

Local author says erotic literature is for 'good girls,' too

By Jessica Iaboni

An Ottawa writer will release her first fiction novel about the sexual escapades of a liberated woman and her hybrid vampire lover in early April.

Patricia McCarthy, an office worker by day and veteran poet by night, decided to take a "bite" at novel writing almost two years ago.

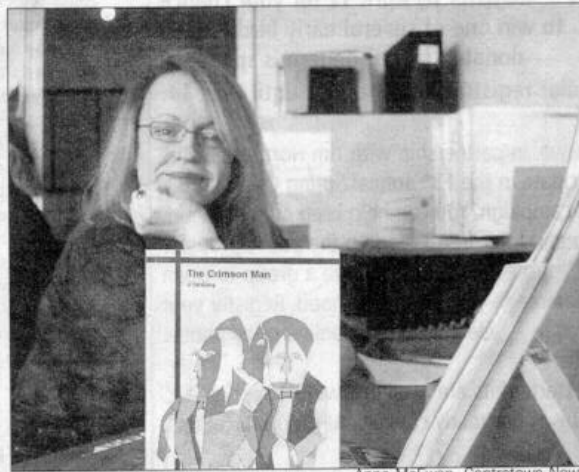
The outcome, *The Crimson Man*, which she describes as a modern fantasy about sexual desire and lust, is not your average romance novel — it's not even close.

"This is not an ordinary love story and it is a little dark," says McCarthy, who feels that the book will allow people to explore their sexuality, likely within the comfort of their own home.

Centretown writer Sylvie Hill agrees and says it is easy to curl into bed all warm and snugly with a good book. Why not a tantalizing book about sex?

But not everyone is a fan of erotic literature. Take for example *Chapters*, where tucked at the far back are the often-overlooked sex books. They are ignored, Hill says, because most people associate sex artefacts with pornography and some wouldn't be caught dead with what is considered "porn." But most novels that discuss sex, like McCarthy's, fall under the literary genre of erotica.

"Traditionally, erotica and porn get swept off the shelf together because they are both seen as being all about sex," says Hill, who is known for her



Anne McEwan, Centretown News

Centretown erotic author Patricia McCarthy recently published her first fantasy novel *The Crimson Man*.

in-your-face and blunt one-night-stand sex poems. For her, erotica varies and can signify many things for many people.

"I think pornography is about the outside and obvious, whereas erotica is instead poetic, mys-

terious and more hidden," she says.

Derived from the Greek word "eros," meaning passionate love, erotica is defined by the online dictionary Wikipedia as "a modern word used to describe the portrayal of human sensuality and sexuality with high-art aspirations." It can include mediums like literature, photography, film, sculpture and painting.

"I can see it as an art form and a craft because you are exploring the world of fantasy," says Hill, who argues that reading erotica is a judgment call and writing it is a challenge. A challenge she

attempted to hurdle a few years ago with a non-fiction novel she doesn't quite consider erotica. Since then she has stuck with poetry and column writing, reading a few times with the *Durtygurls*, a group of Ottawa women who showcase sex poets and their illicit poems.

"I don't identify with erotica because I think it is supposed to flow and be sexy, whereas I am more frank and vulgar," she says, muttering a curse accompanied by a laugh.

For McCarthy, erotica explores desire. "It gives people permission to enter a different world and have thoughts you wouldn't normally articulate out loud," she says.

But McCarthy has found that many people are uncomfortable with these thoughts. Prior to publication of *The Crimson Man*, she asked a few friends and editors to read the novel and unsurprisingly received mixed reviews.

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Exploring erotica

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"Out of those who have already read it, the men were aroused and the women tended to blush," she says. McCarthy finds that men have an easier time discussing sex while women are socialized to hold back. But both McCarthy and Hill agree that the idea women should hold their tongues when it comes to sex talk is changing. "Through erotica women are now able to bring a voice to the female desire, it is not only from a man's point of view," says Hill.

McCarthy has noticed over the years, while sifting through erotica books, that most writers are male. This, she says, should change because women should be able to write about their own sexuality. Her main character in the novel, Magdalene, who is open about sex and shockingly empowered, represents McCarthy's idealistic woman.

But depicting such a strong character didn't come easy. McCarthy took a few erotica writing lessons that came in handy.

Megan Butcher, who lives in Centretown, has taught how to write erotica and seductive letters for a few years at Venus Envy sex stores. She says that writing erotica is difficult for a number of reasons.

"It has a lot to do with discomfort and vulnerability, it is definitely harder than writing regular stuff," she says.

McCarthy agrees and says that writing the sex scenes was the most difficult because they had to be different and unique every

time.

As a writer herself, Butcher agrees that erotica relies on creativity. She has recently noticed an increased interest in erotica writing classes mainly because it is more acceptable in society to talk about sex.

"It is a fun night out of the ordinary and there are a lot of good writers in Ottawa," she says.

For many, attending McCarthy's book launch April 9 will be a night out of the ordinary, but for the author herself, it will be a time to teach others about the art of erotica.

are cultivated so that all learning is vivid and all students with different learning styles can be reached," says Dale Taylor, art consultant for the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board.

The school board's belief that the arts are beneficial to students' learning process led to the launching of Learning Through The Arts — one of the largest public school initiatives in the world.

The program is offered through the Royal Conservative of Music and operates in 300 Canadian schools.

It links teachers with artistic educators to give them ideas to use in their classrooms and offers training in writing of lesson plans and curriculum develop-

School and Cambridge and Elgin Street Public Schools — encourage their students to create art and exhibit it at the library.


Carleton University psychology professor Robert Coplan also encourages parents to promote art among their children.

"Creativity ... allows children to solve problems in ways that are not immediately evident," says Coplan. "It allows them to

And, says Coplan, when it comes to learning through art, no one art is better than others.

"I do not think it really matters what they do," Coplan says. "But the experience of being artistic in any avenue will help their creativity.


"It is going to make them feel good about themselves and will allow them to share things that are inside them with the outside world."



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