

New erotica gives guilty pleasure

Jacquelyn Lewis
Pulse Editor

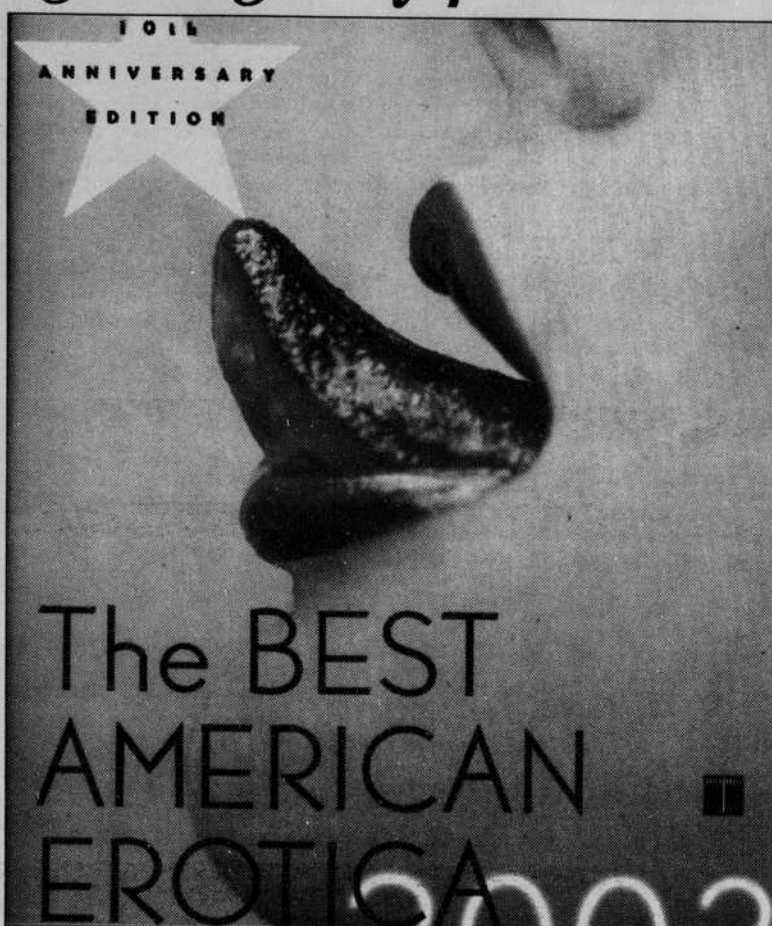
It is the dead of winter — the perfect season to spend an afternoon curled up with a good book. And the term “reading for pleasure” takes on a whole new meaning with “The Best American Erotica 2003: 10th Anniversary Edition.”

While the 348-page volume is a virtual treasure trove for the senses, the content may cause readers who aren't familiar with the genre (like me) to blush — the stories are colorful and well-written.

The sections readers might label as pure smut are so only because that's exactly what their authors intended them to be. They are guilty-pleasure selections the reader will remember later — recalled snippets sure to elicit secretive grins in public.

The book, edited by well-known erotica and sexuality author Susie Bright, contains works from new authors as well as old pros, including Susanna Kaysen, the author of “Girl, Interrupted,” and an engaging section from Chuck Palahniuk's novel, “Choke.” The writing ranges from subtly titillating to full-on nasty. From heterosexual to homosexual to anywhere in between, “The Best American Erotica” serves up smorgasbord of sex — there is literally something for everyone.

The volume's most surprising story is Susan Volchok's “How We Did It,” a selection notable more for its infusion of tenderness and vulnerability than its graphic scenes. Beneath the folds of Volchok's descriptive words describing a lengthy affair lie profound, universal truths about love. Her work is a tingling combination of romance and sexiness. Bright also included interviews



Courtesy

with several prominent erotica authors, including their favorite leisure activities (reading and having sex took first place) as well as how their families react to their work. The authors' answers reveal that sex writers aren't perverts locked in closets, but rather “normal” everyday people. After all, there is nothing strange about enjoying sex.

Thus, we arrive at the most revealing quality of “The Best American Erotica”: Amidst the carnival of strange positions and echoing moans, there's a universal human connection that even the most prudish reader must recognize.

Recommended with a sly grin, get your own copy at bookstores in February.

Contact the pulse editor at jaquelynlewis@dailyemerald.com.

Scene

continued from page 5

pattern with a giant circular skylight topping it off. The elevators are pristine and virtually silent, adorned with giant mirrors.

My favorite location is the browsing room on the second floor — the place where all the magazines and newspapers are held. This is a huge area, with high, slotted wood ceilings and large windows. Looking toward the side that faces Eugene Station, one can see giant set of stained glass windows in the center. I was rather impressed with the periodical selection; the library carries more obscure publications like “The Onion” and “Adbusters.”

I didn't manage to sample any

goods from the lobby's cafe, but I did glance at the prices. They seemed reasonable in comparison to other coffee shops around town.

Perhaps due to location, the new library's hours are somewhat lacking. It closes at 8 p.m. on Monday and Tuesday, 6 p.m. Wednesday through Saturday and 5 p.m. on Sunday. The timing doesn't bode well for nocturnal folk, but when the building is open, it makes a viable alternative to the Knight Library — and it has the benefit of being away from campus.

More information about the library, including access to the catalog, is available at its Web site at <http://www.ci.eugene.or.us/library/>.

Contact the Pulse reporter at aaronshakra@dailyemerald.com.

Ask Nat

continued from page 5
of your mind.

Dear Nat: Do you think dropping out of college and looking for a job with my high school degree is a good choice?

—Wondering

Dear Wondering: Fabulous! Go for it! I'll do you a favor and answer the next question you'll be asking me in advance: Yes, I would like fries with that!

Contact the columnist at natashachilingierian@dailyemerald.com. Her views do not necessarily represent those of the Emerald. Send questions to advice@dailyemerald.com.

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