

# THE CRIMSON WOMAN

Ottawa erotica writer releases her third novel

**books** Jeremy Mesiano-Crookston



**THE CRIMSON WOMAN BY PATRICIA MCCARTHY.  
(INDEPENDENT PUBLISHER), 301 PP**

*photo David Three Rats (www.patriciamccarthy.com)*

**T**he English poet and essayist Alexander Pope wrote that "A perfect judge will read each work of wit/ with the same spirit that its author writ." It's a valuable tool in approaching literature to try to reconcile the form of a piece with the function of it, and sometimes you'll even find that your appreciation runs contrary to whether or not you actually like the thing.

*The Crimson Woman* is the third novel in an ongoing series from independent Ottawa writer/publisher Patricia K. McCarthy. She's a busy lady. Not represented by a publishing house, she's taken unto herself the whole burden of contracting editors and copy editors, and the process of small-run printing. Then again, McCarthy seems pleased at having "the freedom of not writing to please a publisher or audience." She sells her work at local independent bookstores, and finds her audience "the old-fashioned way. A following begins with a small group of people and spreads by word of mouth."

This small gain approach is necessary, since the niche McCarthy writes in is absolutely tiny: R-rated, 18+, fetish erotic vampire thrillers. I have to be honest about my opinion: In my heart of hearts I didn't like this work. From a technical standpoint I

found it difficult to remain in the story – characters act incredibly, scenes are incongruous and a little choppy, and it's redolent with eye-rolling dialogue and expressions about life and lust ("Pain and pleasure remind me life is not an illusion," I repeated. / "Ah yes, the old 'life is an illusion' conundrum," said Sir William).

But then I consider that the purpose of the writing is only to be exactly what it is. These are potboiler novels of an absolute carnival kind of pulp, everything overcharged and overripe, trashy and sensual. In this gin-and-tonic reading space, those flaws become completely charming parts of a whole, celebratory idea which McCarthy obviously just loves writing. "[Erotica] is not something I set out to do, but it just emerged from me as time went on", says McCarthy. The form of her writing exactly matches its function, and I can see why her fans curl up with her works and enjoy them. ( )

***The Crimson Woman* book  
launch**

@ *Venus Envy* (320 Lisgar @ Bank St.)  
Saturday, Sept. 13, 7:30–9:30 p.m.