

Love Never Ends

“Why write a Romance about two fifty-somethings?” I was asked.

My knee-jerk reaction: Why not?

While teen-agers may think that the need for companionship, romance, and love withers and dies as one enters the third decade of life, surely no one else seriously believes that people over fifty do not fall in love. If you do share the adolescents’ belief, however, then you, like they, are quite mistaken. We cross no great chasm as we age. There is no line drawn in the sand over which we step and – poof! – we are ancient. We need love when we are young; we need love when we are old.

Romance is not the property of young adults, and novels quite realistically are written about those who are several generations older than the twenty-year olds who traditionally inhabit the world of Romance. My new book, *To Fall in Love Again*, tells the story of Amy and Drew, She is fifty-five; he is fifty-seven. And they fall in love.

Believe it, or not, none of us sees ourselves as old!

In *The Thorn Birds*, a novel by Colleen McCullough, Mary Cleary Carson, the seventy-two year old matriarch of the Cleary family, has what today’s high school students might call a “major crush” on Father Ralph de Bricassart, the handsome young priest who is the family’s spiritual advisor and friend. The night before she dies, she tells him that she loves him. He denies her feelings, and she responds, angrily.

You’re wrong. I have loved you. God, how much! Do you think my years automatically preclude it? Well, Father de Bricassart, let me tell you something. Inside this stupid body I’m still young-I still feel, I still want, I still dream, I still kick up my heels and chafe at restrictions like my body...

McCullough perfectly captures the feelings of those over thirty, or forty, or wherever you draw the line between young and old. Those on the north side of that line know that, inside, they are no different from the way they were twenty or thirty years before.

Books with older characters are not new, and I expect we will see more of them in the years ahead. Our population is aging, and in a guest post in *Publishing Perspectives*, Claude Nougat, a former project director for the United Nations, wrote on the topic, *Is Baby Boomer Lit the Next Hot Genre?*

A baby boomer, a “boomer,” is anyone born between nineteen forty five, following the Second World War, and nineteen sixty four, when the birth rate bubble that followed the war began to deflate. Boomers are now between the ages of fifty and sixty-nine and there are over seventy-seven million of them in the United States and twenty million in the United Kingdom. Nougat writes that they are retiring in large numbers, that they have free time, money, and that they like to read. She compares Boomer Lit to YA, a genre that came into its own when boomers were approaching age twenty.

Both genres target issues with which people are concerned at crucial transition points in their lives. YA addresses problems confronted by children as they morph into adults. Boomer Lit deals with issues of concern to adults who are adjusting to the prospect of growing older. These are issues which are important to boomers, today, and which will be important to other generations as they make this transition in the years ahead.

In *To Fall in Love Again*, for example, Drew and Amy have each lost a spouse, one to cancer, the other in an accident, and both are struggling with the prospect of loving someone new, experiences being faced by increasing numbers of people over the age of fifty.

It is a mistake, though, to conclude that the issues that Drew and Amy face are peculiar to people of their age. They are not. Many of the issues addressed by YA and boomer lit are the same. Am I in love? Can I trust him? What will my family think? Is it possible to fall in love a second time? These questions are timeless.

Boomer lit is not only for older adults, any more than YA is only for adolescents. One benefit of reading is that books allow us to view our world from the perspectives of those who are different from us. When our stories concern characters from a generation not our own, we find that, while the problems they face are much the same as ours, they will understand them in different ways. And we can learn from each other.

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