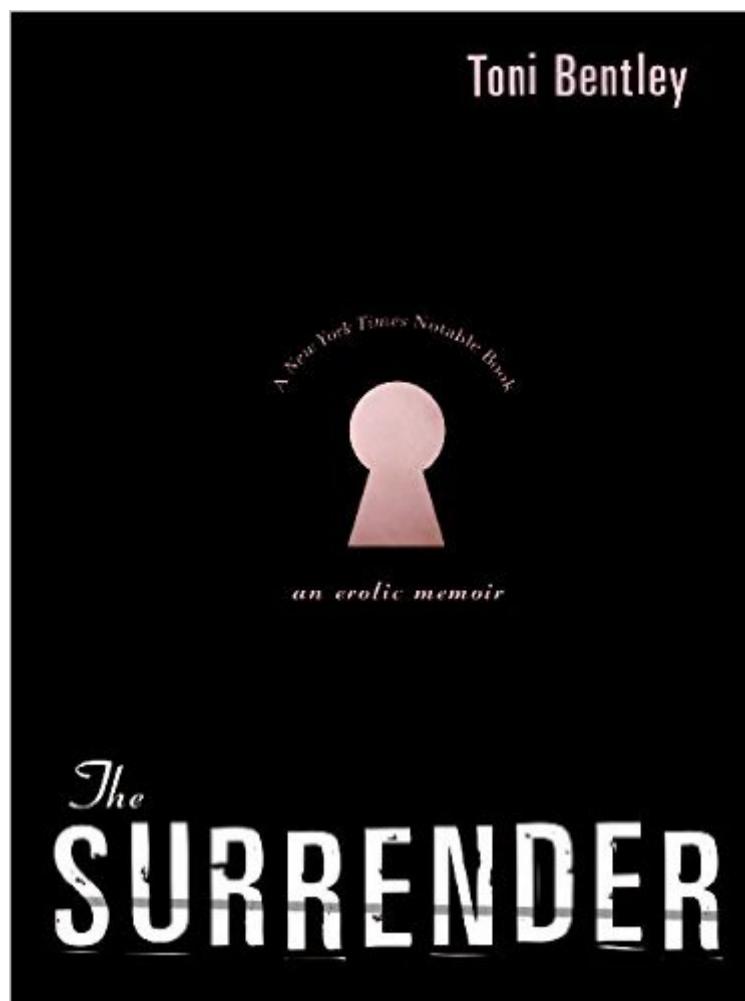


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# The Surrender: An Erotic Memoir



## Synopsis

Few women do it and even fewer will admit to it. But in Toni Bentley's daring and intimate memoir, *The Surrender*, she pulls the sheets back on an erotic experience that's been forbidden since the Bible and celebrates "the joy that lies on the other side of convention, where risk is real and rapture resides." From *Story of O* to *The Kiss* to *The Sexual Life of Catherine M.*, readers have been enthralled with sexually subversive memoirs by women. But even those erotic classics didn't navigate the psychosexual terrain that Bentley does when she meets a lover who introduces her to a radical and unexpected pleasure, to the "holy" act that she came to see as her awakening. *The Surrender* is a witty, intelligent, and eloquent exploration of one woman's obsession that will be sure to leave readers questioning their own desires.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I learned about "The Surrender," former ballerina Toni Bentley's paean to the supposedly sublime pleasures of anal sex, through an article I had read in "n+1." I was both fascinated and repulsed by a quote taken from the latter part of the memoir in which Bentley recounts how she had become so enraptured by her lover that she saved and stored away the condoms left over from their anal encounters -- nearly three hundred in all -- in a black, lacquered box where they remain as mementos of a transformative three-year long affair. I imagined Bentley, a lithe and lovely ballerina and a bona-fide member of George Balanchine's chorus of swans, plucking stained prophylactics from the floor, each dripping with the oleaginous residue leftover from unabsorbed gobs of K-Y and spermicide, and dropping them into an elegant box as if they were just as precious as grandma's

pearls. I was intrigued by the image of this woman and what she could say about an affair that could inspire such an obsession. I was also, with the exception of some brief perusals of Pauline Reage's literature, rather limited in my experience with contemporary erotica. Women are now the primary authors of this material and, after the publication of Catherine Millet's "The Sexual Life of Catherine M." in 2001 (a tome whose success may have helped lead to the publication of Bentley's memoir), it seemed as though Virginia Woolf's wish had come true: women could finally write the truth about the experience of their own bodies. The men (Henry Miller, D.H. Lawrence, et al.) had done a fine job, but lacked the authority. The women who have already traversed this territory either grossly embellished the experiences (Anais Nin) or had made the matter of female pleasure seem, well, to be more of a political act (Erica Jong).

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