In the Body of the World.
By Eve Ensler.

A
fter traveling to 60 countries and talking to women who "had experienced violence and suffering," internationally renowned writer and activist Ensler thought she had heard it all, but nothing prepared her for the brutality of the Congo. The prolonged war over copper, gold, and coltan—minerals used in computers and cell phones—has claimed eight million lives and led to the rape and torture of hundreds of thousands of women. Ensler's philanthropic organization, V-Day, was beginning to build an urgently needed women's center there when she was diagnosed with uterine cancer. In a series of medical nightmares, she sustains the same harrowing wounds as Congolese women who were gang-raped and is flooded by memories of her father's sexual assaults. As Ensler charts her horrific struggle, she aligns her body with the earth, pairing cancer with the pillaging of the Congo and BP's poisoning of the Gulf of Mexico. As explicit as her blood-and-pain chronicles are, this is a ravishing book of revelation and healing, lashing truths and deep emotion, courage and perseverance, compassion and generosity. Warm, funny, furious, and astute, as well as poetic, passionate, and heroic, Ensler harnesses all that she lost and learned to articulate a galvanizing vision of the essence of life: "The only salvation is kindness." —Donna Seaman

Sports & Recreation

Chasing Perfect: The Will to Win in Basketball and Life.
By Bob Hurley and Daniel Paisner.

Hurley is the basketball coach at tiny St. Anthony High School in Jersey City, New Jersey. Typical enrollment for the coed school is about 230, yet in 40 years there, Hurley and his teams have won 25 state championships and 4 national championships and enjoyed 7 undefeated seasons. If this all sounds familiar, that's because Adrian Wojcikowski embedded himself in the program during the 2003-04 season to write The Miracle of St. Anthony (2005), a national-best seller. Now Hurley discusses the program in a memoir that is a little bit autobiography, a lot professional memoir, and a lot more of then-we-played. Remarkably, Hurley doesn't recruit players, and his facilities are anything but glamorous, but he has propelled many players into major-college basketball and the NBA. Hurley provides background on how he built the program, and he gives fairly detailed accounts of some of his most recent successes. A thoroughly enjoyable account of an amazing coach and a school that does more with less.
—Wes Lukowski
YA: Teen basketball fans will be amazed at this story of how the little guy wins . . . and wins and wins. WL.

Literature

Astonished: A Story of Evil, Blessings, Grace, and Solace.
By Beverly Donofrio.

It wasn't supposed to happen to someone like her—California's middle-aged writer acclaimed for Riding in Cars with Boys (1990), which was made into a movie starring Drew Barrymore. Yet she was raped in her own bed in her home in Mexico. It is a chilling story, and in this compelling, spiritually fulfilling memoir, Donofrio takes the reader through that terrible night and its aftermath. But this is more than a straightforward description of a crime; it is a story of healing and even, as the title indicates, grace. Donofrio was attacked at the time she was thinking about joining a monastery, and the rape made her reconsider not only her life but also her faith. Anyone who has been the victim of a crime will appreciate Donofrio's honesty and sympathy, but her memoir is for everyone who appreciates a story well told. It is an unsparring but also hopeful account of evil, misuse, and suffering, as well as joy, goodness, and forgiveness. "Don't run from the pain," she writes. She doesn't. Instead, Astonished transcends it. —June Sawyer

My Foreign Cities.
By Elizabeth Scarrow.

What's it like to fall in love and make a commitment to someone who's dying? Scarrow's memoir takes readers on an emotional journey that begins the moment her high-school friendship with Stephen blossoms into romance and ends a decade later when he loses his struggle against cystic fibrosis at the age of 30. Though Scarrow never idealizes the relationship—they can each be petulant and selfish—the power of the love she portrays is undeniable. With grace and humor, Scarrow shares the couple's most intimate moments: her dismay at Stephen's feeding tube, his dependence on painkillers, her grief-stricken decision to freeze his sperm. Throughout, the pair are surrounded by devoted friends and family who buoy the couple through the most difficult times. It's this "village" that surrounds Stephen when he dies, a scene that Scarrow handles with exquisite beauty and incomparable sadness. As much as the two believed "we're in this together," as in the end, she writes, Stephen was always alone as the one who was going to die and she was always alone as the one who wasn't. —Patti Weller

Poetry

Postmodern Anthology.
Ed. by Derek Walcott and Khare Khare.

When the poet Derek Walcott (b. 1930) first saw Bob Marley in January 1963 in a small church in his native St. Lucia, he knew immediately that he had found a visionary and prophet of the developing pan-African consciousness. Walcott is a leading figure in the literature of the Caribbean and the world, and this collection of poems by writers from around the world, selected by Walcott and a noted young Asian poet, Khare Khare, is a selection by a master of the language of poetry. The anthology covers a wide range of styles and subjects, including ethnic identity, political oppression, eroticism, and the cyberworld. It includes poems from the works of such masters as T.S. Eliot, E.E. Cummings, and Arundhati Roy, and the poems of many contemporary poets, from pioneers of the new generation to established poets. The anthology is a celebration of the diversity of modern Chinese poetry, and a reminder of the power of poetry to unite people across the globe. —Donna Seaman

HIGH-Demand BACKSTORY: Media attention will surge for this provocative collection by a revered writer of conscience.

Silver Lining
By Carlin Brady.

Silver Lining is a novel of quiet strength, and is a powerful testament to the resilience and beauty of the human spirit. The story follows a young woman named Lily, whose world is turned upside down when she discovers that she has inherited the Silver Lining, a family farm in the country. As she struggles to come to terms with her new reality, Lily learns to find hope and strength in unexpected places. This moving novel reminds us of the importance of family, love, and the power of the human spirit. —Donna Seaman

The Wise and the Mad
By Allegra Jordan.

Wise and mad, mad and wise, a novel, a memoir, and a collection of short stories, this book is a personal reflection on the challenges of finding one's place in the world. Through poignant and humorous vignettes, Jordan explores the complex relationships between parents and children, and the often difficult journey of growing up. —Donna Seaman

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