

cissistic, unable to appreciate Sylvia except as an extension of herself, and bent on trying not to offend yet offending in the very act of self-sacrifice. In turn, Sylvia must distance herself from her engulfing mother if she is to live at all. The children, very young at the time of the story, nevertheless command attention and concern from the reader. Finally, Ted Hughes, the not terribly supportive husband, comes off as a heartless cad, either ignorant of or uncaring about his wife's illness.

The title of the book derives from a poem that describes taking honey from bees. Bees are a constant theme throughout the book: extracting honey, the creation of the queen, having to care for bees during the winter by feeding them sugar, and so

on. The sequence of chapters in *Wintering* follows that of poems that Sylvia Plath had intended to have published and had left for her husband in a notebook before his death, yet which he did not publish as she intended. This information is provided by Moses in a postscript. However, the chapters that precede the end are titled "The Bee Meeting," "The Arrival of the Bee Box," "Stings," "The Swarm," and, finally, "Wintering," which in this book is the prelude to Plath's suicide and in the poem combines images of death, life, and life after death. It is clear that Plath intended the bees as a metaphor for her own fragility, transience, and conflict over her roles: the queen cannot fly and depends on the drones for her life and posterity.

making compromises, and making changes in one's worldview, and, ultimately, one's view of oneself.

The thing I found most compelling about this book was its exploration of universal themes in the specific context of an interracial lesbian relationship—for example, the loneliness of not wanting to be known and not being able to trust while longing to love and be loved. Being neither black nor lesbian, when I finished reading the book I felt that I understood—or at least understood better—the emotions and conflicts experienced by the novel's characters. Thus I believe that the author was successful in achieving her stated goal not only of enhancing mutual understanding between white women and black women but perhaps also encouraging a wider mutual understanding between lesbian and straight women.

This novel will be of interest to practitioners who seek to understand cultures and experiences that are different from their own for their own growth as well as in the interests of achieving better understanding of their patients or clients. The book may also be helpful as a resource for clients who are experiencing personal, social, or familial conflict in same-sex or interracial relationships.

Your Loving Arms

by Gwendolyn Bikis; New York, Alice Street Editions, Harrington Park Press, 2001, 247 pages, \$17.95 softcover

Barbara M. Rohland, M.D.

In the author's preface to *Your Loving Arms*, Gwendolyn Bikis states that she writes about what she seeks to understand rather than believing that people write what they understand. This novel, written by a white woman in the voice of both a white woman and a black woman, seeks understanding between women—specifically, more mutual understanding between black and white women. The novel is published by Alice Street Editions, which publishes work by lesbian writers to bring lesbian perspectives to a wider audience through "enlightening, illuminating, and provocative writing." The author of *Your Loving Arms* has a master's degree in sociology as well as in writing and literature and is a lesbian who lives and teaches in Oakland, California.

This novel describes love—want-

ing it and fearing it, seeking it and running away from it, losing it and finding it. Although primarily the story of romantic love between two women, it describes love—and the absence of love—in the context of family (loving or rejecting), cultural experience (black or white), and place (south or north). The book's unique perspectives are presented in the context of a relationship of two women, Beth and Tammy. Beth is a white woman from Baltimore who comes from an abusive home and, because she has not known love, does not recognize it, understand it, or trust it. Tammy is black and comes from a loving family in South Carolina. The novel portrays the intrinsic difficulty in accepting and expressing "different" love—that is, love between two women and love between two persons of different ethnicity. It describes the pain and conflict that occurs when loves are in conflict with one another—love of family and love of partner, love of partner and love of place. It is a story of making choices,

Seizure

by Robin Cook; New York, G. P. Putnam's Sons, 2003, 464 pages, \$24.95

Mark H. Backlund, M.D.

With the debate over stem cell research and latter-day abortion politics at its core, Robin Cook's newest medical thriller draws out a plausible—okay, possible—scenario to immediately demonstrate the many facets of this new frontier.

At center stage are Daniel Lowell, M.D., Ph.D., stem cell researcher and would-be entrepreneur, and southern senator Ashley Butler, crafty

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right-leaning Democrat, adept at power politics but threatened by his newly diagnosed Parkinson's disease. Lowell's dream of wealth and celebrity are likewise threatened by Butler's efforts to ban his therapeutic cloning technology. The intersection of these two threats creates an opportunity for these two characters to meet their colossal needs, assuming their respective ethics and "traditional values" can become temporarily indisposed, each with ample justification.

