



Brain

Robin Cook

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Both of them suspected that something was wrong--terribly wrong--in the great medical research center where they worked. Both of them wondered why a beautiful young woman had died on the operating table and her brain secretly removed. Both of them found it impossible to explain the rash of female patients exhibiting bizarre mental breakdowns and shocking behavior. Both of them were placing their careers and very lives in deadly jeopardy as they penetrated the eerie inner sanctums of a medical world gone mad with technological power and the lust for more...

Brain Details

Date : Published (first published January 1st 1981)

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Author : Robin Cook

Format : Kindle Edition 320 pages

Genre : Fiction, Thriller, Medical, Mystery

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Saara says

Let me begin by stating that I did enjoy this book significantly. I for some reason had a preconceived notion that the story would be much trashier than it turned out to be, which might have influenced my opinion in a positive way; I was pleasantly surprised, ergo inclined toward a kinder review. My grievances are, in the end, minor ones, even though they did affect my reading experiences negatively.

Brain takes place over three days in the life of Dr. Martin Philips, a radiologist who has fared well in his career and is now collaborating with a computer scientist in research that could revolutionise the field. When testing out a device he has been given, he starts finding peculiar anomalies in several patients' head X-rays. Something is not right, people are exhibiting unexplained symptoms and then disappearing, and soon Philips finds himself in danger as he tries to get to the bottom of these mysteries. I admit, for some bits I did feel like I was at the edge of my seat. The novel was gripping and easy to read, so I plowed through it in just a few days — which at the moment is a bit of an exception for me. When the final twists began to be revealed, I was delighted at the successful red herrings. Funnily enough, my intuition woke up at the last minute and when the true culprit's identity came to light, I already knew to expect it. Whether or not this was supposed to happen, I haven't the foggiest.

However, there are multiple issues which prevent me from giving the novel a higher rating. First, Cook falls victim to the sin familiar to many writers: suddenly pausing to describe his characters at length, instead of giving an image of their appearance at a gradual pace. There may be differing opinions about this, but to me it has long been a sign that the writer has not quite grasped the concept of "show, don't tell". Then again, I'm not sure when that particular piece of literary advice was coined.

Second, the narration switches point of view at whiplash speed. Most of the novel is experienced inside the skull of the main character, Dr. Martin Philips, but every now and then we are given a chapter or part of a chapter through someone else's eyes. That is not what I find problematic. What I find problematic is the way we are often taken to another person's headspace for a couple of sentences, maybe a paragraph, before jumping back to Philips or whoever else is the main focus right then. For some reason, omniscient narrators irritate me. Perhaps here it was a source of annoyance because the switch felt like an unnecessary blip in the flow. (view spoiler)

Third, and this might really start to sound like nitpicking, Cook keeps going back and forth between what he calls his main character. In one sentence it's Philips, in the next it's Martin. I understand that this is the author's tactic to avoid using either one of the names until the point of aggravation, and to avoid using descriptors such as "the man" and "the doctor" but hells if it doesn't drive me bonkers. There is no internal logic to when either name is used! That is the issue.

Then there is the fact that the blurb on the back is misleading, although I suppose I should not dock any points for that—this is a common problem for books. I have never understood it and I never will.

It's probably a good thing I know next to nothing about medicine. Otherwise, the practices portrayed in the novel might have seemed rather archaic. Now, even though I know that they must be, it did not bother me.

In closing, I would recommend this to friends of medical thrillers who do not mind reading older material, but in all honesty, you can take it or leave it. I am certain there must be more modern versions of the same

type of storyline. And yes, the subject matter did provoke a few thoughts.

Ryan Lieske says

Ridiculous and fun. I wish all of Cook's novels were this whacked out and macabre. It's no "Coma", but it has the same outlandish thrills as "Mindbend" and "Shock", which is fine by me. I don't expect great literature from Dr. Cook; hell, I don't even expect great storytelling. But "Brain" has just the right amount of B-movie silliness to keep the pages turning. And, since the book was released in the early 80s, a lot of it is hilariously outdated (which, obviously, adds to the fun).

Sherri Losee says

Stilted narrative, stereotypical characters . . . Stick with medicine, Dr. Cook.

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Chaitalee Ghosalkar says

Some books are so bad that they don't deserve the time one takes to write their reviews. Brain easily falls into this category.

Several young women show atypical Pap smear results, only to experience seizures that eventually cause death/disappearance. On a parallel path, Martin Philips, the protagonist who is the Assistant director of Neuroradiology is developing an X-Ray reader that eliminates the need of humans to read them. While this is interesting, the execution fails badly.

In an attempt to make Martin Philips suspect that something evil is going on, several women victims brought into the picture. They only serve to lengthen the book, and add no substance. As a result, the climax is so rushed that it becomes a joke.

Also, throughout the length of the book, the central character Martin Philips is referred by his first name in half the instances, and by his last name at other times. That made me wonder...was Philips suffering from dual personality disorder (hint...the answer is no). Or was the book written by two people who combined their material and then forgot to proof read it? I say this because there were times in which the doctor was

referred to as Martin in one sentence and Philips in the other other... IN THE SAME PARAGRAPH. I never thought I could be peeved by something as trivial as this, and yet, here we are.

I wonder how the author got a publisher to accept his 23 books after churning out stuff like this. Perhaps there's light at the end of the tunnel?

