



Written in the Flesh: A History of Desire

Edward Shorter

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Written in the Flesh is a history of sexual desire - a startling and provocative history of what people yearn to do sexually. It is the story of the whole body's need for sexual attention rather than simply the genitalia and their procreational function.

The desire for sexual pleasure and total body sex - that is, the expansion of sexuality from a limited focus on the face and genitals to include the entire body - is certainly not a new phenomenon: the ancient Greeks, Romans, and Chinese, amongst others, were quite familiar with eroticism that went beyond the strictly heterosexual and procreational. In the long centuries of Christian Europe, when miserable conditions of life and religious repression conspired to minimize the expression of sexual longing, desire was driven underground. Yet in the late nineteenth century, increasing privacy, prosperity, and good health again permitted the underlying biological urge for total body sex to express itself, and encouraged a shift of erotic pleasure toward new and unexplored body zones: the mouth, nipples, anus, and further.

This new work by renowned medical historian Edward Shorter demonstrates that desire is hard-wired into the brain, expressing itself in remarkably similar ways in men and women, adolescent and adult, and in gays, lesbians, and straights alike. Drawing from a wide array of sources, including memoirs, novels, collections of letters, diaries, and indeed a large pornographic corpus, Shorter explores the widening of Western society's sexual repertoire.

Written in the Flesh is a history of what people like to do in bed and how that has changed. The change is relentless: human sexuality continually seeks new means of liberation in its expression of pleasure.

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