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Carol Smallwood

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The Term, Chick Lit

By Carol Smallwood¹

The term, Chick Lit begun in the 1990's is one I'd wish didn't exist but since it does, I wanted to examine why it irritates me so went back to the history of women's movements looking for insight. (Yes, chick is slang for a young woman.)

The feminist movement is grouped into three movements and my mother lived through the first and got to vote; the second from 1960's to 1980's is one I faced marriage and divorce; the third starting in the 1990's is the contemporary one in which I retired. Each movement has aspects which are impossible to cover briefly: the first mainly on voting and property rights; the second expanded into sexuality, family, working, reproduction, law. The third mostly moved on to queer theory, stereotyping, non-white women.

The Chick Lit genre is often about dating, relationships, and love even if sometimes written by males. Publishers like it because the genre sells a lot of books.

Yet Chick Lit translates to me that women are light headed creatures which isn't helping the position of women. What would be a similar term for men's lit? Yes, it is good that women have a genre, but I'd rather they did not have this one. Currently Romance is often equated with women: light fluff, predictable—you know with the paperback covers of bare chested men holding lightly clad young women. Some combine Chick Lit and Romance. Why don't older women object to age stereotyping even if they like Chick Lit and Romance? For that matter, how many crimes committed on television programs are women over 30? So perhaps my objections are related to being a woman over 30? I just typed in Chick Lit in amazon.com books and ten categories were available to do searches.

How can a cavalier, off-hand treatment of the younger part of the female population be good? How can feather heads in stiletto heels break the glass ceiling since it's these young women who must strive up the corporate ladder? Please check out how women are doing in another area on Vida: Women in Literary Arts: <http://www.vidaweb.org/2014-vida-count/>

It has often been a challenge to get enough contributors for my anthologies for women such as *Women, Work, and the Web: How the Web Creates Entrepreneurial Opportunities* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2015). Why didn't more jump at the chance to tell of their success and help struggling women reach their goals? Yet in this book (as well as others) there wasn't the desire to show accomplishments and inspire others that I'd hoped. Is it considered unfeminine? One of my anthologies for women, *Women on Poetry: Writing, Revising, Publishing and Teaching* is on the list of Best Books for Writers by *Poets & Writers Magazine* so it must not be because contributors don't want to be associated with my books. I've often admitted in magazine interviews: "Women are often their own worst enemies and should support each other more." How liberated are we really? Still, Chick Lit is a new genre, and hopefully a new one may supplant it soon more complimentary to women.

¹ Carol Smallwood's most recent books include *Divining the Prime Meridian* (WordTech Communications, 2015); *Women, Work, and the Web* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2015); *Writing After Retirement* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2014); *Water, Earth, Air, Fire, and Picket Fences* (Lamar University Press, 014). *Interweavings: Creative Nonfiction* and *In Hubble's Shadow* are forthcoming from Shanti Arts. Carol, multi-nominee for the Pushcart, has founded, supports humane societies.