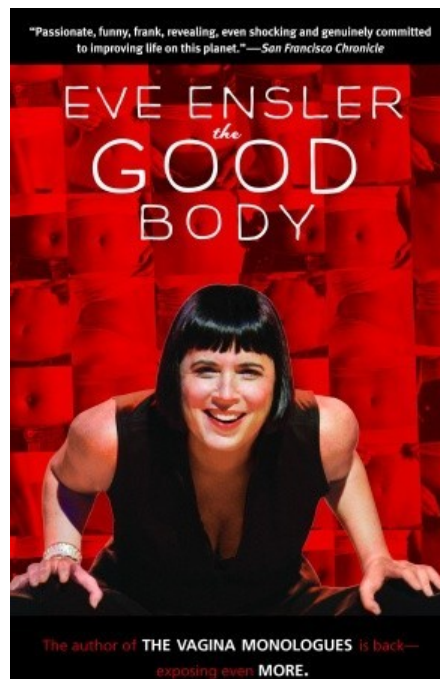




The Good Body

Eve Ensler

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The Good Body Eve Ensler

Botox, bulimia, breast implants: Eve Ensler, author of the international sensation *The Vagina Monologues*, is back, this time to rock our view of what it means to have a “good body.” “In the 1950s,” Eve writes, girls were “pretty, perky. They had a blond Clairol wave in their hair. They wore girdles and waist-pinchers. . . . In recent years good girls join the army. They climb the corporate ladder. They go to the gym. . . . They wear painful pointy shoes. They don’t eat too much. They . . . don’t eat at all. They stay perfect. They stay thin. I could never be good.”

The Good Body starts with Eve’s tortured relationship with her own “post-forties” stomach and her skirmishes with everything from Ab Rollers to fad diets and fascistic trainers in an attempt get the “flabby badness” out. As Eve hungrily seeks self-acceptance, she is joined by the voices of women from L.A. to Kabul, whose obsessions are also laid bare: A young Latina candidly critiques her humiliating “spread,” a stubborn layer of fat that she calls “a second pair of thighs.” The wife of a plastic surgeon recounts being systematically reconstructed—inch by inch—by her “perfectionist” husband. An aging magazine executive, still haunted by her mother’s long-ago criticism, describes her desperate pursuit of youth as she relentlessly does sit-ups.

Along the way, Eve also introduces us to women who have found a hard-won peace with their bodies: an African mother who celebrates each individual body as signs of nature’s diversity; an Indian woman who transcends “treadmill mania” and delights in her plump cheeks and curves; and a veiled Afghani woman who is willing to risk imprisonment for a taste of ice cream. These are just a few of the inspiring stories woven through Eve’s global journey from obsession to enlightenment. Ultimately, these monologues become a personal wake-up call from Eve to love the “good bodies” we inhabit.

From the Hardcover edition.

The Good Body Details

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From Reader Review The Good Body for online ebook

Lani says

I'm having a tough time reviewing this one. Written by the woman who wrote the Vagina Monologues, I expected something similarly revelatory and moving. So I think this suffers from high expectations. It's also hard to knock a woman for wallowing in self-hatred, but I suppose you expect more from the woman who has college campuses everywhere chanting CUNT and loving their vaginas.

I just felt that The Good Body was self-indulgent rather than moving. It was almost the inverse of Vagina Monologues - it's all about Eve Ensler's obsession with her belly and women all over the world telling her it's okay. And the only advice she rejects is the one I related most to - a lesbian piercer explaining why a piercing empowers. Admittedly, I'm a little sensitive about the portrayal of body mods in media, but her anecdote had a strikingly different tone when compared to her other 'body mentors'.

Fortunately the book is short, because by the end I was tired of Ensler talking to exotic wise women all telling her to love her body and move on. That's not to say that these women weren't saying admirable things about body acceptance, but the stories are dragged down by Ensler's insecurity. Even her lover gets in on it and becomes frustrated with her obsession.

I don't like that I finished the book wanting to tell Ensler to shut up about her belly already. Obviously women all struggle with body image, aging, and self-acceptance in one way or another. But this book wasn't about all women, it was about Eve Ensler and she got in the way of her own point. It felt self-indulgent because she wouldn't let it go and share the strength being offered by these other women. Frustrating.

