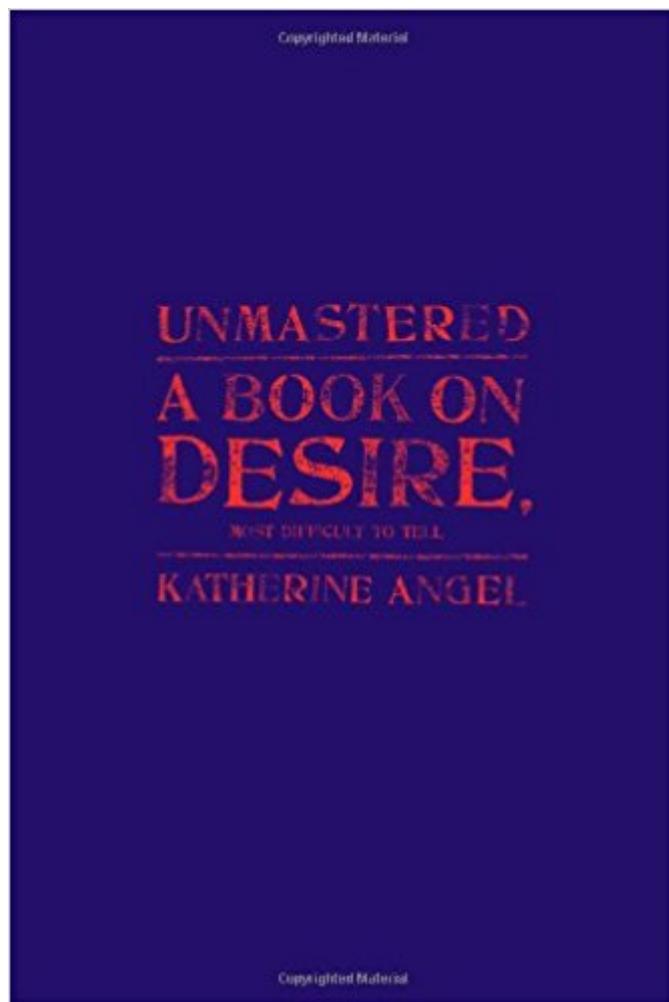


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# Unmastered: A Book On Desire, Most Difficult To Tell



## Synopsis

One of O Magazine's Must-Read Books for June 2013A provocative and personal meditation on sex, power, and female desireToday's women, we're told, have more options in exercising their desire than ever before in history. And yet the way we talk about desire is virtually as constrained as it was for the Victorians. There's an essential paradox at the heart of female sexuality: What we demand in our public lives is often in direct contrast to what we crave in our intimate lives. In the tradition of Susan Sontag and Virginia Woolf, Katherine Angel has forged a path through clichÃƒÂ©, convention, and secrecy, and the result is *Unmastered*, a searching and idiosyncratic account of her studies in sex as an academic and of her experiences of sex as a woman. *Unmastered* isn't merely personal confession; it is also a powerful reckoning with our contradictory and deeply entrenched notions of sexuality. Angel embraces the highly charged oppositions—dominance versus submission, liberation versus dependence—and probes the porousness between masculine and feminine, thought and sensation, self and culture, power and pliancy, always reveling in the elusiveness of easy answers. With remarkable candor, Angel reflects on the history of her encounters and beliefs, and shows how our lives are shaped by the words we use and the stories we tell. The result is a revelatory book that examines and then explodes our most deeply rooted assumptions. Lyrical, brave, and sometimes disarmingly funny, *Unmastered* will start a thousand debates.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Writing honestly about sex takes moxie, but to reach the degree of subtlety and significance Angel

attains also requires knowledge, literary finesse, wit, and acuity. This unique, aptly intimate book of meticulously crafted and succinct observations, aphorisms, musings, and intense vignettes illuminates the nature of desire and eroticism. Angel examines with startling insights the thoughts and feelings generated by sexual longing, satisfaction, and frustration; the language of sex; fantasy; pornography; the eroticism of archetypal gender roles; and the divide between a couple’s social demeanor versus private moments when they are “all teeth and claws and wings.” Angel looks back to her sexual awakening (“It is dangerous to be a girl. To be exciting to others”), consults Woolf and Sontag, and defines her “own feminist erotics.” Exquisitely attuned to the vicissitudes of the body-mind dynamic, Angel is funny, tender, candid, and generous. Wild, abandoned, fleshy pleasure is matched by intellectual and psychological complexity that embraces ire, fear, sorrow, and regret. This is a brave, beautiful, thoroughly considered, and haunting book of reflections, a masterful inquiry into sexuality and its consequences. --Donna Seaman

