

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

Dr. Backlund lives in Anacortes, Washington.

Dr. Rohland is associate professor and chair in the department of psychiatry at Texas Tech University School of Medicine in Amarillo.