Ambivalently adjoined to the Faustian pact that emerges are two Cassandras: Lowell's scientific and personal partner, Stephanie D'Agostino, Ph.D., and Butler's political assistant, Carol Manning. D'Agostino's discomfort mounts along with the ethical compromises Lowell feels compelled to make, and the actions of these characters give readers the feeling of watching the lead actors in a horror movie deciding to "check out the basement." Sometimes all you can do is shake your head.

Manning finds her concern for her long-time employer's health blunted by her own burgeoning political ambitions for Butler's senate seat. How hard should she try to save his life?

This novel contains endless turns to twist the plot. "Investment" money is provided by D'Agostino's brother's mob connections, who don't like to lose and who apply the heat. There is the whimsical grandiosity of Butler's requirement that his defective substantia nigra be repaired with DNA purportedly from the staining of the all but unreachable Shroud of Turin with Christ's blood. And the dangerously crass Wingate Fertility Clinic, resurrected from another Cook novel, *Shock*, plays the pivotal role in Butler's therapeutic cloning procedure.

Cook does a credible job of going a layer or two below the surface psychologically, although readers may find themselves wishing that D'Agostino would focus less on Lowell's sexist slips and more on the enormous hubris that drives his ambition and paralyzes her objections. Psychotherapists may cringe at the

miscommunications, especially in the D'Agostino family, but it's hard not to relish Cook's exposé of power, greed, and narcissism.

As usual, Cook gets the science just right. We comfortably learn about both the science and the politics of therapeutic versus reproductive cloning as well as more than you could ever imagine about the Shroud of Turin and about the Catholic bishops and priests who preserve it. As a

medical thriller, *Seizure* has the successful elements of suspense and rapidly shifting twists of plot and turns of fortune. The "don't go through that door" plot tricks become almost predictable, but what's a thriller for if you can't occasionally see it coming? With mobsters and mitosis, egos and ethics, politics, polemics, and miracles, Master Cook has again stirred up a stew of a cautionary tale.

Warning Signs

by Stephen White; New York, Dell Publishing, 2002, 486 pages, \$7.95 softcover

Wesley Sowers, M.D.

Steven White's suspense novel *Warning Signs* takes place in a post-Columbine Boulder, Colorado, not yet sensitized by the events of September 11, 2001. A campaign of terror is unleashed in the Denver area that anticipates the reality of our post-9/11 world to some degree, but, as might be expected, does not capture all its implications.

A progressive Boulder District Attorney, perceived by some to be too lenient in his treatment of criminals, is brutally murdered. The prime suspect turns out to be an attractive female detective, who, along with her male partner, a crusty veteran of the department, is among the first to investigate the crime scene. A tangled web of relationships connects Alan Gregory, a clinical psychologist in private practice, to this case in a variety of ways. His involvement, in turn, connects the murder indirectly to a vengeful plot by a disturbed young man and woman. Both victims of violent crime, they feel that they have been further violated by the system's failure to adequately punish the persons responsible. They plan an extraordinary series of bombings to bring the impact of senseless violence to the attention of the public

and to make public officials experience their pain and loss. The result is a riveting account of Alan's efforts to identify exactly who the bombers are and prevent what they have planned.

White writes in a clear and highly accessible manner and weaves an engaging tale. However, to achieve some of the objectives of his plot, he has had to resort to the use of some rather improbable circumstances. Alan happens to be a good friend of the crusty old detective whose partner is being accused of the murder, and his wife, an assistant district attorney, switches over to defense in order to aid the young detective. Coincidentally, the mother of one of the bombers chooses him as her therapist. These connections supply him with a wealth of information on all aspects of the murder investigation and direct involvement in the quest to subvert the planned terror. At the same time, White, himself a clinical psychologist, includes elements in the story that would seem to have psychological significance, but they are never really elaborated or explored.

Although this novel is successful in keeping us interested and entertained, it misses the opportunity to be something more. The ethical issues related to patient confidentiality are considered superficially but are not allowed to interfere with the

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