

Books

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The Book of the Spider: From Arachnophobia to the Love of Spiders—Paul Hillyard. Miss Muffet is perhaps the most famous arachnophobe, but for every Miss Muffet there are people like the Piaroa Indians, who collect the largest tarantulas and eat them. While he devotes some space to the physiology and habits of spiders and their prey, Hillyard concentrates his efforts here on the myths surrounding spiders and on human interactions with them. He relates the ways in which arachnids can help people forecast the weather or dress a wound in this engaging look at spiders. Random, 1996, 218 p., b&w illus., hardcover, \$25.00.

Demonic Males: Apes and the Origins of Human Violence—Richard Wrangham and Dale Peterson. Is it possible that violence such as rape and border raids is inherent in human males? After studying a variety of apes and chimpanzees for more than 20 years, the authors tend to think so. As primates are our closest relatives, Wrangham and Peterson feel that male aggression is bound to follow humans down their evolutionary path. While civilization and larger brains neutralize male violence to some extent, so do women. They describe the harmonious society of the bonobo chimpanzees of Zaire, in which equality of the sexes has contributed to a peaceful environment. The authors share their fieldwork and analysis in this heavily referenced text. HM, 1996, 350 p., b&w illus., hardcover, \$24.95.

Fractal Horizons: The Future Use of Fractals—Clifford A. Pickover, ed. This exploration into the myriad uses of fractals, both in the sciences and in the arts, shows how these computer-generated images continue to influence everything from education to medicine. In six sections, the relationship between fractals and the diverse areas of art, music, sound, and math are explored by experts in those fields, both as they are and as they are likely to become through the continued application of fractals. St Martin, 1996, 355 p., b&w illus., hardcover, \$29.95.

Full House: The Spread of Excellence from Plato to Darwin—Stephen Jay Gould. Once again, Gould asks his readers to lay aside commonly held notions about evolution and ponder another approach. In this case, he challenges progressives, arguing that variety, not complexity, is the true measure of excellence. Masked by discussions about such phenomena as the disappearance of the .400 baseball hitter and the dominant role of bacteria, Gould shows how things vary within full systems rather than "moving somewhere." Noting, for example, that .400 hitters no longer exist not because batters have gotten worse but because the level of all play has improved, Gould lays the groundwork for reconceptualizing our fundamental view of life. Harmony, 1996, 244 p., b&w illus., hardcover, \$25.00.

Strength in Numbers: Discovering the Joy and Power of Mathematics in Everyday Life—Sherman K. Stein. For those whose children want to know why they will ever need to know math—or those who have ever shared that sentiment—Stein is here to explain. A chapter outlining specific occupations and the role of mathematics in each is sandwiched between chapters that detail how numbers are used, often deceptively, in marketing. Stein provides fresh views and explanations of some of the most common concepts, as well as lessons on their application in the "real world." Wiley, 1996, 272 p., b&w illus., hardcover, \$24.95.

A Theory for Everything—Jeremy Bernstein. A well-known contributor to THE NEW YORKER, Bernstein pulls together here a wide range of essays including some fiction, notably, send-ups of academic and sexual politics at an imaginary small college. Bernstein also explores whether or not Niels Bohr gave German atomic secrets to researchers at Los Alamos and why sheer brilliance was not enough to make Emilio Segrè a great physicist. Copernicus, 1996, 320 p., hardcover, \$25.00.

The Ulcer Story: The Authoritative Guide to Ulcers, Dyspepsia, and Heartburn—W. Grant Thompson. Virtually unheard of before 1900, ulcers have become pervasive since 1970. Thompson begins with an explanation of the upper digestive tract and a history of the ailments that plague it. He follows up with the causes of ulcers, dyspepsia, and heartburn, along with some offshoots of these problems. Concluding chapters look at the indications and treatment of ulcers, as well as the potential for a cure. Plenum, 1996, 415 p., b&w photos and illus., hardcover, \$29.95.

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