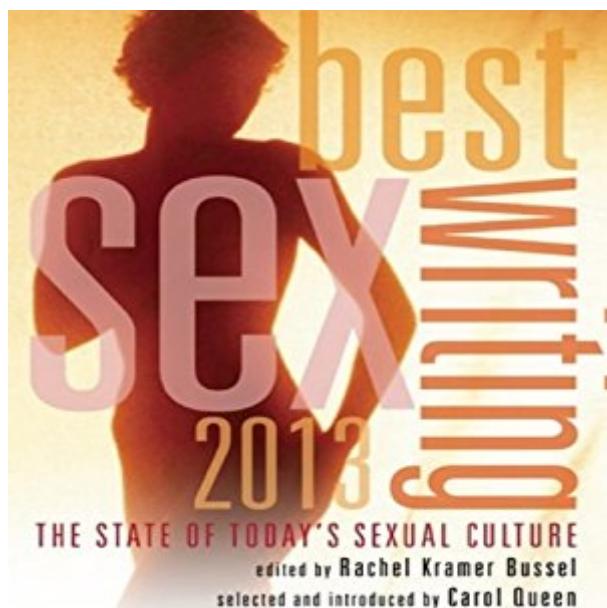


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# Best Sex Writing 2013: The State Of Today's Sexual Culture



## **Synopsis**

The Best Sex Writing series has fundamentally changed the way people think - and what they say - about sexuality. Once again, Rachel Kramer Bussel has collected the year's most challenging and provocative nonfiction articles on this endlessly evocative subject. The essays here comprise a detailed, direct survey of the contemporary American sexual landscape. Major commentators examine the many roles sex plays in our lives in these literate and lively essays. Judged by the Dr. Carol Queen, who is without peer, this stunning collection of sex-smart essays is sure to stir the heart, the brain, as well as other major organs.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

This isn't a book about dirty stories although there are some provocative stories within the book. This is a yearly anthology (I think that my first one was from 2010) about just very interesting viewpoints about different topics concerning (generally) alternative type of sexuality explained or presented. Each year, these books just get better and better. It's a good bunch of reading to learn more about the desires of others. This isn't the best review on this book, I know. But they come very highly recommended from me. Just great, overall!

a wide range of essays that covers many issues around sexuality, in very direct, frank & impartial language. Sometimes funny, always thought provoking & filled with sound, sensible conclusions.

Overall review: Best Sex Writing 2013 is a choice anthology of essays centered around the current vibe of our Western culture, carnal and (sometimes) beyond it. This is one of my favorite anthologies Bussel has edited, as well as one of my all-time favorite sexual anthologies, for its scope and (mostly) bullstuff-free take on what's going on in our world. Only one of the essays didn't grab me because it was long-winded (Jonathan Lethem's "Live Nude Models"). Lethem's verbiage was occasionally clever, but ultimately not worthy of his essay's supposed pay-offs. Lethem's work aside, this is an exceptional collection of works - one worth owning. Standout essays: 1.) "Sex By Numbers" - Rachel Swan: Excellent piece about polyamorous relationships. 2.) "Very Legal: Sex and Love in Retirement" - Alex Morris: The title says it all. Especially good read. 3.) "Notes From a Unicorn" - Seth Fischer: A bisexual man details his evolution as a person and a sexual being. Emotionally engaging, exceptional essay. 4.) "Rest Stop Confidential" - Conner Habib: The mindset of rest stop cruising is explored. 5.) "When on Fire Island... A Polyamorous Disaster" - Nicholas Garnett: The joys and pitfalls of polyamory play out in affecting and tragic fashion. One of the best entries in this collection. 6.) "Cherry Picking" - Julia Serano: Wonderful, thoughtful piece about a transgender woman and her series of sexualized "firsts". 7.) "Baby Talk" - Rachel Kramer Bussel: A lover's predilection for 'age play' leads the author to consider her own predilections, carnal and otherwise. 8.) "Dear John" - Lori Selke: A woman parts ways with the traditional power dynamics of leather culture. 9.) "Christian Conservatives vs. Sex: The Long War Over Reproductive Freedom" - Rob Boston: The author outlines the history of birth control and religious/political interference; more importantly, he tells why we, as advanced cultures, must fight to defend our reproductive rights. Excellent, a must-read entry. 10.) "Porn Defends the Money Shot" - Dennis Romero: Another exemplary essay. In a shifting world, porndom finds itself having to change - or else face a tumbledown in their revenue streams. 11.) "Lost Boys" - Kristen Hinman: Overblown governmental budgets, social denial, corruption and other factors - some of them surprising - contribute to the misreporting and exacerbation of underage prostitution across the United States. Illuminating call-to-action, this - and easily one of the best entries in this anthology.

It's difficult to overstate the quality of this book. I've followed the series for some time now, using one edition as a required text in a class on Sex, Gender & Culture. This is a wonderful collection of real writing. We're not talking about erotica or titillation (though sometimes, honestly, some of that happens in the best way possible). What we have in this book (and, I think, all its predecessors) is a portrait of sex and sexuality, told in a special way, presented in a perspective that is unique and enduring. We can laugh out loud at Andy Isaacson's story of growing up and vibrators. Rachel

Swan's *Sex By Numbers* is one of the more cogent, honest pieces about the realities of polyamory I've read. Aging in retirement and the amusing (thought annoying) preponderance of social rules highlights the chapter by Alex Morris. Bisexuality - frequently overlooked - is explored through pain in a chapter by Seth Fischer. I am drawn back to the haunting sound of 'Nowhere Man' by the doubt and fear conveyed in "Rest Stop Confidential". Again we find polyamory, and how this seemingly open approach can become normative in a chapter by Nicholas Garnett. Jon Pressick's sex positivity is refreshing. Rachel Kramer Bussel's own "Baby Talk" explores deep connections and sharing. Lori Selke's words are a testimonial to personal growth. Patrick Califia describes a perfect scene with the precision of a Julia Child. Madison Young's dilemma as a mom and a feminist jumps out at us. We could be that person. Carol Queen is Lazarus-like in the retrospective on past loves. There is agency, suffocation, safety, politics and, oh yes, porn. Every chapter is powerful and wonderful. It's a long list. For me, though, Julia Serano really is the cherry to be picked in her "Cherry Picking". Her words describe more than simply sex, they embody transformation as both fear and power. She lands on the idea of orgasm with perfection, following her transition, achieving a "sexual state at least twenty times more intense than any boy orgasm I had ever had." It is here I find the power of this book, this series. It is personal. Writing about sex can seem to take on many forms. We have, of course, the erotic. Commodified to absurd levels, erotica runs a gamut from bad to priceless. There is the pontification: the authors so full of themselves and what they feel is "real" sex that we mere mortals had best read their tome. Let's not forget the clinical - that factual, dry, absent volume of stats and facts. Too many of the offerings in these genres seem to miss the mark. It's not common to find erotica that speaks to us as though we were having a conversation. It's rare to find sex modeled in a way that makes it accessible (my list has about 10 entries). Clinical is good, but where is everyone? And here it is that *Best Sex Writing* really shines. Yes, the writing is absolutely super, the ideas impress, amaze, stir, sadden, delight, mystify, beckon and illuminate. But underneath it all, behind the layer of ink on paper or pixel on screen, we find real people sharing real experiences and perspectives with us. This deeply humanizing approach calls me back, and my hope is that this series continues to open us up.

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