Janet says

Short and funny and poignant at the end.

Lisa says

She's so vulnerable and open I just wish it was longer.

Ana says

original read: 2008

I still remembered some parts of this. It was good.

Joanna says

I did not care for this book at all. I wonder if I saw it presented on stage, if that would change my opinion,

but I disliked it so much that I'd be unlikely to give any money or time to be exposed to it again.

First of all, there is really nothing new in terms of the style or presentation of material. Ensler is using the same structure as The Vagina Monologues, the only difference is that this work focuses on her stomach and she herself gets a lot of stage time.

Although there were a few thought provoking moments - her assertion that all women throughout the world, regardless of their race or class, when asked one thing that could be changed that would really improve their lives, most answered in a way that related to changing some part of their physical bodies.

First of all, there is no citation for that. Who did this study? And how?

Also, the liposuction description was revolting. But it was so revolting that I imagine it will stick with me for sometime.

The piece about the Cosmo editor who works so hard to reshape herself, and ends by saying that her husband thinks she is beautiful, but he doesn't count, "Because he loves me." That was a really interesting section, but more in terms of the way that we discount the opinions of important people in our lives, as opposed to anything really revealing about body image.

I think the part of this book that disturbed me the most was how much Eve Ensler focused on her own stomach issues. If you want to navel gaze, fine. But don't try to make it something that it's not. Don't try to make it a play about the body image issues of women all over the world.

The global focus was also somewhat offensive. When Eve Ensler refuses to eat bread that is being offered to her in Africa, I wanted to smack her. Maybe that is the point. But still. Never did she seem to acknowledge the complete privilege of her position and the luxury it is to be able to refuse food at all.

When she is taken out for ice cream, which is forbidden by the Taliban, her host is risking her life so that Eve freaking Ensler can feel like eating ice cream is okay in this moment due to it being an act of political rebellion. Give me a break!

Also, the extent to which Ensler selects stories where women of all ages blame their mothers for their body image issues is pretty shocking.

Urgh. It also seems like this play is not even the story of how a woman learned to love her body. Or how a woman overcame her struggle with body image. This really seems to be a play about how Eve Ensler travels all over disliking her stomach. I have no opinion about her particular stomach, but I now have no stomach for Eve Ensler.

Jamie says

Just read this. And buy it for all the women you know. And take them to see it performed on stage, if at all possible.

Kaijsa says

This is a mess. Maybe it's because I don't like the format, or that I think a 90 page book made up mostly of unexplicated quotes is a lazy way to make money, or that I think the whole premise is strangely misogynistic, but I hated the book. There is really no discussion of reasons why women might hate their bodies beyond being damaged by their parents or personally buying into media images of what's beautiful. So who makes the media? What drives our standards of beauty? Is it possible that the evil parents--mostly mothers--to blame for these women's pain are victims of social forces bigger than themselves? The lack of analysis by the author, who is more interested in talking about her own body image problems, made me dismiss this whole mess.

Rogene Carter says

A beautiful and timely examination of the perilous relationship that many individuals, particularly women in this text, have with their bodies and how that easily turns to self harm when it should be rooted in appreciation and love.

Elena Potek says

This short little play was interesting to read and touched on so many parts of female identity that remain, sadly, relevant. I loved the exploration of body and felt a calm upon completing the script.

Gen L says

I am deeply concerned about Eve and her relationship to food and her body. I was expecting to find something relatable here, but instead I find myself horrified by how disturbed her body image is and hoping she was either exaggerating for the art of it or getting some proper help.

Vanessa says

Eve Ensler changed my relationship to my body when I saw her perform the Vagina Monologues. I had no idea what to expect (I was a teenager!) She spoke about experiences I was new to and those I had yet to experience. As a nutritionist I've discovered that body image binds us, regardless of body type, age or gender. In this book Eve once again takes women's stories and shares them to provoke and empower. There are the universal tales- how fashion mags make us feel about our ordinary selves, the extreme- multiple plastic surgeries to feel desirable and subculture-piercing and domination.

Mara Shaw says

Relentless, vehement body loathing with a desperate attempt at a hopeful (saccharine) ending of:
"We live in a good body.
We live in a good body.
Good body.

Good body.
Good body."

