

hours is being done while the author's alive and maybe the royalties will cover some losing days at the track. The man is not going to stop writing, so there won't be a long wait for the next book of his new poems.

— KEITH ABBOTT

HAVING YOUR BABY BY DONOR INSEMINATION

BY ELIZABETH NOBLE. HOUGHTON MIFFLIN; 1987.

MY WIFE AND I are the family litmus papers. My cousin tries things out on us first. If we don't turn pink, she can tell the rest of the family. She told me first that she was gay. I had just survived a brief encounter with Death, and had the survivor's aura of vulnerability that confers a sense of trust.

Next, she told us that her lover was converting to Judaism, a prelude to their marriage, we supposed. So if it couldn't be a nice Jewish boy . . . well, this would be all right, too.

A couple of years later, they came to announce their plans to have a baby. My cousin would be the mother; that was settled. The question was whence the sperm? They had approached Beth's brother, but were puzzled at his reservations, as well as our own. We could understand their wish to draw from the genetic and cultural heritage of both families, but can an uncle be a father, too? They were getting little help from the medical establishment; third-party-payers do not ordinarily cover donor insemination for those who are not legally married.

This book would have been a help. Not that it has the answers — it raises far more questions than it offers solutions. But, ah, such questions! The technical section is surprisingly short for such a comprehensive text, and contains clear and concise information on anatomy, physiology, legalities, and sperm banks. There are a few pages on technique, from the obligatory turkeybaster to the more sophisticated use of the cervical cap, a small rubber or plastic *yarmulke* that holds the semen at the entrance to the uterus.

The rest of the book is a bible of moral, ethical, and interpersonal dilemmas. There is one commandment: *cognoscatur donator* — let the donor be known. It stems from the personal experience and conviction of the author, who herself undertook donor insemination. Time and again, she makes the point that dealing with an anonymous donor is a dehumanizing, impersonal, and (forgive me) sterile experience. She finds it inconceivable (I'm sorry, I'm sorry) that a mother, her husband, the semen donor, and the child would not want to know each other. Please note, O ye in need of sensitization, that the term "artificial insemination," with its connotation of unnaturalness, is out, and "DI" is in.

Elizabeth Noble, director of the Maternal and Child Health Center in Cambridge, Massachusetts, tells of her experiences in conceiving and raising her daughter, Julia. She and her husband, who was infertile, ruled out her former lovers as donors, refused the offers of friends who coyly offered an *in vivo* experience, and settled on a friend in Canada. It is curious that Noble, with her emphasis on openness of donor identity, refers to her husband as Geoff, her daughter as Julia, and the donor as X. She describes a humorous assignation in the

bathroom of the friend's house. First, she was to leave the cervical cap in the soap dish. He was then to dash to the bathroom to leave his semen in the cervical cap. Next, she was to return to the bathroom to insert the sperm-laden cap. Their efforts had to be tightly coordinated, in order to avoid interruption by a bevy of teenage girls who were sleeping over for a pajama party.

Noble was open with her daughter about the identity of the donor from the start. At the age of four and a half, Julia announced that "the father gets the sperm from his penis and puts it in the mother's hand and then she puts it in her 'gina." Ms. Noble believes that Julia has not just intrauterine memories, but a preconceptual conception of her own conception.

All right, out with it: I think Ms. Noble is a bit of a flake. But this does not detract from the glorious complexity of the questions that she raises and thoughtfully discusses in her book. Should the donor's identity be known? If a donor is not the "father" of the baby, then who is? In many jurisdictions, children born of DI must be legally adopted and legitimized by their mother's husband. If a fertile husband donates his sperm to a surrogate mother for gestation, who is the father? Should the semen of donor and husband be mixed? Some feel that this enhances the sense of paternity of the husband, while in other jurisdictions, legal and canonical, the practice is outlawed.

You can't legislate morality. Or can you? O, King Solomon, where are you, now that we need you?

— MICHAEL A. INGALL

THE HIT MAN COMETH

BY ROBERT J. RAY. ST. MARTIN'S PRESS; 1988.

ACCORDING TO THE "ABOUT the author" afterword and the biographical sketch accompanying the photograph on the book jacket, Robert Ray has been teaching college-level English and fiction writing for more than a decade. Which reminded me of why I wasn't an English major and why I have always steered clear of writing classes. As I was reading this detective-story-murder mystery-thriller-whatever-you-call-these-things, I could just see this guy smarmily telling his students that in order to write fiction that sells, you have to give your main character some hooks! You know, class, things that make him distinctive! Warm and fuzzy. Someone you can relate to. Your character has to have traits that make him memorable — and saleable. So here comes a Serbo-Croatian (!) homicide detective, Frank Branko, the other more obvious ethnic identities having already been sold off, Jewish to rabbis who sleep late, Italian to cops who play dumb, and Irish to Anglo-Catholic priests. He is always described as being lonely and thin, I imagine so that when they make a Frank Branko TV series it can be called "The Lonely Detective." Necessarily, all the attractive women in the book throw themselves at the macho-gentle hero who cries real tears when his partner gets killed. Now why the tennis-ace policeman ultimately couples off with the girl reporter instead of the valiant co-worker is a little mysterious. Maybe it's because it creates the possibility for better location shots, if the subplots surrounding her are assignments filled with human interest, exotic locales, or the drama of the newsroom.

Then there's the language. Good lord, there is dialogue

the likes of which I haven't read since I used to sulk over science fiction written before psychedelics, Jung, and feminism toned up the genre. I mean, has anyone in living memory ever actually uttered the word "gonads" outside of the laboratory dissection of a frog? Or how about "brunette"? Now there's a locution not seen this decade outside of the packaging for Lady Clairol. Characters named Dink Carruthers and Lissa Cody and Douglas Cade? I could go on, but, nah, it's not worth it.

I read this expensive (list price almost \$20) throwaway when I was down in Orange County, driving around all the sometimes fictional, sometimes real places he describes: the Crystal Cathedral (called here the Tower of Prayer) and Newport Beach. And I was imminently suggestible: I would have grabbed at anything to distract myself from a convention of people who were passionate about statistical multiplexers and

conversant with IBM's marketing strategies for network management. Didn't matter. Didn't help the caper feel real. The book points to all the dangers of computerization because it looks and feels as if it were written with a word processor and a database.

When reading books whose primary purpose is to entertain, the wise child would do well to follow the dictum of former President Carter. He said, "Why not the best?" So stick to Eric Ambler and Graham Greene for spy stories, Joseph Wambaugh for *romans policiers*, Patricia Highsmith for tales of sociopaths who get away with it, and Robert Parker for a real cool hunk of a humanistic private eye. Don't mess with this trumped-up blather about a millionaire television evangelist, a soldier of fortune, corruption in the LAPD, a rilly, rilly high-class call girl, and I don't remember what all else.

— PAULINA BORSOOK



"BOMBAY CLIPPER" (ORIGINAL IN COLOR) FROM JUDITH GOLDEN: CYCLES, A DECADE OF PHOTOGRAPHS. THE FRIENDS OF PHOTOGRAPHY; 1988.

★★♥♥♥