

M E D I A G U I D E

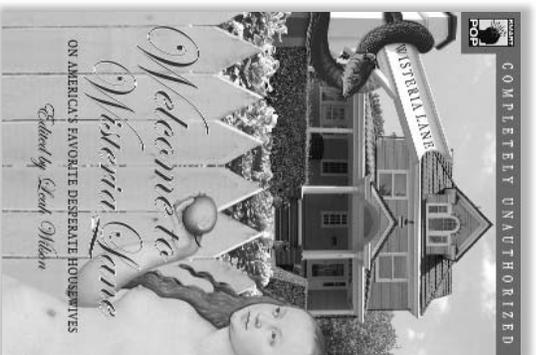
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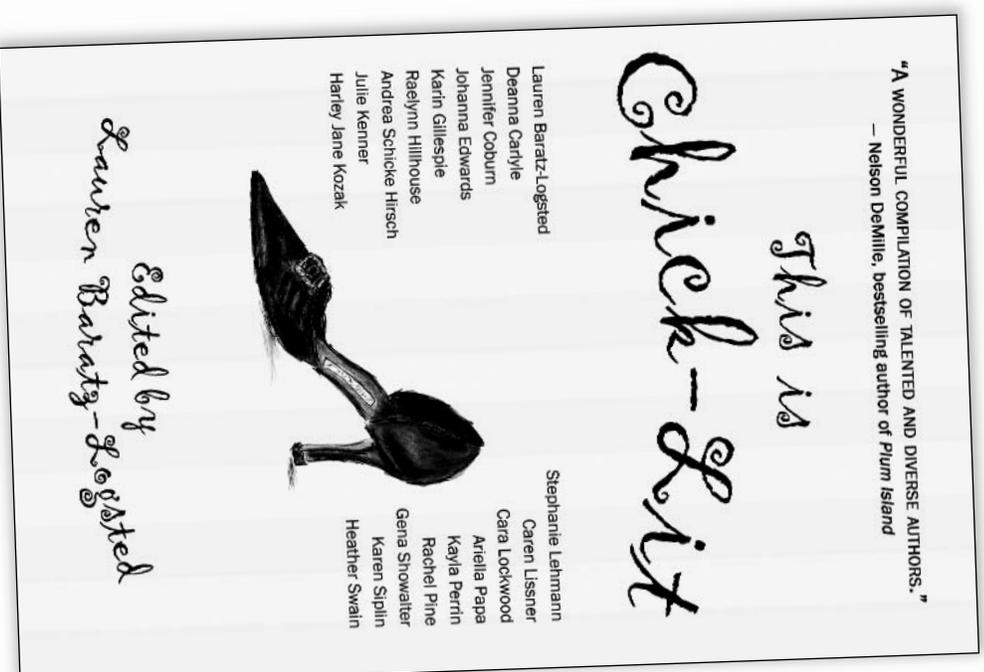
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"This is Chick-Lit is a wonderful compilation of talented and diverse authors. It's funny, a little edgy, thoughtful, and thoroughly entertaining."

Nelson DeMille, author of Plum Island

FROM THE EDITOR

Dear friends,

When the collection *This Is Not Chick Lit*, edited by Elizabeth Merrick, was announced, nearly ever writer of chick-lit I know, not to mention fans, became incensed.

It seemed as though the collection was conceived to look down at a whole group of women writers and their readers. But soon afterwards, I envisioned a very different collection and I was fortunate enough to have some of the leading lights of chick-lit climb onboard with me. Our collection would make a positive statement about what the genre is; it would debunk the Manolos and Cosmos stereotype by showcasing the breathtaking diversity of writers, featuring stories that, while chick-friendly in plot, are invested with important themes.

The result: *THIS IS CHICK-LIT*. My fondest hope is not that you will choose between the two collections – despite what my colleague Ms. Merrick has said, this isn't a war here, although it has felt like one at times – but that you'll read both and that there will be enjoyment to be had from both.

