



Thanks for Coming: One Young Woman's Quest for an Orgasm

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By turns uproarious and touching, the memoir of a young woman's search for an orgasm—and for the elusive connections between sex and love

Twenty-six-year-old Mara Altman wanted to know what all the screaming was about. She'd lost her virginity at seventeen; grown up in southern California with sexually free parents; had lovers in India, Burma, and Peru; and spent a year in Bangkok observing all manner of depravity. And yet she was an attractive, successful, single woman in New York who'd never had an orgasm.

And so she embarked on a wildly funny, emotionally resonant odyssey—a journey both inside and outside herself—only to discover that, for Mara, orgasm was connected to a part of her that no vibrator could reach. *Thanks for Coming* is one woman's look at our obsession with and anxiety over the female orgasm. Her quest to get her own yields poignant results that will surprise even the sexually awakened among us. From sex shows to sex conventions, from a therapist's couch to her own couch, from the bedroom to the bar, Mara Altman proves to be a guide as hilarious as she is investigative.

Thanks for Coming: One Young Woman's Quest for an Orgasm Details

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Evie says

At first, I didn't really like this book. There is this girl (the author) who she complains about being in her mid-20s never having experienced an orgasm (not that that's not something to complain about.) She is so fixated on this, in fact, that she decides to write a book about the quest to achieve one. Then she talks to a whole bunch of sexperts and vulva gurus.

The part I didn't understand was that all through the first part of the book she was so fixated on achieving an orgasm, and yet she barely attempted to stimulate herself. The first few months of her journey, she is focused on her orgasm-less-ness and talks to a host of experts (including the lovely Betty Dodson), yet she doesn't make the time to put her hand on her snatch. Not even lean against a dryer on spin cycle. Not even purchase a vibe, never mind switch it on. This irritated me as a helpless bystander. I too wanted to yell at the book "JUST MASTURBATE!" How can one be upset about never having experienced an orgasm if they don't give themselves physical contact?

Halfway through the book I warmed up to Mara and her body-shy experiences. I couldn't relate in that sense, but I could appreciate how hard it is to deal with hangups of any variety. I also appreciated that she visited so many experts and that I was able to vicariously experience being in the awkward presence of some of the great thinkers and DOers on sexuality of the modern age.

Angela says

No one can fault Altman for writing and researching *Thanks for Coming* with a lack of earnestness. At its best, the memoir is a broad expose of a scattered grassroots industry emerging to promote women's pleasure, whether through direct physical means or by the promise of boosted self-esteem, with plenty of combinations of these on the offer. And indeed, we soon realize that Mara's problem isn't anything physical, but rather confronting the demons that prevent her from feeling comfortable with her own body. I didn't relate to the process, much. Perhaps I failed to get the cultural message that declares parts of the female body horrifying and shameful. In any case, most of the book is a memoir of how, while refusing to engage in any of the behaviors that typically give most women orgasms, the author fails to have an orgasm, and once she tries one of these methods, she succeeds in her quest.

For sure, there's a lot to enjoy here. It's well-written, funny, and I think Altman would make a great lighthearted weekly columnist somewhere. Her descriptions of the strange cast of characters she meets along her journey are unparalleled. This did not, however, prevent me from wanting to reach into the book and shake her when she asked people around her for the thousandth time how to have an orgasm--even lamenting the lack of advice provided at a family Thanksgiving dinner!--while proceeding to ignore anything they actually suggested.

Douglas says

The precursor to her current "Gross Anatomy". The author tells a highly personal, but not erotic, story of

visits to numerous sex experts. Be an adult and read it without smirking.

Ron says

Altman caught a lot of flak from Gawker when the proposal for this book was being shopped around; after all, it's pretty easy to laugh at a woman in her mid-20s who still hasn't managed to have an orgasm. And Altman's story turns out to be a lot like that State Farm commercial that's on TV all the time lately, except that instead of asking everybody to help her figure out the right deductible, she's... well, you know.

But the thing is, if you're willing to give Altman a chance, and approach her story without condescension or smugness, it's actually pretty entertaining. Yes, she can be obtusely self-absorbed; yes, she's carrying around a lot of emotional baggage many of us shucked long ago. But she wants to understand herself; she works through her own denseness, and she knows that as much as this story is all about her, it also isn't all about her. I could've done with a little trimming here and there, but this was one of the better memoirs I've read in recent months: Altman gives you a real sense of how high the stakes are in her life, and follows through on that dramatic promise.

Andrea Borod says

The writing was better than the plot. She's a talented writer but the book when on for a little too long although the subject would have made for an interested longform article. Good read for those interested in the art of creative non-fiction. I'd be happy to read more from her.

Elizabeth says

It wasn't my favorite book in the world, but it was really entertaining. Altman has a very easy and funny style which makes the book interesting and fairly comical at times. I thought it was going to have a little more into the science of orgasm, but instead focused more on the emotional. It was informative, but read more like a fiction journey. I think the lightness and the journey aspects of it made it interesting and worth reading. I'd recommend it to anyone looking for a simple, entertaining read.

