

Listen up, boys, the secret to great sex is dating an older woman

By Celia Walden

Tuesday March 16 2010

"Women start at 30 and just get better." When it comes to outlining the attraction that ladies of a certain age hold for younger men, no book goes into as much depth as [Stephen Vizinczey's](#) era-transcending *In Praise of Older Women*.

The best-selling novel, which has sold five million copies since it was originally published in 1965, was re-released this week as a Penguin Classic. With statements like the one above, the book must have provoked a glut of misalliances after its narrator, [Andras Vajda](#), described in enchanting detail his discovery that the embraces of older women are infinitely preferable to those of younger girls.

"One of my chief irritations at the time was the blankness of the faces of my young girl friends," says the young Vajda of one married lover, Maya. "But Maya's face, with the fine lines of her 40 some years, expressed all the shades of her thoughts and emotions."

Forty-five years on, the Hungarian-born Vizinczey, now 76, remains ardent on the subject. "To be a young man and have a grown woman as your lover is not just sexy, it is paradise," he says. "That's what my novel is about."

Putting any condemnation of the pairing down to "people hating to see other people happy," Vizinczey lambasts the idea that women with children should no longer be sexual beings.

"If anything, a woman who has had children can be even sexier than before, because childbirth gives her a profound experience. The sexiest thing about a woman is her intelligence. The older women in the book were intelligent enough to learn from their experiences."

Our modern day deification of youth may push an increasing amount of young men into the arms of older women, he feels. "The sex appeal of a woman has very little to do with the kind of things magazines talk about. It doesn't have much to do with big breasts, small breasts, figure -- the most important part of sex appeal is humanity, an affectionate nature, intelligence. Allure certainly has very little to do with clothes. Isn't a woman best dressed when she is naked?"

"If you take the evolutionary argument," agrees psychologist [Oliver James](#), author of *Affluenza*, "there is a great deal more sense in a younger man being with an older woman than the other way around, because a younger man can be more vigorous and useful to the woman."

It is a theory [Germaine Greer](#) supported in her book, *The Boy*, a thesis on "why boys have always been the world's pin-ups". "Historically," the author of *The Female Eunuch* explained, "older women were expected to introduce boys to the refinement and excitement of sex. They were lovers, but they were also teachers."

Greer also maintains that "older men sit in judgment, but boys don't do that. They are able to admire a woman for what she has achieved".

But if the appeal from the young man's perspective is obvious, so are the pitfalls. Writer Oscar Humphries, the son of comedian [Barry Humphries](#) who enjoyed a liaison with [Jimmy Choo](#) founder [Tamara Mellon](#) when he was 22 and she was 40, remembers assuming a submissive role in the relationship. "The first time we had dinner together," he wrote at the time, "I half-heartedly reached for my overburdened Switch card when the bill arrived. I feigned hurt when she brushed it aside with her corporate Amex.

"Can there be equality in our relationship? Well, there is sexual equality, but, I have to admit, little else."

A mutually enjoyable game of dominance and submission is what drives the dynamic, adds James.

"But whether it is love or sex spurring on the people involved, there will always be a large measure of desire on the part of the older person for the younger, which is where the 'older woman' dynamic is not straightforward, because women, on the whole, are not attracted by nubility in younger members of the opposite sex -- whereas men are."

So are these older women liberated or damaged? James believes that narcissism and the search for eternal youth may play a big part, reducing the toy boy to a pick-me-up like a new bag.

"There probably is something wrong with women who persist in going for very large age gaps," he claims. "The real problem starts when the younger person grows up."

So long as the relationships are fictional, it seems, we can enjoy them. We all regret Benjamin's decision not to elope with Mrs Robinson, but how long would it have lasted?

"The preliminaries, the half-truths, the confidences, the wooing -- all these are dispensed with. There isn't time; she comes straight to the point and then goes back to her life. She is doing what older men do to younger women."

Vizinczey disagrees.

"Most relationships don't last, regardless of the age of the couples. Enduring relationships depend not only on the ages of the couples, but whether or not they are people on the same wavelength, which is why I think mine will go on lasting."

His particular older woman? She's Canadian, she's called Gloria -- and he's been married to her for 45 years.

In Praise of Older Women by Stephen Vizinczey (Penguin Modern paperback, €11)

- Celia Walden

Irish Independent