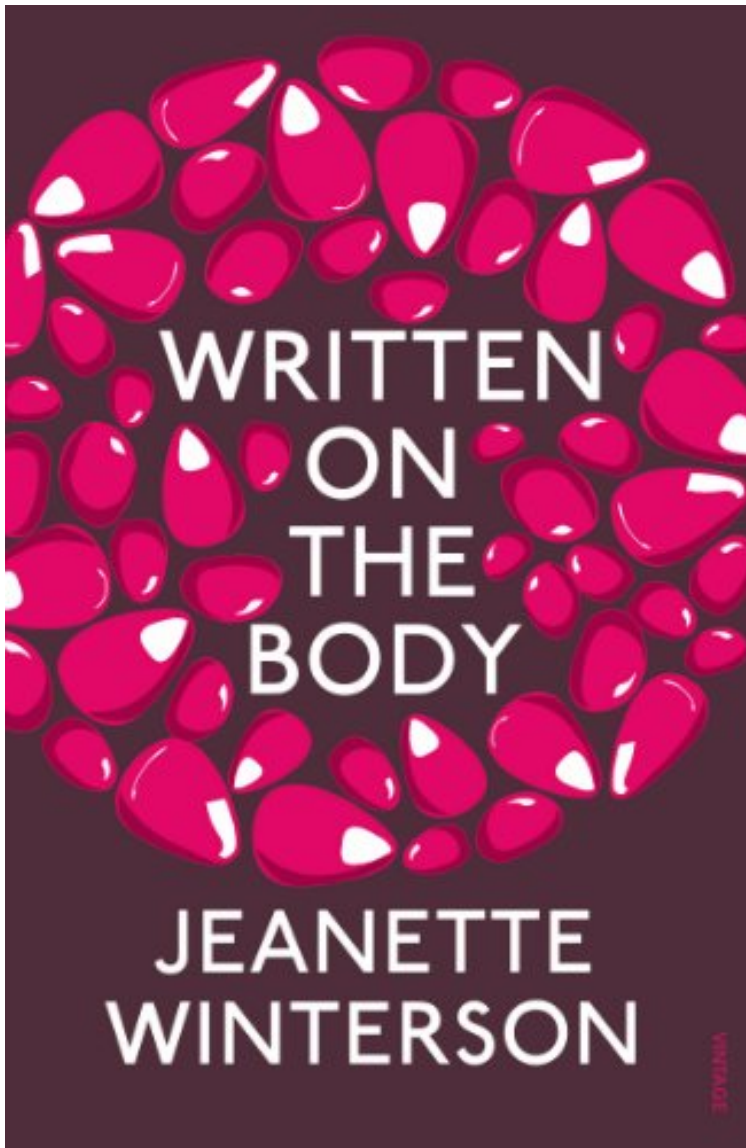


Written On The Body



Par Jeanette Winterson
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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurWritten on the body is a secret code only visible in certain lights: the accumulation of a lifetime gather there. In places the palimpsest is so heavily worked that the letters feel like braille. I like to keep my body rolled away from prying eyes, never unfold too much, tell the whole story. I didn't know that Louise would have reading hands. She has translated me into her own book.ExtraitThe interesting thing about a knot is its formal complexity. Even the simplest pedigree knot, the trefoil, with its three roughly symmetrical lobes, has mathematical as well as artistic beauty. For the religious, Kind Solomon's knot is said to embody the essence of all knowledge. For carpet makers and cloth weavers all over the world, the challenge of the knot lies in the rules of its surprises. Knots can change but they must be well-behaved. An