Fondly,



Lauren Baratz-Logsted

NEWS & REVIEWS

Here's what Priya Jain, reviewer for *Bust Magazine* had to say about *THIS IS CHICK-LIT*:

“Like a lot of snotty literary types, I have often sneered at chick lit ... I'm here to tell you: I was wrong. These stories, which take chick lit beyond its Bridget Jonesian beginnings, show that it's time to take this maturing genre a little more seriously. In this round of the culture wars, at least, the point goes to the chick-lit girls.”

To read more of this review and other news, please visit thisischicklit.com.

Content is added daily

To request additional review copies or to arrange an interview with the editor and/or contributors, please contact Laura Watkins, (214) 750-4656 or laura@benbellabooks.com.

MEET THE WRITERS (cont')

High. Cara lives with her husband in Chicago, where she is currently at work on her next novel.

Ariella Papa is the author of the novels *On The Verge*, *Up & Out* and *Bundle of Joy?* She is also a freelance television writer and producer. She lives in Brooklyn with her husband Mike and her dog Sophie.

Kayla Perrin lives in Southwestern Ontario and has twenty-six published titles including romance, mainstream and children's fiction. She is a USA Today best-selling author and has won several awards, including twice winning a spot on the *Romance Writers of America* "Top Ten Favorite Books of the Year" list, a *Career Achievement Award* from *Romantic Times* magazine and an *Arts Acclaim Award* from the city of Brampton. Kayla's novel *Sweet Honesty* was optioned for a movie of the week.

Rachel Pine is the author of *The Twins of Tribeca*. She is currently director of marketing and communications for *Doubledown Media, LLC*, the publisher of *Trader Monthly* and other magazines. She is also a contributor to the *Huffington Post*. She lives in New York City and Southampton.

Gena Showalter is the prolific author of sexy paranormal romances, fun contemporaries, an alien huntress series and young adult novels.

Author of *His Insignificant Other*, **Karen Siplin**, was born in Brooklyn and received her Bachelor of Arts degree in film production from CUNY's Hunter College. Her second novel, *Such a Girl*, was a Main Selection of *Black Expressions Book Club* in 2005. She has worked as a telephone operator at the *Four Seasons Hotel* in New York City and as a celebrity personal assistant.

Heather Swain is the author of two novels, *Eliot's Banana* and *Luscious Lemon*, and the editor of *Before: Short Stories About Pregnancy*. She lives in Brooklyn with her husband, two children and dog.

A B O U T T H E B O O K

The debate between chick-lit and literary fiction has heated up!

A new anthology sets out to show chick is lit... This is that anthology. THIS IS CHICK-LIT.

Chick-lit's unprecedented success has proven its popularity with readers . . . but not with critics, or the literary fiction writers critics love. It's been called "frivolous" and "bubble gum," accused of a preoccupation with fancy cocktails and overpriced shoes, and indicted for its supposed lack of intelligence and literary merit. Tired of being the literary underclass, chick-lit writers are finally fighting back—in style.

Welcome to chick-lit's coming-out party. Here, eighteen of today's hottest authors set out to prove that chick is lit—that fiction by, about, and for women is as meaningful, as rewarding, and as worthy of respect as any other writing out there.

THIS IS CHICK-LIT celebrates what it means to write chick-lit and to read it—and shows once and for all that you shouldn't judge a book by its pastel cover.

Contributors include:

- Lauren Baratz-Logsted	- Andrea Schicke Hirsch	- Ariella Papa
- Deanna Carlyle	- Julie Kenner	- Kayla Perrin
- Jennifer Coburn	- Harley Jane Kozak	- Rachel Pine
- Johanna Edwards	- Stephanie Lehmann	- Gena Showalter
- Karin Gillespie	- Caren Lissner	- Karen Siplin
- Raelynn Hillhouse	- Cara Lockwood	- Heather Swain

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M E E T T H E W R I T E R S

Editor and contributor, **Lauren Baratz-Logsted** lives in Danbury, Connecticut, with her husband Greg Logsted and their daughter Jackie. Lauren is the author of the published novels *The Thin Pink Line*, *Crossing the Line*, *A Little Change of Face* and *How Nancy Drew Saved My Life*, all dark comedies; *Vertigo*, a literary novel set in the Victorian era with erotic and suspense undertones; and the forthcoming *Young Adult* novel *Angel's Choice*. Lauren also has an essay in *BenBella's Jane Austen-themed anthology Flirting with Pride & Prejudice*.

