

WHY BE HAPPY WHEN YOU COULD BE NORMAL?

I loved God of course, in the early days, and God loved me. That was something. And I loved animals and nature. And poetry. People were the problem. How do you love another person? How do you trust another person to love you?

I had no idea.

I thought that love was loss.

Why is the measure of love loss?

That was the opening line of a novel of mine – *Written on the Body* (1992). I was stalking love, trapping love, losing love, longing for love . . .

Truth for anyone is a very complex thing. For a writer, what you leave out says as much as those things you include. What lies beyond the margin of the text? The photographer frames the shot; writers frame their world.

Mrs Winterson objected to what I had put in, but it seemed to me that what I had left out was the story's silent twin. There are so many things that we can't say, because they are too painful. We hope that the things we can say will soothe the rest, or appease it in some way. Stories are compensatory. The world is unfair, unjust, unknowable, out of control.

When we tell a story we exercise control, but in such a way as to leave a gap, an opening. It is a version, but never the final one. And perhaps we hope that the silences will be heard by someone else, and the story can continue, can be retold.

When we write we offer the silence as much as the story. Words are the part of silence that can be spoken.

★