informal knot is a messy knot. Louise and I were held by a single loop of love. The cord passing round our bodies had no sharp twists or sinister turns. Our wrists were not tied and there was no noose about our necks. In Italy in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries a favourite sport was to fasten two fighters together with a strong rope and let them beat each other to death. Often it was death because the loser couldn't back off and the victor rarely spared him. The victor kept the rope and tied a knot in it. He had only to swing it through the streets to terrify money from passers-by. I don't want to be your sport nor you to be mine. I don't want to punch you for the pleasure of it, tangling the clear lines that bind us, forcing you to your knees, dragging you up again. The public face of a life in chaos. I want the hoop around our hearts to be a guide not a terror. I don't want to pull you tighter than you can bear. I don't want the lines to slacken either, the thread paying out over the side, enough rope to hang ourselves. I was sitting in the library writing this to Louise, looking at a facsimile of an illuminated manuscript, the first letter a huge L. The L woven into shapes of birds and angels that slid between the pen lines. The letter was a maze. On the outside, at the top of the L, stood a pilgrim in hat and habit. At the heart of the letter, which had been formed to make a rectangle out of the double of itself, was the Lamb of God. How would the pilgrim try through the maze, the maze so simple to angels and birds? I tried to fathom the path for a long time but I was caught at dead ends by beaming serpents. I gave up and shut the book, forgetting that the first word had been Love. In the weeks that followed Louise and I were together as much as we could be. She was careful with Elgin, I was careful with both of them. The carefulness was wearing us out. One night, after a seafood lasagne and a bottle of champagne we made love so vigorously that the Lady's Occasional was driven across the floor by the turbine of our lust. We began by the window and ended by the door. It's well-known that molluscs are aphrodisiac, Casanova ate his mussels raw before pleasuring a lady but then he also believed in the stimulating powers of hot chocolate. Articulacy of fingers, the language of the deaf and dumb, signing on the body body longing. Who taught you to write in blood on my back? Who taught you to use your hands as branding irons? You have scored your name into my shoulders, referenced me with your mark. The pads of your fingers have become printing blocks, you tap a message on to my skin, tap meaning into my body. Your morse code interferes with my heart beat. I had a steady heart before I met you, I relied upon it, it had seen active service and grown strong. Now you alter its pace with your own rhythm, you play upon me, drumming me taut. Written on the body is a secret code only visible in certain lights; the accumulations of a lifetime gather there. In places the palimpsest is so heavily worked that the letters feel like braille. I like to keep my body rolled up away from prying eyes. Never unfold too much, tell the whole story. I didn't know that Louise would have reading hands. She has translated me into her own book. We tried to be quiet for Elgin's sake. He had arranged to be out but Louise thought he was at home. In silence and in darkness we loved each other and as I traced her bones with my palm I wondered what time would do to skin that was so new to me. Could I ever feel any less for this body? Why does ardour pass? Time that withers you will wither me. We will fall like ripe fruit and roll down the grass together. Dear friend, let me lie beside you watching the clouds until the earth covers us and we are gone. Elgin was at breakfast the following morning. This was a shock. He was as pale as his shirt. Louise slid into her place at the foot of the long table. I took up a neutral position about half way. I buttered a slice of toast and bit. The noise vibrated the table. Elgin winced. 'Do you have to make so much noise?' 'Sorry Elgin,' I said, spattering the cloth with crumbs. Louise passed me the teapot and smiled. 'What are you so happy about?' said Elgin. 'You didn't get any sleep either.' 'You told me you were away until today,' said Louise quietly. 'I came home. It's my house. I paid for it.' 'It's our house and I told you we'd be here last night.' 'I might as well have slept in a brothel.' 'I thought that's what you were doing,' said Louise. Elgin got up and threw his napkin on the table. 'I'm exhausted but I'm going to work. Lives depend on my work and because of you I shall not be at my best today. You might think of yourself as a murderer.' 'I might but I shan't,' said Louise. We heard Elgin clatter his mountain bike out of the hall. Through the basement window I saw him strap on his pink helmet. He liked cycling, he thought it was good for his heart. Louise was lost in thought. I drank two cups of tea, washed up and was thinking of going home when she put her arms around me from behind and rested her chin on my shoulder. 'This isn't working,' she said. *Revue de presse* "Winterson's novels are about exploding our complacent notions of the real, breaking down received ideas of gender, time and space... John Donne wrote, "Love...makes one little room, as everywhere." Winterson's novel arrives at a similar affirmation" (Time Out) "An ambitious work, at once a love story and a philosophical meditation on the body...the result is a work that is consistently revelatory about the phenomenon of love" (New York

Times Book)"This book is a deep sensual plunge, a worship of the body, inside and out" (Guardian)