Novelist and screenwriter **Deanna Carlyle** is co-founder of the International Women's Fiction Festival held each year in Matera, Italy, and originator of the popular online listserv "Chick-lit: Women's Fiction Markets and Tips."

Jennifer Coburn is a chick-lit writer living in San Diego with her husband, William, and their daughter, Katie. She is the author of *The Wife of Reilly*, *Reinventing Mona* and *Tales from the Crib*. Coburn's debut novel has been optioned for film by Freedom Productions and Gold Circle Films. Her fourth novel, a sequel to *Tales*, will be released in February 2007.

Johanna Edwards is an award-winning journalist and radio/TV producer. Her first novel, *The Next Big Thing*, debuted on the national bestseller list where it remained for nearly three months. Johanna's second novel, *Your Big Break*, was also a bestseller. Johanna lives in Memphis, Tennessee, where she is currently at work on her next book.

Karin Gillespie is the author of the *Bottom Dollar Girl* series. Her latest release is *Dollar Daze*. Karin maintains a popular publishing industry blog called *Southern Comfort* at karingillespie.com. She is also the founder of the *Girlfriends' Cyber Circuit*, a virtual tour for women novelists.

Raelynn Hillhouse has slipped across closed borders, smuggled jewels and been recruited as a spy by two of the world's most notorious intelligence services (they failed). *The St. Louis Post-Dispatch* wrote that "she's truly like James Bond and

Indiana Jones all rolled into one." Her widely acclaimed first novel, *Rift Zone*, draws from her experiences. Her next novel, *Outsourced* is due out May 2007). A former professor and Fulbright fellow, she lives in Hawaii.

Andrea Schicke Hirsch has been a bookseller, freelance editor and copywriter, teacher and paralegal. She studied Theatre and English at Fordham University and has a master's degree in education from the University of Bridgeport. A Connecticut native, she lives in Wilton, Connecticut, with her family.

Nationally best-selling author **Julie Kenner's** first book hit the stores in February of 2000, and she's been on the go ever since, with more than 20 titles to her credit. Her books have won numerous awards and have hit bestseller lists as varied as *USA Today*, *Waldenbooks*, *Barnes & Noble* and *Locus* magazine. She writes a range of stories, from sexy and quirky romances to chick-lit suspense (*The Givenchy Code*) to paranormal mommy lit (*Carpe Demon* and *California Demon*).

Harley Jane Kozak, lives in Topanga Canyon, California, with her husband, two big dogs and three small children. Her debut novel, *Dating Dead Men*, won the Agatha, Anthony and Macavity awards. Its sequel, *Dating is Murder*, came out last spring, and she's now writing number three, working-titled *Dead Ex*.

Stephanie Lehmann is the author of *Thoughts While Having Sex*, *Are You in the Mood?*, *The Art of Undressing* and *You Could Do Better*. Her plays have been produced off-off-Broadway and is a contributor to *Salon*. Originally from San Francisco, she's a graduate of the University of California at Berkeley and has a master's in English from New York University. Stephanie now lives with her husband and two children in Manhattan.

Caren Lissner's humorous first novel, *Carrie Pilby*, was published in 2003. She lives in Hoboken, New Jersey, where she serves as the editor of the *Hudson Reporter* newspaper chain. She graduated from the University of Pennsylvania in 1993.

