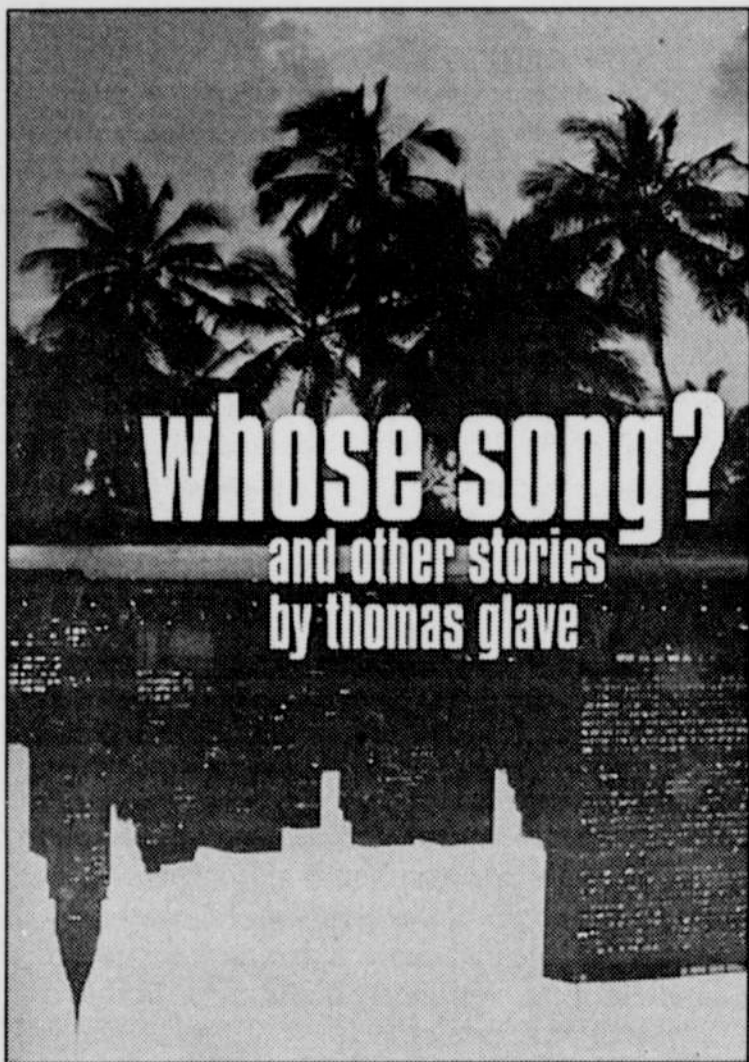


BOOKS



WHOSE SONG? AND OTHER STORIES
by Thomas Glave. City Lights Books, 2000;
\$12.95 paperback.

Thomas Glave is no E. Lynn Harris. His work is in an entirely different class. Harris has won popular recognition for his bright, sexy tales of moderately wealthy African American men struggling with being true to themselves and their nature.

Nothing is bright or wealthy in Glave's fiction. In the course of these nine tales, he unflinchingly examines violence, homophobia and prejudice among the lower and middle classes of African American culture. These are sad, gorgeous, complicated tales occasionally pierced by sweet beauty and hopeful tenderness.

The collection begins with a story that follows a young African American man's aftermath of horror and the systematic way violence moves into the psyche and takes over. It is an appropriate way to begin this book. Glave's brave volume of stories features a young gay black man marrying under threat of his father's gun, a white woman terrified of "them" and "their violence," an old Caribbean man haunted by loss and drawn to a fellow widower, a witness to the killing fields of an unidentified island tyranny and many others. The author is not afraid to explore brutality, hatred and the scars left by a history of racism.

The writing is extraordinarily diverse, playing on different styles of colloquialism. In some cases, the prose abandons the formal use of punctuation, grammar and other rhetorical devices to create an oral text—one that begs to be read aloud. In others, the style is dense and follows through every flight of thought a character thinks. Each time, Glave's style woos with brilliant twists of language.

Above all, this collection confronts what a recent study called "the greatest taboo": homosexuality in the African American community. Here, Glave is covering territory similar to Harris: black men with a propensity toward loving other men caught in the constraints of a community not known for its acceptance of homosexuality.

The Bronx-born son of Caribbean expatriates, Glave has received a slew of well-deserved honors; he is only the second African American writer, besides James Baldwin, to win the prestigious O. Henry Award. This is a collection of short stories worthy of every recognition it has received,

Love and hate

New books examine brutal bias, marginalized memories and furry friends

BY GLENN WILLIAMS

and for once, comparisons to Baldwin are well-deserved.

Glave will be in Portland to read 7:30 p.m. March 13 at Powell's Books on Hawthorne. He also will read during the Gender Symposium at 4:30 p.m. March 15 in Lewis & Clark College's Templeton Student Center.

HORNITO: MY LIE LIFE
by Mike Albo. Harper Collins, 2000;
\$23 hardcover.

If coming into adulthood in contemporary society is weird, coming into adulthood gay in contemporary society is far beyond freaky. Fortunately for us, Mike Albo has been there and has written down for us all the gorgeous and gory details: the bullies, the parental oddities, the awkward romances, the eternal search for "the one."

Hornito: My Lie Life offers back all the burned-out, shaken memories of our youth that we have driven from the table of our minds and ladles them right back into our bowls again—luckily, with a sprinkle of understanding and a strong dash of humor. What he writes about his old roommate can aptly be applied to himself:

"He has as many stories as I do about being a sissy or monkey in the middle or the queer that is smeared in Smear the Queer. And now, like me and many other guys we know, he has worked very hard to excise that and remake himself. Now he can have sex and feel the possibility that guys may like him back."