Wendy Gamble says

Extremely enjoyable. Real-life technology now approaches the results in the novel, but it's possible that mutilated bodies would be cheaper than expensive cameras, lasers, programming and such.

The characters in Brain were very appealing. I don't mean I'd personally want to meet all of them, but Mannerhiem added a lot of drama, Phillips was a wonderfully imperfect hero. I can't help but wonder, though, if the more people read about a divorce making people happy the more it will happen. I'm not suggesting that by having a few divorced protagonists, an author is causing an increase in a modern trend that could be a root cause for increased poverty and teen problems. I just wonder what the additive effect of the many books and movies having split families does to a young mind. Does it normalise divorce so much that children now think that's just the way things are done?

The issue of human experimentation in a medical setting was a good topic to cover, well worth thinking about. How clever of the author to work in these themes into such fun fiction.

A brief mention of the child abuse issue made me think it would be a good topic to delve into more in the future. Doctors and social workers have a terrifying power over parents that can scare even the innocent. On the one hand, we have to protect children, but we don't want parents scared to take them for treatment, either.

When Phillips in Brain was following the suspect, I thought the description of night people looking "bizarre and grotesque" was hilarious. I first pictured gross deformities and shrivelled monsters before I toned down my mental image to tattoos, beer bellies and purple hair.

If Phillips was surprised what someone in a hospital told him because he was a doctor, he should hear what people tell their home support workers. (It was a good student job with its flex hours, and good research on character profiles, too.) I'm still haunted by a detailed telling of a murder, and other horrors. Also, a lot of chronically ill or elderly people don't seem to have a high level of confidence in doctors' abilities to take away their problems. It seems there are a lot of diseases and old-age problems there's just no solution for (yet?).

All in all, another thought-provoking, entertaining story.

Jeremy says

Brain was entertaining, intelligent and completely ridiculous in equal measures. I admit I enjoyed it, despite never buying the premise for a single moment. Cook has a talent and it's for telling a good yarn that keeps the pace going. It's not so much that he's believable or a good writer (although I've read worse working in the thriller genre). Also, I think I understand TeeVee shows like House a little better having read this.

Vandan Revanur says

A novel that is well paced , talks about the incredible powers the brain harnesses. A peek into the futuristic synergy of the biological brain and the computers. An impending biologically cybernetic future. Does definitely involve a lot of Medical terms and literature. Definitely requires a medical dictionary or Google at disposal. The end is quite predictable. A satisfactory read.

dracos99 says

Thriller médico, con algo de terror y algo de ciencia ficción. Situaciones no demasiado creíbles. Personajes normales. Trama bien desarrollada.

Gerard says

A shocking medical thriller!

Rabbit {Paint me like one of your 19th century gothic heroines!} says

Need to be reviewed.

Melina says

The story starts with a girl Kathereine Collins going to a GYN clinic where she undergoes treatment for some Gynac ailments. She has starts having seizures where she smells a repulsive but familiar odor and then loses consciousness. As the book goes on it tells about other young women around the same age with the exact same symptoms. The story's main character is Dr. Martin Phillips, a doctor in neurophysiology at a New York City hospital. He is working on a self-diagnostic x-ray machine along with his companion Michael, a researcher at MIT. Later on in the story, Phillips starts to discover the hidden experiments involving human subjects for testings purposes. Now that he knows, he realizes he can never tell anyone of bad things would happen. This was the first medical thriller I've ever read, I would definately recommend this to anyone who enjoys exciting and action packed novels.

Vanessa Benavides says

Genial.... he de decir que para mi es un 4.5, al final le hizo falta un poco mas... pero aun así, me pareció un excelente libro, corto y fácil de leer.

La problemática ética en el ambiente medico científico que enmascara el libro es interesante si se investiga realmente toda la evolución que ha tenido la ciencia medica a costa de varios experimentos en los cuales han sido sacrificados no solo animales si no seres humanos.

Debbie Bradford says

It may have been outrageous as some people have suggested but the prologue in the end bothered me. It certainly makes one think and wonder about human experimentation and exploitation. Truly was a good read with the afterthoughts compelling.

Amal_zameli says

L'année 2018 s'annonce bien ! Le livre "vertiges" de Robin Cook m'a tenu vraiment à cœur et les événements atroces que le chercheur Martin Phillips a vécus m'ont concerné particulièrement, puisque j'ai étudié les sciences expérimentales et je vise une carrière de chercheur en biologie. Ce livre témoigne la transformation du progrès scientifique en une arme redoutable qui menace la vie humaine, dévoilant le visage terrifiant que la recherche scientifique (incontrôlée par les morales) pourrait avoir: expérimentation humaine, assassinats, maltraitance des animaux, exploitation des cadavres et création des "missiles intelligents".

Malgré l'existence d'une multitude de procédures pour protéger les droits de l'Homme et les données personnelles, et malgré la création des comités d'éthique pour surveiller la recherche scientifique , le cauchemar de l'expérimentation humaine continue à rôder, pouvant même être encouragé par les gouvernements afin d'obtenir plus de pouvoir. Ce livre montre qu'un fil fragile sépare entre la fiction et la réalité.

Un livre émouvant tissé avec un suspense fou et une bonne dose d'adrénaline.
