



Publishing: 'Chick Lit' Goes Gray

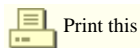
Newsweek

Sept. 12, 2005 issue - When Rexanne Becnel started writing her latest romance novel, "it was just such a pleasure to write about thunder thighs and varicose veins," she says. Hardly sexy stuff. But books like Becnel's "Old Boyfriends" are turning on publishers to the "matron lit" market. After decades of romance and relationships, many women no longer want standard tales of starry-eyed first love. The heroines in the upcoming Red Hat Society novels and Harlequin's new Next line deal with more identifiable situations like failed marriages and widowhood. (The Next novels are even available in large-type editions.) "This is a new power demographic-women at a critical stage of life who are willing to say, 'What's next?'" says Next editor Tara Gavin.

It's not only the fiction market that's catering to this set's romantic interests. Divorcee Katherine E. Chaddock, 57, and her widowed sister, Emilie Chaddock Egan, 60, thought their generation needed dating advice. The sisters' guide, "Flings, Frolics, and Forever Afters," offers practical advice, while Sherry Halperin's upcoming book, "Rescue Me, He's Wearing a Moose Hat," offers more humorous accounts of her later-life dating experiences. "I can't tell you how many men complain about the cost of Viagra," she says. It seems that love, at any age, always has its trials.

-Alice Fishburn

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