Ms. Ensler is obviously trying to convince herself, but I'm certain she does not believe it. She's left with hatred of her body, and, sadly, the reader is left with the stories of extreme self-hatred that constitute the book.

Instead of feeling glorious that my body functions and is my "tree" (one of her few attempts to be uplifting), I will recall Helen Gurley Brown's self-revulsion despite her amazing success and 200 daily situps. I will remember vagina tightening, hatred of all "skinny bitches", celebration of getting parasites to get thin, extreme workouts, unhealthy rejection of food (including bread -- gasp!). And anger, anger, anger. Hate, hate, hate.

Ensler offers a few stories of women who are happy in their bodies, but these pale compared to the violent reds and oranges of the stories that scream off the pages of woman after woman who rejects her own body.

The Vagina Monologues were a masterpiece. This is not only a self-indulgent hate-fest, I think it offers so many examples of women hating themselves that it suggests that this is the western norm. To actually like a body with its curves or sags, is to not be striving sufficiently.

I renounce the implication that my body, usually 15 pounds overweight, indicates that I am lazy, ugly, and to be socially rejected. Because I know I, and many other women, am vital, energetic, capable, successful and forgiven for carrying a few extra pounds that would be unacceptable in Ensler's wacky, sad, and hate-filled world. Nameste.

Alice says

Not as good as the Vagina Monologues, but still very powerful and funny and wonderful in its own way. My favorite moment of this book was reading it in an airport... My copy had a different cover from the one pictured here. The cover art is a naked female torso with scoops of ice cream instead of breasts. I thought it was a fantastic image that managed to convey the commodification of female bodies, the link between female sexuality and self-denial, the strange way female sexuality and food have become "forbidden" for women in popular culture, etc.

Well, two white middle aged men were sitting across from me at the gate, waiting for the same flight I was, and eying my book with great discomfort. Unveiled discomfort. Until I finally made and held eye contact with them and they were forced to say something. "Uh... what is THAT?"

They had never heard of Eve Ensler. Or the Vagina Monologues. (And seemed shocked... SHOCKED... that a stranger and a girl would say "vagina" right out loud in an airport! This is not late-night cable, young lady!) So I explained it was a play, a feminist play. And as soon as I said "feminist" their facial expressions seemed to both instantaneously switch off, like a light. "Oh." And back to the sports section. Clearly nothing of concern to THEM.

rishita says

In theory, I (generally) like what Eve Ensler has to say- I (kind of) get where she comes from and her feminism bumps up against mine and we sometimes find a middle ground and sometimes... not.

I believe in the idea that underlies this piece. I know what she's saying. I (mostly) agree with what she's saying.

I just detest the way in which she says it. There's a whole load of unchecked privilege present in the text, no real reflection of how women's bodies and lives intersect with the complicated negotiations of our everyday. I was also uncomfortable with the lack of cultural, socio-political, or national contexts that underscore these lived realities and experiences. I get that it's a 'play'- a pithy text/reflection attempting to showcase how this is a universal construct, not just an individualised one... but context is everything.

Lisa says

Most women have something they hate about their bodies. For Eve Ensler it's her stomach, but for me it's less one part and more a laundry list of complaints: the hair on my head (too fine), the hair on my body (too thick), my cheeks (too hamster-licious), my eyes (too wonky), my teeth (too mangled), my stomach (too wobbly), my thighs (too thick), my legs (too short) and my feet (too wide). I've spent a fortune over the years buying products to firm, tone, support, remove and disguise the many areas of my shame, all trying to replicate the photoshopped and virtually unattainable look that is now the western female body ideal. *The Good Body* intends to free us from this endless, demoralising war against our own flesh - sadly such a skinny book was never going to undo 35 years of conditioning, although it did provide some food for thought.

It's a sad thing to contemplate how few women are accepting of their bodies and I appreciate Ensler shining a little light on the subject, although I also felt that light was mostly directed at herself even when giving other women a voice - whether it be the model married to her surgeon (who desperately needs for me to rip him a new asshole), the teenager at fat camp or the ladies in Afghanistan risking their lives for a taste of ice-cream, everything was viewed through whether Eve's stomach was flat enough. But this is coming from a woman who spent the first paragraph of this review rambling on about herself, so can probably be taken with a pinch of salt.

****Also posted at Randomly Reading and Ranting****