On the surface, this novel is about smoldering, the act of grousing through the years toward the possibility of a life. It is memoirlike yet full of immediate slow-motion dreaminess—it darns together the intricacies and details of a life lived just beneath the surface.

At times, *Hornito: My Lie Life* is bone-shatteringly funny. The short *Six Million Dollar Man* fantasy sequence alone is worth the cost of the book.

But Albo also dives into the gut-and-sinew issues from the gay experience: to test or not to test, friends who are not real friends, commitment vs. voracious sex, the seamless thread between childhood impulses and adult urges. And through it all weaves a shadow road of paranoia that only a member of a marginalized community can feel:

"For a time I think that my parents are impostors and that they are sent to study or kill me, I'm not sure, and I think the bathroom mirror could be two-way, and my impostor parents could be spying on me. They study me in the bathroom, my every gerbilly move.... My family members are robot pawns of a whole secret system sent to observe me."

Hornito: My Lie Life is simultaneously

insanely autobiographical and utterly universal, lending to the tone and detail of the novel a truly authentic touch. This is Albo's first novel, although he has written several performance texts, including three solo shows that also draw on his life material. Given what we have here, we only can hope he will write more, if nothing else to remind us of the joys and hells we've all come through.

THE BEAR HANDBOOK
Compiled by Ray Kampf. Harrington Park Press, 2000; \$14.95 paperback.

All right, all you big, furry, sexy lunks out there (you know who you are), at last the manual has been written for us! Ray Kampf has drawn together the quintessential guidebook on how not only to survive but thrive in this thin-is-in, gym-buffed, hair-is-icky gay world.

Within these pages lie tips on dating bears, explanations of those confusing but oh-so-explicit "bear codes," guides to bear bars, Internet sites and even where to pick up bears when you're feelin' like a little fur.

Drawing heavily from Internet sources, magazines, clubs and information revealed in Les Wright's pioneering study on the subculture, *The Bear Book I*, Kampf sifts the diamonds from the shit and comes up with excellent drawings, funny charts and some damn hilarious prose. This book illuminates the way we bears really behave in all our startling (and usually humorous) glory!

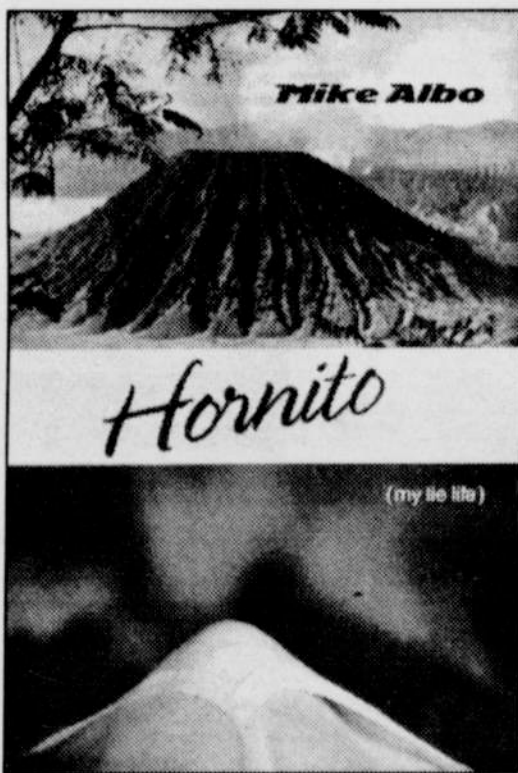
The Bear Handbook: A Comprehensive Guide for Those Who Are Husky, Hairy and Homosexual and Those Who Love 'Em is a smart, tongue-in-cheek look at bears: a group of gay men interested in accepting gay men as they come...pun intentional.

The "bear movement" was born as a reaction to the commercialization—the Abercrombie-and-Fitching, if you will—of gay culture and the harmful stereotypes this breeds among us. The bear movement signaled an open-minded spirit of inclusiveness among its gay brothers. This "be yourself" outlook has become such a positive, progressive

step forward, groups of lesbians recently have begun to identify as bears and have welcomed women of all shapes and sizes into the den.

The Bear Handbook might have a sly grin on its face, but in its heart lies a big damn hunk of self-esteem and *joie de vivre*. If you're a bear or if you like bears, put down your beer, get on your plaid shirt, comb the chips out of your beard, and go get this book. **J**

GLENN WILLIAMS writes poetry, prose, plays, periodica and porn in Portland.



A DOZEN BABY ROSES
ARRANGED IN VASE
ONLY \$19.99
WITH THIS AD
expires 3-30-01

RALPH'S
HOLLYWOOD FLORIST
2005 NE 42ND AVENUE
PORTLAND, OR 97213
(2 blocks north of Sandy)
"FLOWERS FOR EVERY OCCASION"
(503) 249-1888

Coventry
Cycle Works

Professional Service
Comfortable Bikes
Recumbents a Specialty!
(COME SEE WHY!)
Open Tuesday-Sunday
230-7723
2025 SE Hawthorne

Look Good
Feel Good

Full body waxing
Facials
& Make-overs
Private Room
— Safe & Friendly
For Men & Women

Call **Ginny**
503/653-3597

GAY LIFE
Producers of Tunnel of
Love and Homo-larious

Join Us!
Event/Board
Volunteers
Wanted.
Call Now
503.680.9182
Gaylifehealth@yahoo.com