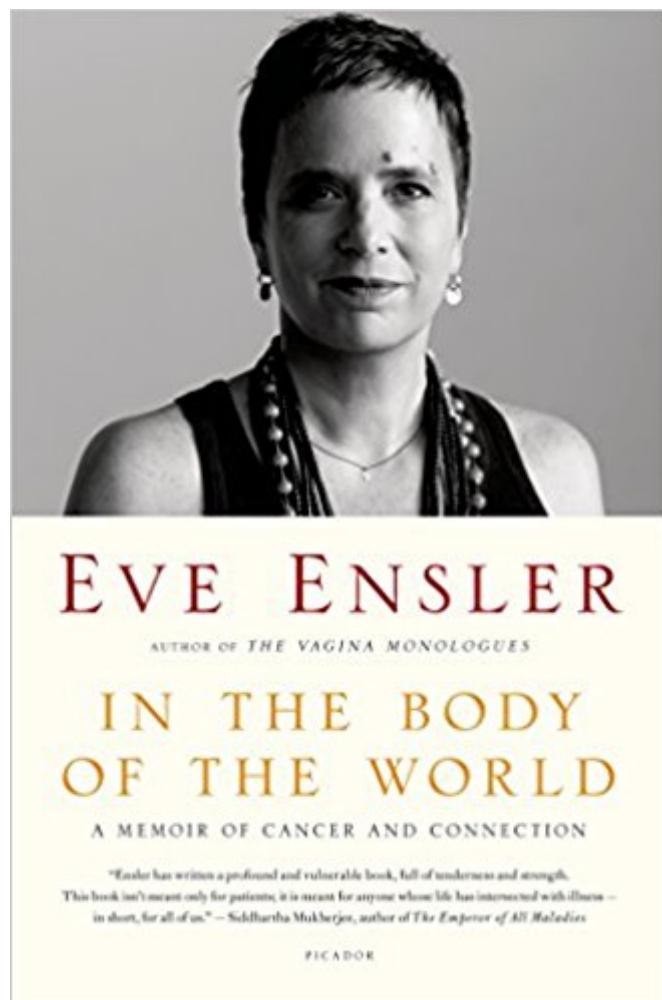


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# In The Body Of The World: A Memoir Of Cancer And Connection



## Synopsis

Playwright, author, and activist Eve Ensler has devoted her life to the female body—how to talk about it, how to protect and value it. Yet she spent much of her life disassociated from her own body—a disconnection brought on by her father's sexual abuse and her mother's remoteness. "Because I did not, could not inhabit my body or the Earth," she writes, "I could not feel or know their pain." But Ensler is shocked out of her distance. While working in the Congo, she is shattered to encounter the horrific rape and violence inflicted on the women there. Soon after, she is diagnosed with uterine cancer, and through months of harrowing treatment, she is forced to become first and foremost a body—pricked, punctured, cut, scanned. It is then that all distance is erased. As she connects her own illness to the devastation of the earth, her life force to the resilience of humanity, she is finally, fully—and gratefully—joined to the body of the world. Unflinching, generous, and inspiring, Ensler's *In the Body of the World* calls on us all to embody our connection to and responsibility for the world.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Not for the squeamish or the fainthearted. Not for the indifferent or the complacent. Eve Ensler, famous for her play, *The Vagina Monologues*, has written an impassioned memoir which uses her personal story of enduring treatment for a huge, Stage IV uterine tumor, as a metaphor for our destruction of our planet and for our toleration of the atrocity of gang rape as a weapon of war. Again and again, Ensler shows us the links between her own ordeal and the ordeal of a suffering

planet, especially its women. Ensler became absorbed in the stories of these women, especially in Congo, who had been so savagely raped that they developed fistulae (a fistula is a tear in the vaginal wall), which made them permanently incontinent. Ensler was so horrified by their ordeals that she vowed to create, for these women, a refuge where they could heal, physically and emotionally. She pays tribute to a brilliant and selfless, heroic doctor, Dr. Mukwege, who has performed surgery on these damaged women, and to the women who, even if they cannot walk, still sing and dance, and who, in turn, help others like themselves. Ensler began fund-raising for a place, called City of Joy, where women could receive surgery to heal their bodies AND, at the same time, rescue their souls. Given her own history, Ensler was shocked to discover the irony of a tumor the size of a grapefruit in her uterus. Although aware that something was wrong, she ignored the tumor until it had spread throughout her reproductive system, threatening her, at 57, with disfigurement and death. She shows us the links between her own personal denial and our collective denial of phenomena like global warming, the destruction of species, and the use of rape as a weapon of war. Fully aware of this irony, she, who had written so compellingly about these women, developed the same sort of fistula as they, although she was lucky enough to have insurance and access to skilled care. For me, the story of Ensler's own ordeal was, the most compelling aspect of the book; I sometimes got a bit tired of her belaboring the correspondences between her own story and that of our damaged planet. I know that, for her, these correspondences are all-important, but even feminist environmentalist pacifists may tire of her incessant pontificating. Still, *In the Body of the World*, is a bold, engrossing, impassioned plea for all of us to wake up to the damage we are doing ourselves, others, and our planet. Although this book is graphic, uncompromising and terrifying, it is ultimately a testament to survival, and to joy. Four stars.

5.0 out of 5 stars "You must make up your mind. The reason that you have survived when so many have died was that yEve was "raised in America . All value lies in the future, in the dream, in production. There is no present tense." And eve has always lived outside her body at full speed taking on every experience as deeply as she can delve. From self destructive, drug addled promiscuity, she has raised herself to bear unflinching witness to the violations and torture of women. She has served as an activist, facing down injustice and most recently the actual "policy" of rape in the Congo. She implies, and I believe, that her unflinching immersion in that which is impossible to see would protect her from more violation to herself. Well that didn't work. She has stage three or maybe stage four b uterine cancer. And just like that she has entered the world of the invisible where people cannot bear to look. I am a looker, and I believe in bearing witness so I

deeply appreciate this journal of her illness laced with the scenes of horror she has witnessed. The rhetoric can really get away from her, but she is so deeply sincere, I cannot deduct points. And you can always skip the purple prose if you like. She is not every woman's woman. She sees exclusive love partnerships as suspect. This after all is the author of the Vagina Monologues. She is not a flincher and she has not softened the lights for this story. But it is a true look at her disease. I appreciate her presence in the now, and take the point she makes to do so ourselves.

I picked up this book because I'm impressed with Ensler's work. I've been moved by the Vagina Monologues. I'm amazed by her efforts to improve conditions for women all over the world. Reading a memoir of hers made sense. I didn't know about the part of her life she chronicles in this book. I was simply blown away to be immediately immersed in her experience with cancer. She is so clear and graphic that I felt like I was by her side throughout her diagnosis and treatment. At the same time, there's nothing sensationalist or maudlin here. I couldn't put the book down. I finished it in a single afternoon. To have stopped would have been to abandon Eve. Somehow, the cancer ties into Ensler's earlier abuse and her work in the Congo. She is feeling what the women she works with feel. She is releasing her own pain and reestablishing herself as a new, more complete person. There is such passion here - and such hope. I will share this book with the cancer survivors in my circle and recommend it for any woman who has struggled with disease, abuse, or shame.

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