

KIRKUS REVIEWS

TITLE INFORMATION

GRAY MANEUVERS

Grove, Dale A.

CreateSpace (612 pp.)

\$15.33 paperback, \$2.00 e-book

ISBN: 9781466270008; May 9, 2012

BOOK REVIEW

A brain surgeon performs operations that allow him to control minds in this chilling sci-fi debut.

World War III brought devastation to the United States. New York, bombed by Middle Eastern forces, still bleeds deadly radiation. New Washington, the rebuilt capital, is home to an organization called Central Perception, led by Dr. Benjamin Minder. It maintains national security not for a president but for a ruling cabal of corporate taskmasters. The organization's chief battle is against the domestic terrorists of the Neural Network. Enter Dr. John Cosgrove, a surgeon who specialized in the now-illegal "gray" procedures performed during the war; his skillful hands can plumb the frontal cortex, inserting technology that results in various shades of obedience. After capturing an agent of the Neural Network, Central Perception hires Cosgrove to help "cleanse" the man—that is, surgically interrogate him and record his memories onto disks. Once the man's memories have been recorded, however, a shootout between hospital staff and Central Perception security suggests that things aren't what they seem. Later, Cosgrove visits Maine and the Neural Network forces his car off the road with a fallen tree. He enters another vehicle at gunpoint, finding himself face to face with terrorists—his girlfriend Judy among them. Debut author Grove delivers this surprise, and many others, with seasoned panache. Scenes in which Cosgrove slowly loses his vision (only to comically regain it) are superbly engaging. But his novel's strongest trait is the sweeping, elaborately detailed world of espionage spun from the Gray Technology. Agents get programmed and counterprogrammed, and payoff frequently comes in explosive though carefully planned action sequences. As needed, Grove offers absorbing medical explanations—"The removal of emotional decision making was important in creating a calmer individual. . . . Rewiring portions of the cerebral cortex and internal body chemistry alterations made this possible—that's sometimes tempered by painful woodenness: "Clothes were removed from their hangers and placed on Cosgrove's body in the appropriate places." Still, for a thriller this long, Grove ably juggles heroes, villains and side characters, giving all ample room to develop.

A winding narrative, propelled by stark visuals and enjoyably crass action-film motifs.