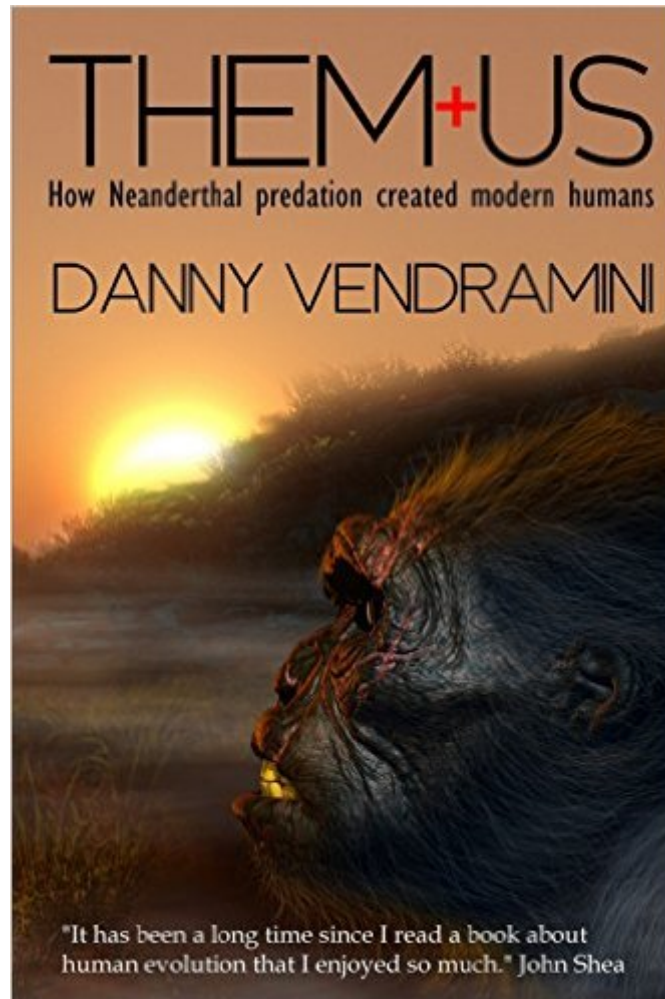


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Them And Us: How Neanderthal Predation Created Modern Humans



Synopsis

This accessible, intelligent and page turning read sheds new light on how Neanderthals evolved and the origins of human behavior, uncovering what it means to be a modern human in the 21st century. Neanderthal Predation (NP) theory begins with a radical new assessment of Neanderthal behavioral ecology by pulling together new archaeological and genetic evidence, showing they weren't docile omnivores, but savage, cannibalistic carnivores - top flight predators of the stone age; Apex predators at the top of the food chain, and what happened next - when humans became prey. "Danny Vendramini presents a truly unique and innovative picture of the role of Neanderthal predation in human evolutionâ Vendramini pulls together countless different threads of scientific evidence to re-cast Neanderthals as "apex predators", proverbial "wolves with knives" who were effective rivals with our ancestorsâ . It has been a long time since I read a book about human evolution that I enjoyed so much." Associate Professor John J. Shea. Stony Brook University, New York.

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Customer Reviews

I want to start by saying the author doesn't seem to be a trained Anthropologist. I only minored in the field in college and could easily spot so many holes in his theory. I liked some of the basic ideas in the book, but once I got to around 40% through the author goes off the deep end and tries to link EVERY aspect of humans' universal cultural and physical attributes to some great "war" we allegedly had with Neanderthals. I think this guy wanted to link every possible trait about humans to NP theory so that just in case any of it ends up being picked up by mainstream anthropologists

down the road he can claim he said it first. It also offends me that he even calls it a "war" as if early humans were invading Europe like Patton to intentionally eradicate Neanderthals with some great coordinated strategy, as opposed to them just spreading in the search for food and killing them off as a result of competition (Ockhams Razor?). When the author goes on to link this war as the birth of humans concept of romance i was ready to quit reading. The only reason I was able to finish it was so I could complain about its ridiculousness to others. Parts of the book that actually had references to recent studies published by REAL scientists were entertaining and educational, but the author tended to make repetitive wild conclusions based others' data. And by repetitive, I mean he literally repeated the same concept so many times it seemed like it was copy and pasted throughout the book.