Cara Lockwood is the author of *I Do (But I Don't)*, which was made into a movie for Lifetime Television, as well as *I Did (But I Wouldn't Now)*, *Dixieland Sushi*, *Pink Slip Party* and *Wuthering*

THE GUIDE: BOOKS

a thoroughly entertaining, theatrical story with brave heroines, bittersweet regrets, races against time, and a hilarious sexual proposition by a most unsavory time-machine repairman. [MICHELLE HUMPHREY]

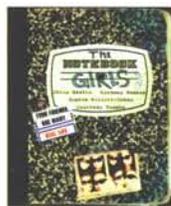


NOT ANOTHER TEEN KNITTING BOOK
 By Vickie Howell

(Sterling, 2006)

Vickie Howell's latest knitting book may be aimed at the 18-and-under crowd, but it has plenty to delight the craftily inclined of any age. The second book from this *BUST* contributor and host of DIY Network's *Knitty Gritty* program is full of the sassy, spunky designs you've come to expect from Howell and her collaborators. Organized by high-school stereotype (Goth, Homecoming Queen, Jock, Drama Club), the patterns range from your standard array of scarves and shawls to fun and relatively easy clothing. For the ladies, there are retro-tacular polo shirts and a kitsch-tastic shift dress with a giant Eiffel Tower graphic. There is also equally excellent guy stuff, from a cute skater sweater to a nerdy-sexy sweater vest. The guy stuff also gets super bonus points for the jailbait-hot male models.

Howell really rocks the accessories patterns, which include felted slogan tote bags, a laptop sleeve, a guitar strap, and, for the true nerd, calculator cozies. The book also includes a basic intro to the art of knitting, with a rundown of casting on and binding off, purl and knit stitches, and crochet edging, along with instructions for tassels and pom-poms. Many of the projects are fairly easy to knit, and all the patterns are easy to follow. Fun and simple projects and wicked-cute guys—what more could the crafty gal ask for? [VICTORIA COOPER]



THE NOTEBOOK GIRLS
 By Julia Baskin, Lindsey Newman,

Sophie Pollit-Cohen, and Courtney Toombs

(Warner Books, 2006)

Remember how terrified you were that a teacher would intercept a note you were passing, and read it—maybe even to the entire class? For the authors of *The Notebook Girls*, that fear is child's play. The four high schoolers started writing letters in a notebook as a way to keep up with one another despite their demanding schedules. Their private exchanges are now public, in all their real, raw glory (right down to the handwriting and the doodles).

The girls are intriguing representatives of teens in a climate of change; just days into their freshman year, the Twin Towers collapsed mere blocks away from their prestigious Stuyvesant High School. And yet the notebook is not unique in its subject matter—drugs,

body image, homework woes, and sexual experimentation, are common to many a teen angstfest. The beauty of this book lies in its stark, unfiltered honesty—the girls are in it together, for better or worse. Casual jokes and generalized ramblings give way, month after month, to intensely personal exchanges of worries, wants, triumphs, and, overall, support. Arguments happen and get resolved, making the notebook a solid testament to how simple discussion can breed understanding: When Courtney and Sophie feel excluded by the youth organization Julia belongs to, Julia and Lindsey each explain their faith, and good vibes get restored. There are no expert analyses or critics crying Ophelia here. Whether or not the girls' experiences echo yours, it

seems as if we'd all benefit from sharing such a notebook. [LAURIE CEDILNIK]



THE SCENT OF GOD: A Memoir
 Beryl Singleton Bissell
 (Counterpoint, 2006)

In college, I devoted a semester-long writing project to following a nun, Sister Bernadette. I was curious to find out just what makes these religious ladies tick. Sister Bernadette's story started out much the same as Beryl Singleton Bissell's new memoir does: as children, they identified most with nuns, longed to serve the Catholic Church, and nev-

CHICK FIGHT

TWO ANTHOLOGIES DUKE IT OUT

LIKE A LOT of snotty literary types, I have often sneered at chick lit. I have rolled my eyes at the pink army of stiletto- and martini-glass-covered paperbacks that have laid siege to Barnes & Noble. But after reading the anthology *This Is Not Chick Lit: Original Stories by America's Best Women Writers* (Random House, 2006) and the compendium of stories written in response, aptly titled *This Is Chick-Lit* (BenBella Books, 2006), I'm here to tell you: I was wrong.