Jill-ann says

I didn't like this when I started it. In fact, it took me quite awhile to like it. I felt that the author was obsessing in a repetitive manner and not moving forward a whole lot with her efforts. It was too much of the same lamentation. Once I finally got engaged in the story, though, I found it truly enjoyable. The cast of characters is fascinating, frankly, and is one of the things that I liked most about this book. I also love that Altman explored so many different facets of sexuality, and that she had the courage to peel away her emotional baggage and to share all of the self-discovery that was inevitable given her quest. Sex is WAY too taboo in our society and I tend to get really enthusiastic about authors who have the gumption to really delve into human sexuality. The ending left me joyously satisfied...which, given the subject, HAS to be a good thing!

P.S. Nitpicky, but I hate the words "cooter" and "crotch". So the frequent use of both of those was quite a bit

of a buzzkill. Oh well, I lived to enjoy the book anyway ;)

Slash Coleman says

Finally, a book that deserves to be a book rather than a book disguised as a long blog post. Altman can write, damn can this girl write!

She reminds me of writers like Hemingway who worked long and hard at their craft before looking for a way to shape their story.

Taylor says

I guess the sad truth about *Thanks for Coming* is that I couldn't really bring myself to care about the outcome. Was it interesting? Absolutely. Was it sexy? Kinda. Something about it felt very shallow, which perhaps is the point - that she set out upon this quest for an orgasm and seemed to divorce it from all of its factors. At times - read: most of the time - it felt like she was doing things just to have a book to write, which I guess I understand, and certainly isn't unusual (see: my upcoming review of Dave Eggers' memoir), but takes something away from it, to be sure. It's a good read if you want something quick and curious, but there's very little from this that lingered in my mind, and I finished it all of a month to three weeks ago.

Jessica says

The content of the book was much deeper than the title would lead you to believe. I think most twenty-somethings have gone through a period in their life when they felt disconnected from life and were searching for something to grasp onto. To me, this book highlighted the journey of finding yourself.

Cathy Serpico says

Altman's writing is witty, honest, and entertaining. While I relate to the team of readers who found frustration that after hundreds of pages I was still reading new cute nicknames for her crotch without one moment of the author sticking her hand down her pants, there is a wealth of information she discovers about the industry that has grown out of researching and enhancing orgasm. I'd recommend to anyone who likes funny memoirs or is interested in learning more about anorgasmia.

Meghan says

I loved Mara Altman's Kindle Single "Sparkle", so I figured I'd try another one of her works. I actually intended on purchasing her other single "Bearded Lady", but accidentally bought this sucker instead [curse you, Fat Finger Syndrome]. I was out ten bucks no matter what, so I figured I'd still give 'er a try.

Mara Altman is brave, honest, and hilarious in this memoir. This book is more than just about sex; it is about

self-discovery. Altman, an orgasm-virgin, writes to experience what all the fuss is about regarding female orgasms. She does it in a very scientific way. She explores female pleasure by speaking to sex therapists, psychologists, her grandparents, her personal "sex whore" (strictly rubbing, no feelings), lovers, friends, and other orgasm gurus.

About halfway through I questioned Altman's sanity, as she was truly obsessed with having and learning about the human orgasm. I thought, "Enough already! This bitch is creepily obsessed." and had set the book down for a few weeks. Then my appreciation for research knocked some perspective into me. I no longer viewed the book as a woman creating just a funny read, rather I viewed it as a journalist researching a topic. Once I could view it as research, I grew to appreciate her efforts a lot more.

Give the book a shot. Worse-case scenario is you get the opportunity to read the word "pussy" more than you actually get it. Boom.

Nik says

This book was a journey of the orgasm, for one female in particular. Mara overthinks, over feels and over researches for the sake of her orgasm. Its a good book, an interesting journey and I laughed a lot. Read this if you are not easily offended by sex.

Georgia Taylor says

So it's about this 26 yr old girl who hasn't had an orgasm and her quest to 'find' it. A little ways into the book, we realize she has never masturbated before, never used a vibrator before. The first time she finally does masturbate, WOW, there it is! First try! Not too much of a quest, if you ask me. Didn't answer any of my questions...

Rachel LaMacchia says

Now I realize the taboo nature of this book might lead one to believe there is no way it is worthy of 5 stars. Sure, the taboo content was alluring and entertaining, but that is not why I am rating this book so highly. It is ... the pure vulnerability Mara Altman portrays in this memoir. The attempt at finding a part of oneself so typically only privy to, well oneself, is so inspiring to me. The entire time I was reading this book (other than really wanting to somehow obtain her email address so I can probe her mind more), I was thinking to myself that I need to find something in my life to be that passionate about. I don't need HER passion per-say, but just the thought of throwing caution to the wind and venturing on a journey into the unknown, so fascinating. I went into reading this purely for amusement (and at this point have NO idea how I came upon it, to be honest), but ended up being left thinking about my own life. To me, that is the #1 sign of a good book.