“Offers an arresting mix of diaristic experiences with her lover . . . and heady reflections from feminist thinkers like Susan Sontag and Virginia Woolf. A genre-busting nonfiction account that reads like poetry, revels in ambiguity, and intentionally defies definition, the book explores the slippery emotions of sex in fiery, collage-like scenes intended to reconcile the contradictory metaphors we love by.” “Unconventional, deeply personal . . . often poetic.” “The New Yorker Page Turner blog” “Angel embraces the impossibility of extricating fact from feeling.” “Julia Klein, The Boston Globe” “Poetic . . . Sharply truthful, musical, and beautifully patterned . . . An act of cultural resistance, and a book you immediately start to reread.” “Adam Foulds, author of *The Quickening Maze*” “Absorbing . . . [A] vigorous testament to a female libido undaunted by the cold shower of self-analysis.” “Talitha Stevenson, *The Guardian*” “Ghostly and poetic . . . [A] thinking woman’s meditation on sexual desire.” “Publishers Weekly” “[A] provocative and profoundly personal investigation into female desire . . . It’s hard to overestimate the riskiness of these passages, their courage and their exquisite sensuality . . . But the real joy lies in the artfulness with which [Angel] uses these intimate episodes as a way of unwrapping the larger issue of what it means to be a woman, both object and subject of desire . . . Unmastered is a giddily joyful book . . . Days after reading, its images linger in the mind . . . [An] elegant and uplifting journey through the labyrinth of female lust.” “Olivia Laing, *The Observer*” “Katherine Angel’s *Unmastered* stayed in my head for

weeks after I read it. It's brave, moving, and perfectly structured. — Sam Byers, author of *Idiopathy* — “Unmastered is an intriguing literary and cultural study . . . Erudite and personal . . . The strength of Ms. Angel’s writing . . . makes the book seem both universal and intimate at once.” — The Economist — “Unmastered is one of those totally out-of-the blue, impossible-to-classify, weird and new and wonderful fiction-ish nonfiction books, which happily come along every so often and make you go, ‘Whoa: this is what we need now’ . . . A libidinous thrill all of its own.” — Stuart Hammond, *Dazed & Confused* magazine

Although I appreciate the author's observations on how our culture views female sexuality, by no stretch of the imagination is the digital version of this work worth \$11.00. This is more like a long magazine article. It took me 90 minutes to read. As a previous reviewer mentioned, most of the length is blank spacing. Why any editor or publisher thought this was a good idea, I don't know. I returned my order.

This short "book" is mostly filler - blank and one sentence pages. There is no structure to speak of. There are a few choppy, disjointed words on sex/desire. It is not clear as to what one is to take away from this mostly empty "book." For some, apparently quite a bit, if they are to be believed.

You may reasonably believe that memoirs are meant to tell a story of some kind. I, for example, hold this belief. *UNMASTERED*, unfortunately, does not express this belief. It's not really a story so much as a pile of vignettes that one might expect of a sophomore with her first blog. There is no real narrative and hence no possibility of narrative coherence. Many of the pages are single sentences surrounded by an expanse of empty page. They seem designed to make you ask, "Why did I pay for this?" When I asked the same question, I realized there is no reason and returned the book. Thank you, , for your generous return policy. A strategy of deliberate vagueness and random observation may have been original when Anais Nin was writing. It's not interesting anymore.

After reading a rave review from Tracy Clark-Flory at *Salon*, I decided to order "Unmastered." When my package arrived I simply could not believe my eyes as I leafed through the book and saw pages upon pages "filled" with a sentence or two. The excerpts I'd seen were poetic and insightful--I did not expect them to be strewn around the book without a narrative to string them together. This book reads like a Twitter feed and is quite simply a waste of paper. I wish I'd read the reviews before

ordering ...DO NOT BUY THIS BOOK.

A poetic and beautifully written book on desire. It's sexy, sad, and exciting. I'll read this book again several times.

I love the concept of short sentences and paragraphs one per page. And this woman is so honest. How can someone be so honest. This took guts and it is a very, very juicy and way-cool read. Thank you, thank you for your sharing with us.

I didn't care for the author's writing style, or the fact that the book had little substance. The writing was somewhat abstract and poetic, and never seemed to impart much of anything worthwhile.

I thought this one would be kinda fun. It is boring beyond words and I refuse to finish it! It came recommended by some authority in good reads. In my estimation, this one fails miserably. I hate using 'hate' in a review, thus the two stars!

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