I had hoped that *This Is Not Chick Lit* would provide a bridge to bring chick-lit fans into the world of literary fiction. After all, there are millions of chick-lit readers out there, and the smart and entertaining writers featured in this book should appeal to them. Sadly, editor Elizabeth Merrick squanders that outreach opportunity with her condescending introduction. "Chick lit shuts down our consciousness," she writes, whereas "literature expands our imaginations"—an admonishment akin to a schoolmarm chiding you to eat your damn vegetables. And while none of these stories is a clunker, few of them truly shine. Jennifer Egan's hilariously odd "Selling the General," about a washed-up publicist who takes on a genocidal dictator as a client, is one; Aimee Bender's "Two Days," wherein the prospect of a new relationship disappears halfway through the first date, is another. Some of the stories don't stack up to the authors' own standards—Francine Prose and Holiday Reinhorn are both much better writers than their so-so contributions here would suggest.



The most frustrating thing about *This Is Not Chick Lit* is that it never answers the ultimate question: what separates these literary writers from chick-lit authors? Is it just the candy-colored book jackets, or is there a deeper distinction? I'm inclined to agree with editor Lauren Baratz-Logsted, who writes in the introduction to *This Is Chick-Lit*, "There are basically only two kinds of books in the world: good/well-written stories and bad/poorly written ones." Her anthology proves that both can not only share a genre, but they can also share a book. Riddled with

clichés, clunky dialogue, and protagonists who are fully freaked out because they're 28 and unmarried, many of these stories are excruciating to read. But others are surprisingly smart, funny, and well-written, like Harley Jane Kozak's "The Infidelity Diet," whose Shakespeare-quoting protagonist convinces herself that her husband is cheating. Then there are the wonderful, slightly lunatic, and surreal contributions from Ariella Papa ("Confessions of a Three-Eyed Freak," in which the narrator really does grow a third eye) and Baratz-Logsted herself ("Shell Game," about a woman who dreams of living in a nursery rhyme, only to have the horror of that dream come true). These stories, which take chick lit beyond its Bridget Jonesian beginnings, show that it's time to take this maturing genre a little more seriously. In this round of the culture wars, at least, the point goes to the chick-lit girls. [PRIYA JAIN]

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Web-Exclusive Reviews: Fiction

-- *Publishers Weekly*, 9/18/2006

EVERYTHING'S COMING UP ROSIE

Kasey Michaels. HQN, \$6.99 (384p) ISBN 9780373771271

The week-long pre-wedding house party for Doug Llewellyn's cousin Lili-beth is slated to be the social gathering of the decade—or a seven-day ordeal of shrill matchmaking and grim self-reflection, as it would seem to Doug—in this latest contemporary romance from Michaels (*Stuck in Shangri-La*). Handsome, intelligent, witty—and “matrimonially un-catchable,”—Doug is a successful 40-year-old Philadelphia architect dreading the tireless matchmaking efforts of Lili-beth's mother. Ditto for sassy, independent web-site designer Rosie Kilgannon. With no graceful way out, Rosie and Doug figure “us victims have to stick together,” and proceed to undo Bettie's best-laid plans. Meanwhile, disaster rules at the pre-nuptial festivities: the groom is showing a dark side, Bettie is methodically bedding each of the band members, the wedding planner drinks more than she pours, and Lili-beth isn't sure she wants to get married after all. Lots of flirting, slap-stick antics and eccentric characters, including light-fingered 85-year-old Aunt Susanna and Lili-beth's secretive childhood friend Delbert, make this a cheerful, lighthearted read. (*Sept.*)

THIS IS CHICK LIT

Edited by Lauren Baratz-Logsted. BenBella, \$14.95 paper (274p) ISBN 9781933771014

