POZ Picks

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Books:

SOUL MAN
In The Arms of Africa: The Life of Colin M. Turnbull
By Roy Richard Grinker
St. Martin's Press
($27.95, 345 pp.)

Few people have lives as rich as that of Colin Turnbull (1924-1994), perhaps the 20th century's most famous anthropologist after Margaret Mead and Louis Leakey, an Oxford educated world-traveler who died of AIDS in 1994 ignited global attention with his 1961 publication, *The Frost People*. Before the book, European race theorists and sideshow wranglers had singled out East African Mbuti Pygmies for special abuse. Citing their dark and diminutive stature as proof of white supremacy. But in Turnbull's eyes, the Pygmies' generosity of spirit and oneness with nature have them the aspect of heroes. *The Frost People* became a runaway bestseller, helping to touch off the vogue for "non-Western" belief systems and lifestyles in America in the '60's.

In writing *In The Arms of Africa*, anthropologist, Roy Richard Grinker had hopes to debunk Turnball's scholarship about he Pygmies. "Like many other anthropologists, I assumed that his characterizations of Pygmy life were romantic and somewhat fictionalized," Grinker writes. But instead, the author grew fascinated by the ways that Turnball's African scholarship intertwined with his life, particularly his love for a younger African-American anthropologist names Joe Towles.

From 1959, when Turnball and Towles met at a New York City bar (cheekily called the *Mais Oui*), until Towles AIDS death in 1988, the two men lived openly in America as a couple. Next to the fervor of Turnaball's quasi-religious devotion to Towles, the racism and homophobia they often encountered were but passing shadows. While Towles was withering away in the late '80's, Turnball wrote to friends, "How do you say good-bye to your own self?"

No dusty tome, *In the Arms of Africa* has all the sweep and heartbreak of a David Lean epic, with an engrossingly operatic buildup to both their deaths. For the most part, Grinker doesn't let academic's attentiveness to detail bog down the book. Nor does he let Turnball's and Towles' giant romance obscure each man's mortal flaws.

-Angelo Ragaza

WHILE THE GETTING'S GOOD

Glory Goes and Gets Some
By Emily Carter
Coffee House Press
($20.95, 240 pp.)

Early in this darkly funny collection of linked stories—"Ask Emilio" was first published in these pages in August 1998; others have popped up in T*he New Yorker* and one was picked for *Best American Short Stories 1998*—Emily Carter's HIV positive narrator, the thirty something Glory B. confides that a movie made her cry. But it was "not the kind of crying where they trick you into it with violet colored lights and a certain kinds of music that attached itself directly to your tear ducts and pulls at them like an invisible milking jellyfish, so you feel a little ashamed of yourself for being so easily run through the maze to get your money's worth…"

No, that's not what Carter is after. But while this book indeed runs you through a maze of addiction, recovery, and AIDS diagnosis, *you* won't be shamed to cry. There isn't a false emotion anywhere in Carter's smart, cliché-free prose. As Glory moved to New York City to Minneapolis for rehab and settles in for the long haul, she fend off dishonestly and self-deception as fiercely as she resists drug cravings and HIV—two other varieties of invisible, milking jellyfish.

Carter, who writes her Girl Talk columns for *POZ*, is one of those rare talents whose work utterly unsentimental yet movingly open true feeling. An HIV positive recovering heroin addict, she knows what she's writing about. In her alter ego, Glory, she had a found a streetwise yet lyrical voice retains the vulnerability if memoir and bristles with humor and surprise. Glory, on the life of a heroin addict:

"I was considering suicide, but I wanted to die happy, and that would make drug money, which, in turn, would take time and effort to come by. I other words, it was a normal day." Glory on sex and the single HIVer: "If I were a guy, it might be different, but carrying around the eve of destruction between my creamy white thighs doesn't exactly make me feel like a sex goddess."

This book is particularly eloquent when tearing down recovery-speak, yet it is equally moving when teasing real meaning from 12-step platitudes. Wondering whether she's the only HIV positive former drug addict looking fir a mate, the narrator concludes: "As they tell toy in treatment, don't wear yourself out with Terminal Uniqueness, Another kitchy-koo catch phrase that turns out, finally to have the distinctly unsampler-like ring of truth."

The many startling and hard-won insights of this fine collection have the same distinct ring.

-Clifford Chase

MUSIC

Ride and Pride
Various Artists
$9.99 only at Virgin Megastores or www.virginmega.com

Dance music has a long tradition of compilations that profit no one beyond he compiler. So it's heartening to hear this past summer's Tangeray AIDS Rides benefit CD, a specially priced Virgin exclusive worth picking up for its current and vintage electronic dance grooves. Extended mixes from such perky synth-pop vets such as Erasure, Depeche Mode, and Yaz blend well with blissful trance anthems by newcomers Paul Van Dyk, ATB, and Bedrock, as well as enduring faves from sweet-voiced Saint Entienne and Everything But The Girl. Perfect for parties or headphone listening at the gym. Ride and Pride is a dancer's digest for a commendable cause.

-Barry Walters

BOOKMARK THIS

Sex and Lies

AIDS hoaxes, scams, and scares are as old as the epidemic itself. Now you can turn to the Net for the real scoop behind the whispers and the wackos.

Centers For Disease Control and Prevention
www.cdc.gov/hoax_rumors.htm
A formal response to hoaxes falsely attributing the CDC as their source. You can even find scientific evidence behind the "myth" that HIV causes AIDS.

Quack Watch
www.quackwatch.com
The "Ask Jeeves" of medical myths, Stephen Barret, MD, will answer your queries on anything from AIDS to aspartame.

Urban Legend Combat Kit
www.netsquirrel.com/combatkit
Has the perfect comebacks. Those HIV-laden syringes on gas pump handles? Just a gas-crunch modification to an old dirty needle fib.

The Urban Legends Research Centre
www.ulrc.com.au
Gives the lowdown about the infamy, pours silver-screen scandal—needles found in seat cushions that can prick during the flick. A haven for believers and skeptics alike.

About.Com

Urbanlegends.about.com

You get an urgent e-mail warning of infected needles n coin return slots of pay phones. Fact? Absolutely not.

-Michelle Tan

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