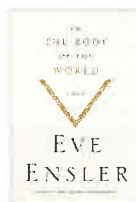


may feel distanced from the book's experienced tone as well as from Rousse's analytical writing, which on occasion reads as more dispassionate than ardent. Some of her insights begin to sound repetitive in the book's middle section, too, but Rousse regains her momentum when she talks about her work first as a women's advocate, and then as a civil rights leader for people with disabilities. She criticizes the white, wealthy feminist establishment for failing to advocate for disabled women, and pushes organizations to do more than simply address issues of accessibility. But page by page, she makes the case for herself, to herself—and to other disabled women. "There is no quick fix for a lifetime of self-hatred," Rousse writes. "Only slow healing." —AILEEN GALLAGHER



IN THE BODY OF THE WORLD:
A Memoir
By Eve Ensler

(Metropolitan Books)
(e) (e) (e) (e) (e)

Internationally honored for her feminist activism, and of course for *The Vagina Monologues*, Eve Ensler is an insistent, irresistible voice calling for the betterment of women's lives. You could call her new book a memoir about her uterine cancer, from diagnosis to recovery, but it is really an extension of her greater crusade. This is a truly remarkable book. Each chapter is a dense, beautifully realized thing; some are confessional, some half-comical, some poetry, but all intensely felt and powerfully written. Stories about the women she's encountered through her activism who have suffered the horrors of war, rape, and violence, are woven through her own life story; she meditates on the devastations within her own body as a mirror of the violence that has been visited on Earth. If her turn of the personal into the political can occasionally be off-putting—like

comparing the suppuration of her diseased organs to the Deepwater Horizon oil spill—that is easily forgiven with each fresh wallop of profoundly great writing.

While I particularly recommend this book to anyone facing terrible illness, in themselves or in loved ones, Ensler offers a mesmerizing tribute to the transformative power within us all, and challenges her readers to take action and make positive healing change in the body of the world. —FRAN WILLING



NEW GIRL LAW: Drafting a Future for Cambodia
By Anne Elizabeth Moore
(Microcosm)

(e) (e) (e) (e) (e)

New Girl Law is a post-Empirical, proto-fourth-wave-feminist memoir-cum-academic abstract that scrutinizes the current reality and future hope for women aspiring to positions of power in Cambodia. If that sounds heady, know that it also makes our country's Mommy Wars look like child's play—and proves, in the meantime, why we should be paying attention to Cambodia's record of human rights and gender equity.

Author Anne Elizabeth Moore, a Fulbright scholar and U.N. Press Fellow, documents the struggles of Cambodian women and the ways in which the brutal reign of the Khmer Rouge continues to impact their lives. Popular and frequently used Khmer aphorisms like "Men are diamonds and women are cloth," have been thoroughly absorbed into Cambodia's day-to-day life and culture. She collaborates with a group of young, ambitious women enrolled at universities in Phnom Penh to create a set of laws to empower women. Together, they come up with 20 rules, like, "Girls should be brave enough to make eye contact with and speak to boys," and "Women should have the right to leave home and join in

social activities as men do, or be involved in politics." Yikes.

Throughout, Moore acknowledges the paradigm through which she filters her own observations, and points out that *New Girl Law* is a work in progress, analogous to the *Declaration of Sentiments* drafted by Elizabeth Cady Stanton and her cohorts. Seventy-two years after Stanton's *Sentiments*, American women were given the right to vote. Perhaps it won't take as long in Cambodia. —KATHLEEN WILLCOX



SHE LEFT ME THE GUN: My Mother's Life Before Me
By Emma Brockes
(Penguin)
(e) (e) (e)

When Emma Brockes' mother Paula emigrated from South Africa to England as a young woman, she brought only a few things with her: a six-piece dinner set, the complete works of Jane Austen, a two-piece suit, a handmade tapestry, and a handgun. Although Paula did not, in fact, leave Brockes the gun (she turned it in during a gun amnesty), she did leave Brockes with dark hints of a violent childhood in South Africa. "One day I will tell you the story of my life," Paula promised Brockes, "and you will be amazed." Only, as Brockes writes, "She never did, not really, although I think she wanted to. So I went to find out for myself." After Paula dies of cancer, Brockes—a journalist at *The Guardian*—travels to South Africa to uncover the truth of her mother's childhood and reunite with the family she never met. The result is an unsettling, captivating tale of incest, alcoholism, poverty, abuse, and, above all, survival. Brockes' account of her family history is at times disorganized and tangential—she spends far more time recalling a tourist trip with her best friend than she does examining how Paula began a new life in England, and she almost entirely brushes over her relatives' racism and pro-apartheid

beliefs. In spite of these faults, however, *She Left Me the Gun* is an unflinching look at the way abuse and the resulting silence affect a family, and what happens when you finally speak the unspeakable.

—ERIKA W. SMITH



WRECKED:
A Novel
By Charlotte Roche
(Black Cat)
(e) (e) (e)
Charlotte Roche's raunchy, sexual novel

Wetlands was an international publishing sensation when it was released in Germany in 2008. In her latest, she revisits her favorite subject, but this time in the context of marriage.

Opening the story with an explicit, detailed, and lengthy sex scene, Roche immediately places the reader into the mind of Elizabeth Kiehl, a woman whose personal efforts to be the perfect wife and mother provide the crux of the novel's plot. Told solely through Elizabeth's inner narrative voice, the tale slowly reveals the deep psychological scars left over from tragic events in her past, ones that she battles as she learns how to connect with and love her husband, George, both sexually and emotionally.

On the surface, *Wrecked* seems simplistic. However, Roche's style is hauntingly disarming; beneath Elizabeth's surface narrative lie troubling themes of personal depredation, sexual promiscuity, and the affecting nature of familial relationships. Despite this, though, *Wrecked* is not entirely relatable. Elizabeth's character is unsympathetic and often frustrating, and too much of the story is taken up by past events and emotions. Rather than connecting readers with the characters themselves, Roche instead forces us to question the themes and issues that the book raises: What is the ideal marriage, and how much of yourself are you willing to sacrifice to achieve it?

—SHOLEH HAJMIRAGHA