Defending the much-maligned genre, recently dealt a slap with the Elizabeth Merrick-edited collection *This is Not Chick Lit*, author and former *PW* reviewer Baratz-Logsted has produced a comeback anthology that asks, “Are women really criticizing each other about what they're reading?” Though they may be, the ensuing conversation is producing grist for hungry authors. This round up of 18 chick lit tales offers plenty of enthusiasm and creativity, but suffers in the inevitable comparison to *This is Not*. The authors here, including Jennifer Coburn, Gena Showalter, Karin Gillespie, Johanna Edwards and Rachel Pine, have produced undeniably lively, inventive stories that pair expected elements (jerk ex-boyfriends, jealous girlfriends, insecure spinsters, unruly toddlers and demanding mothers) alongside spies, ghosts, futuristic dating databases, third eyes and house-size pumpkins. Authors also get to cheer on their genre in notes that follow each story; “I loved Chick-Lit before Chick Lit was even a genre,” gushes Cara Lockwood at the conclusion of “The Commitment Phobe,” a story about a relationship in which “either he will marry her, or she will kill him.” Unfortunately, the stories are by and large marred with ho-hum dialogue, clichéd characters and unpolished endings, ultimately working to reinforce claims that chick lit trades smarts and craftsmanship for easy laughs and themes that pander to female audiences. Enjoyable and eager, this will please fans who took umbrage at the Merrick gang's salvo, but probably won't win any converts. (*Sept.*)

THE TUNNEL RATS

Stephen Leather. Hodder (Trafalgar Square, dist.), \$9.99 (512p) ISBN 9780340689547

In Leather's latest American release, British Transport Police Sergeant Nick Wright gets territorial when the mutilated body of an American news photographer turns up in an abandoned railroad tunnel. He's resentful toward the Metropolitan police for getting involved, and likes it even less when the FBI joins the manhunt, but he hangs tenaciously to the case, despite being saddled with an alcoholic partner and a hatful of personal problems. When another body with identical mutilations is discovered in Bangkok, he begs permission to investigate that murder as well. By the time he discovers the connection between them, Wright is in over his head and too far in to back out. His only choice is to move deeper into danger, courting the vengeance of a spook from his past. Leather has a gift for making pages fly by as bodies pile up, tension builds and clues drop parsimoniously; effective, economical characterizations give the plot just enough depth to captivate readers without hampering the rapid-fire narrative. (*Sept.*)

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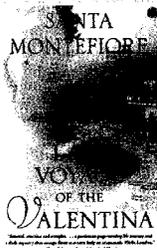
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Book



Last Voyage Of The Valentina
By Santa Montefiore

Exotically beautiful but desperately unhappy, Alba lives on a houseboat on the Thames, where she enjoys a life of leisure and entertains an endless and unfulfilling succession of lovers. But then she discovers a portrait of her dead mother, Valentina—a woman she'd hardly known, whose story has been kept from her by her still grieving father. Determined to learn the truth about Valentina, Alba returns to the olive groves of the Amalfi coast of Italy. There she uncovers a mysterious tale of decadence, deception, murder, and betrayal involving partisans and Nazis, peasants and counts. Alba's journey leads her not only to the truth of her mother's hidden past but to the possibility of happiness in her own future.

Touchstone Books
389 pages

\$15.00



Hawke's Pride
By Norah Hess

From the moment Rue laid eyes on him, she thought Hawke was the most insufferable man she'd ever met. Proud and arrogant, Hawke Masters made it clear that although Rue's grandfather's shotgun had forced him to wed her, nothing could raise his passion for a scrawny little backwoods package such as her. But Hawke Masters was going to fall hard. When he gets Rue back to his ranch, the girl begins to blossom. Her red-gold hair makes his fingers itch to bury themselves in its silky mass; her velvet-soft skin cries out for the burning touch of his lips, and the ripe promise of her young body drives him to distraction. He has to convince Rue that he is no longer a helpless boor, but a doting husband willing to cherish her.

