that is her heroine's life. From rescuing bergies off grungy Sea Point sidewalks to being stalked at Valkenberg psychiatric hospital, it's all here in grippingly vivid detail. A fascinating glimpse into the world of mental illness. **Lori Cohen ★★★**

Innocent Traitor

Alison Weir (Hutchinson, R150)
One of the UK's most eminent popular historians turns her hand to fiction for the first time with *Innocent Traitor*, a compelling account of the short and tragic life of Lady Jane Grey. Jane occupied the British throne for nine days between the death of Edward VI and the start of the reign of 'bloody' Mary (half-sister of the first Queen Elizabeth). Weir brings Jane beautifully to life but is rather less successful with some of the supporting characters, especially Jane's one-dimensionally heartless mother. There are several moving moments, though, and the final scene (told from the point of view of the executioner) is likely to make sensitive readers weep. A must for those fascinated by Tudor lives and times. **Robyn Alexander ★★★**

Panic

Jeff Abbott (Time Warner Books, R90)
This book should come with a warning. Do not start it unless you can afford to write off the whole night... A young film-maker is summoned in the early hours by his mother. Finding her dead, he is attacked by one hitman and rescued by another. Carrie, the girl he loves, has disappeared; his father is also missing. Spinning from one shock to another, Evan Cashier realises that everything he believes in is a lie, that something in his own life has triggered all these catastrophes, and that something in him has the power to turn the tables. **Jane Raphaely ★★★★★**

Mandela's Ego

Lewis Nkosi (Umuzi, R125)
Mandela's Ego is the 1960s coming-of-age story of Dumisa Gumede, a young herd boy who grows up in the village of Mondli. Dumisa tries to woo the most beautiful girl in the village and gets involved in politics too. But it's his admiration of a young black lawyer named Mandela that has the greatest effect on his life. Lewis Nkosi uses this apparently simple story to explore the complex influence of heroes and leaders on young people at a turbulent time in South Africa's history. **Naa-ila Joseph ★★★★★**

PLEASURE PRINCIPLE

1000 new designs and where to find them by Jennifer Hudson (Lawrence King, R391)
Need a crash course in the latest in design for the home? Look no further than this book, which is organised into furniture categories - from 'Tables and Chairs' to 'Textiles' - and also includes profiles of leading designers, among them luminaries such as Tom Dixon and Patricia Urquiola. An excellent sourcebook for anyone interested in contemporary design. **Robyn Alexander ★★★★★**



WORDSMITH

Gabeba Baderoon, 37, poet, writer and academic

When did you realise you had a passion for poetry? I studied English at UCT after school and went on to receive a doctorate. When I turned 30 I received a fellowship to go to the USA. While there, I wanted to do some creative things - so I took cooking, pottery and poetry classes. And in the poetry class, I rediscovered the English language.

How did you get your work published?

A classroom task for my poetry class was entered into a competition, which I ended up winning. I also started interacting with other poets, many of whom were already friends. They were the ones who encouraged me to send my work off to publishers. Kwela Books expressed interest in publishing my work and then in 2005, I won the Daimler Chrysler Award for South African Poetry, just before my debut collection of poetry was released.

How did it feel to see your first collection printed?

It made me nervous to think about being published. I didn't expect it. Writing is a solitary act, but I have to be able to share and connect with the reader.

What do you write about? For me it's the metaphysical depths of the ordinary details of life. There is something great about finding the extraordinary in the mundane.

What does the future hold? More growth as a poet and writer. My ambition now is to write some short stories.

Gabeba Baderoon's third and latest poetry collection, *A Hundred Silences* (Kwela, R95) is available now.

