



Defending the Cavewoman: And Other Tales of Evolutionary Neurology

By Harold L. Klawans

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During the neurologist Harold Klawan's lifetime, patients came to him from all over America, exhibiting a huge array of troubles, all of which boiled down to one complaint: something was wrong with their brains. As a sympathetic brain detective, Klawans deduced a great deal from his patients, not only about the immediate causes of their ailments but also about the evolutionary underpinnings of their behaviour. This book contains the richest of his clinical tails. He examines a woman suffering from "painful foot and moving toe syndrome", whose case reminded him that we were once reptiles with brains at the bases of our spines. He discusses with his friend Oliver Sacks his own experience of knocking a recently broken toe with allowed him to see that, while the brain dulls pain, it also block position sense, so that an accident is likely to occur again to the part of the body that was previously hurt.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

"All superficial comparisons to the contrary, Oliver Sacks and I are really quite dissimilar," said Dr. Harold Klawans, in his essay "My Lunch with Oliver." He and Sacks were both neurologists, both with special interests in movement disorders and Parkinson's disease, and both writers. "The brain and how it functions is to Oliver a philosophical issue... I try to ask simple questions." Klawans's questions are not really "simple," but they're about evolution and development instead of philosophy.

In his clinical practice, Klawans thought about the evolution of the brain to try to understand his patients' problems, and vice versa. His theme throughout is that brain development is about windows of opportunity: many things can only be learned in certain periods, and after puberty in particular the brain has been largely "pruned to shape," so that skills like language and music may never be properly acquired.

The cavewoman of the title is the one who stayed home taking care of the babies while Man the Hunter was off spearheading the Ascent of Man (in what Stephen Jay Gould, one of Klawans's favorite writers, calls an "evolutionary just-so story"). Not so, says Klawans: because the window of opportunity for learning language is in childhood, especially early childhood, language *must* have arisen between mothers and children: "though few defend the Cavewoman, we all speak our mother's tongue." --*Mary Ellen Curtin*

From Publishers Weekly

Much in the manner of Oliver Sacks, neurologist Klawans (*Why Michael Couldn't Hit*, etc.) uses stories from his clinical practice as jumping-off points for discussion of how the brain works, and of how and why it evolved as it did. Klawans explains how doctors find out which half of your brain controls your speech, and why they might need to know; how a professor's stroke cost him his ability to read, and how he regained it. Later chapters lay out "how literacy changes the brain" (among other things, it teaches us to use abstract categories) and how mad cow disease alters it (by means of contagious proteins called prions). Bringing in modern European history, Klawans connects an obscure nerve disease to conditions in Nazi-occupied Norway. Straying into evolutionary genetics, he describes Cheddar Man, a specimen of early *Homo sapiens* found in England; his DNA matches that of a modern-day history teacher still living in Cheddar. The difference between the two Cheddar men shows how much human life has been controlled by cultural, rather than biological, evolution. Klawans strikes an admirable balance between breezy narrative and serious exposition, between clinician's anecdote and broad biological overview. His decision to build each chapter around a single patient gives some of his work the feel of short stories, each with a single scientific punch line. Readers familiar with similar science writers will zip through Klawans's work with pleasure; those new to the genre will learn lots of neuroscience, nontechnically and without pain. (Jan.)

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From Library Journal

Neurologist Klawans (*Why Michael Couldn't Hit*) contends that the unique qualities that make us human evolved because of our extended childhood under women's care--which allowed for continuing brain development, language, and learning--rather than from men's hunting and tool use. He uses fascinating clinical anecdotes to lead into explanations of how our brains work and how they got that way. His methodology resembles that of Oliver Sacks, but Klawans concentrates more on the process of learning how our brains function, while Sacks is also interested in the philosophical and literary implications of neurology. Klawans has a wonderfully clear, entertaining style that makes him a pleasure to read while giving the reader

important insights into how our brains work. Highly recommended for all types of libraries.

-*Marit MacArthur, Auraria Lib., Denver*

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Michael Due:

Reading a reserve tends to be new life style with this era globalization. With examining you can get a lot of information that could give you benefit in your life. Having book everyone in this world can share their idea. Guides can also inspire a lot of people. Many author can inspire their own reader with their story or their experience. Not only the storyline that share in the textbooks. But also they write about the ability about something that you need example of this. How to get the good score toefl, or how to teach children, there are many kinds of book that exist now. The authors these days always try to improve their proficiency in writing, they also doing some analysis before they write for their book. One of them is this *Defending the Cavewoman: And Other Tales of Evolutionary Neurology*.

Tiffany Reyes:

People live in this new time of lifestyle always attempt to and must have the time or they will get wide range of stress from both lifestyle and work. So , when we ask do people have free time, we will say absolutely of course. People is human not a robot. Then we inquire again, what kind of activity are you experiencing when the spare time coming to you actually of course your answer will probably unlimited right. Then do you ever try this one, reading books. It can be your alternative with spending your spare time, often the book you have read is definitely *Defending the Cavewoman: And Other Tales of Evolutionary Neurology*.

Jared Carter:

Your reading sixth sense will not betray you actually, why because this *Defending the Cavewoman: And Other Tales of Evolutionary Neurology* book written by well-known writer whose to say well how to make book which can be understand by anyone who all read the book. Written throughout good manner for you, leaking every ideas and creating skill only for eliminate your own personal hunger then you still uncertainty *Defending the Cavewoman: And Other Tales of Evolutionary Neurology* as good book not only by the cover but also from the content. This is one publication that can break don't evaluate book by its protect, so do you still needing yet another sixth sense to pick this kind of!? Oh come on your examining sixth sense already told you so why you have to listening to one more sixth sense.

Willis Harrington:

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