Dorchester Publishing
448 pages

\$6.99



This Is Chick-Lit
Edited By Lauren Baratz-Logsted

In the last decade, chick-lit has exploded in popularity. Readers relate to the stories told by a growing group of powerful and fun women: chick-lit writers. Rebellious against the Random House title, *This Is Not Chick-Lit*, this book sets out to prove that chick-lit is not only enjoyable, it is also smart and timely; it's thought-provoking, funny, and entertaining from start to finish. This new anthology sets out to show that chick is lit, and it spotlights the worth of this growing genre through various contributors who prove that being labeled chick-lit doesn't make a story, or its author, part of the literary underclass, but quite the opposite. Enjoy!

BenBella Books
274 pages

\$17.95



An Assembly Such As This
By Pamela Aidan

In Jane Austen's classic novel *Pride and Prejudice*, the timeless romance of Fitzwilliam Darcy and Elizabeth Bennet begins. Austen's novel is beloved by millions, but little is revealed in the book about the mysterious and handsome hero, Mr. Darcy. And so the question has long remained: Who is Fitzwilliam Darcy? In *An Assembly Such as This*, Pamela Aidan finally answers that long-standing question. In this first book of her "Fitzwilliam Darcy, Gentleman" trilogy, the reader is reintroduced to Darcy during his visit to Hertfordshire with his friend Charles Bingley. As Darcy spends more time at Netherfield supervising Bingley and fending off Miss Bingley's persistent advances, his unwilling attraction to Elizabeth grows—as does his concern about her relationship with his nemesis, George Wickham.

Touchstone Books
288 pages

\$14.00

books

A Girl's Life

To chick or not to chick, that is the question

by Rachel Aviv

September 14th, 2006 4:40 PM



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In *The New York Times Book Review* last year, Curtis Sittenfeld wrote that labeling a book chick lit is like calling a woman a slut. The genre is too easy; there's no challenge, she argued. *This Is Not Chick Lit*, a collection of stories by "America's best women writers," including Sittenfeld, Aimee Bender, and Francine Prose, presents the idea that fast-selling novels about girls who fulfill all their dreams—namely, catching a man—is somehow a threat to literary fiction. The characters in the collection have little in common with one another; they've all moved beyond the candy world of gossipy co-workers and clean resolutions. In one of the best pieces, Jennifer Egan tops the bitchy boss trope with a story about a New York publicist who has the worst client of all: a genocidal dictator who's murdered millions.

This Is Not Chick Lit

Edited by Elizabeth Merrick
Random House, 321 pp., \$13.95

This Is Chick-Lit

Edited by Lauren Baratz-Logsted
BenBella Books, 274 pp., \$14.95

Most stories are funny and inventive, although the book lacks purpose compared to the anthology it inspired called *This Is Chick-Lit*—"born out of anger," notes editor Lauren Baratz-Logsted. The first piece, Jennifer Coburn's "Two Literary Chicks," dramatizes the rift among female writers with the tidiness of a school play. Jo and Marley took the same fiction class at NYU, but Jo has written a bestselling novel while Marley and her "smarty-pants posse" are still describing drapery as "a metaphor for the tragic frailty of life." "Oh please," Jo says, "How 'bout a plot?" Then they swap manuscripts: Marley reads Jo's "bubblegum" book, tries on her Juicy Couture workout suit, and realizes " *how very funny life is.*" True to stereotype, the stories that follow are glib and goal-oriented and focus on well-dressed women afraid of being 30. The book doesn't try to defend itself against the insult of acting like a girl.

"Who ever heard of such a thing in publishing," writes Baratz-Logsted in her preface. "What next . . . *This Is Not a Literary Coming-of-Age Story?*"

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More by Rachel Aviv**Double Jeopardy**

Quiz show: Two books reveal the pleasures and perils of trivial pursuits
Brainiac; Prisoner of Trebekistan

The Intelligencer

Inside the hypercompetitive world of high-IQ societies

Food for Thought

Talking with the LeFevres, a competitive eating couple

A Celebration of Bighearted, Idiosyncratic Indie Journals