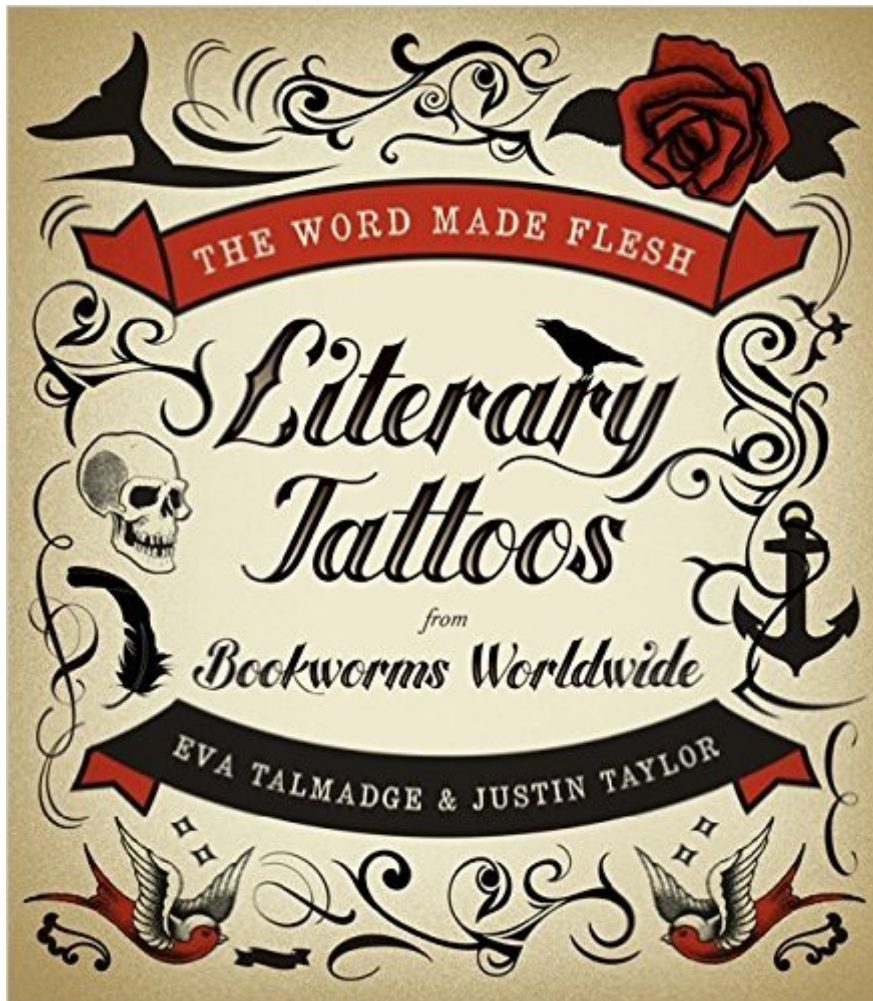


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# The Word Made Flesh: Literary Tattoos From Bookworms Worldwide



## Synopsis

A beautifully packaged full-color collection of literary tattoos and short personal essays, *The Word Made Flesh* is an intimate but anonymous confessional book, in the vein of thought-provoking anthologies like *PostSecret* and *Not Quite What I Was Planning*. Gorgeous photographs and candid commentary are collected by authors Eva Talmadge "whose short story "The Cranes" was cited as Notable Nonrequired Reading of 2008 in Dave Eggers'™ Best American Nonrequired Reading 2009" and Justin Taylor, author of *Everything Here Is the Best Thing Ever*, and editor of the acclaimed short fiction anthology, *The Apocalypse Reader*.

## Book Information

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Best Sellers Rank: #554,315 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #152 in Books > Arts & Photography > Other Media > Body Art & Tattoo #1218 in Books > Humor & Entertainment > Pop Culture > Art #4779 in Books > Arts & Photography > History & Criticism > History

## Customer Reviews

Nicely bound on heavy stock, this book is like a pirate's chest filled with treasure. The familiar tattoos of rebellious outliers have gone mainstream, body ink enjoying a renaissance of art and literature, a combination of art and language embellishing the flesh of devotees. The author's describe their selections as eclectic, much like a mix tape. Shelley Jackson's "Mortal Work of Art: Skin" is as unconventional as it is fascinating: each participant is given one word, part of an animate project. Each person becomes a "word". Brought together, these words might tell a story, or might not. As words die, the story changes, but "the author will make every effort to attend the funeral of her words." Text accompanying the images explains the choice of one author or another, the fondness of phrase or portrait, lines from the work of Flannery O'Connor to William Blake. The entirety of Carey Harrison's broad back is inscribed with the text of Theodore Adorno's essay, "For Marcel Proust", a paean to genius. A personal favorite, two provocative lines on Alyssa Carver's

arm that parallel the veins under her skin: "a wet seed wild in the hot blind earth." In her own words, "This sentence just kills me every time I read it." As striking as the marriage of literature and ink are the stories that accompany these extraordinary photographs, the choice of writers, the extension of art to flesh. Katherine Barthelme wears the words "Born Dancin'" on her inner arm, this selection made more astonishing by the story by Donald Barthelme, "The Baby". A child willfully tears the pages from books, her punishment commensurate isolation in her room. As the years of potential isolation accrue, a father is faced with an ethical dilemma and the necessity of a practical solution.

I've never considered getting a tattoo. They're fine, but never held any personal appeal... until I saw *The Word Made Flesh*. It's a photo essay of literary tattoos, and in addition to the fine editors who put the book together, it owes its success to the creativity and literacy of the individuals pictured within. Don't expect to see a lot of smiling faces. Most photographs are disembodied arms, legs, and other assorted body parts. The tats pictured take all forms. Many are literary quotations, and it's quite fascinating to see the words that moved a reader so profoundly that he or she literally wanted them to become part of their selves. Other tattoos were recreations of cover art, illustrations, bookish logos, punctuation marks, and even portraits of authors. One of the sequences that interested me most was a press release and a series of photographs from "The Skin Project." Writer Shelley Jackson has penned a 2,095-word short story entitled "Skin." It will never be published anywhere. The only place it is being printed is word by word on the bodies of volunteers. The only individuals who will ever be privileged to read the entire text are the tattooed "words." Five of them are pictured. And once the "words" die, the story will be gone. Very cool. While the photographs are the central focus of the book (and they're nicely shot and pleasingly laid out), the text is likewise pleasing and diverse. Much of the text is made up of brief discussions of the tattoos in the bearers' own words, which are almost always interesting. The editors do a good job, as well, keeping things mixed up. I mentioned the press release earlier. At one point, a two-page short story that inspired a tattoo is printed in its entirety.

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