I am a biologist and I do keep my mind open. Concepts that are new are often quite strange to us. Still, there are some ideas that I do disagree on. Well, I am part Neanderthal myself and Danny seems to believe that is not possible, but look at my genes. Truth is stranger than fiction as we say. Modern Europeans are a mix. About 96% Cro Magnon and 4% Neanderthal, and who knows what else we might find in coming years.

For starters, I really can't remember any other book that I've read in recent memory that at first held so much promise, and I initially enjoyed reading so very much, that by the 65% mark had started sounding so totally like a pseudo-scientific broken record. Author Danny Vendramini's fervent assertion that Neanderthals most likely looked quite different from the way they've been portrayed in scientific circles for many years now, is actually what originally attracted me to read *Them and Us*. So naturally, there was at first quite a big payoff in reading this book - because the first two thirds is mostly pretty compelling stuff. Granted, I'm not an expert, but I'd wager that much of the scientific meat of *Them and Us* could probably be gleaned from reading a few well chosen Wikipedia articles about evolution and early human and Neanderthal anthropology. But then you'd have to know what to look for, and you wouldn't get Vendramini's two big claims to scientific fame. The first is that he apparently thinks his vaunted "NP (Neanderthal Predation) theory" explains just about everything, and secondly, he posits that, in addition to Darwin's theory of evolution, "a second evolutionary process also exists that regulates the evolution of innate behaviours, instincts and emotions in multicellular animals." First off, NP theory can be summed up pretty much like so: Neanderthals, despite being shorter than their prehistoric hominid counterparts (us), were actually physically more imposing, with a heavy bone structure topped off by an exceptionally large skull. However, even

though they were great with a spear, they definitely weren't like US. No way, Jose! Nope! Never! Neanderthals weren't the mostly hairless, animal skin wearing cousins of early humans that they've long been depicted to have been, but rather, they were a vicious apex predator that swept down from their Ice Age European and Eurasian homelands to terrorize the Skhul and Qafzeh hominids (our ancestors) who inhabited the Levant. In other words, they were hairy, scary, sexually voracious upright walking primates who hunted, raped, killed and just generally predated early humans to almost total extinction. Okay. Easy. Got it. So, according to Vendramini's NP theory, WE were the hunted. IN THE BEGINNING, we humans were so docile and herbivorous that we were unable to defend ourselves from the brutish, carnivorous Neanderthals (who even often ATE us), and our population experienced a "bottleneck," or rather, a near extinction. Therefore, at one point, the evidence strongly suggests, there were as few as 50 to 100 homo sapiens left alive, and the only way that we managed to survive was to jump start our evolution and become hyper intelligent, hyper vigilant, hyper aggressive and truly vengeful early modern humans (Cro-magnons) that spread out across the globe and killed everything and anything in their path that looked or behaved even remotely like those pesky, predatory Neanderthals who'd nearly wiped us all out! Okay. Up to that point, I was totally with the author. Good stuff. Made complete and total sense to me. The problem is that the last 1/3 of the book started to go dramatically downhill for me. NP theory, the author continually asserts, is such a revolutionary new idea that it pretty much explains... well... JUST ABOUT EVERYTHING ABOUT MODERN HUMAN BEHAVIOR! And I mean EVERY BLESSED THING! Well, not quite everything, but, Verdrimini argues, this near extinction event that turned our forebears against their hominid brethren explains why, even after we'd managed to finally exterminate the Neanderthals, we just couldn't call it quits in the killing urge department. Yes, after we'd not only narrowly managed to survive the predation period AND turned the tables on the species that nearly took us all out, we used our newly acquired homicidal urges against one another. And we've been wiping those "others" that we always label "them" out in droves ever since. Sounds like quite a book, right? And it is! Mostly. You see, where the author really lost me was when he sorta, kinda, maybe hinted with his numerous examples of bad modern human behaviors, that this NP theory thing is supposedly why there are now Republicans and Democrats. Well, he doesn't mention them exactly, but he does strongly suggest that NP theory is why there are now those righteous ones on the left, and there are those nasty ones on the right. Me? I'm not political and do not enjoy parties, so don't get any funny or adversarial "Them and Us" ideas, buster! You see, I tend to stay the hell away from the polarized fringe thinkers on either side of the political divide (because, call me highly evolved, but I don't really like thinking in "Them and Us" terms most

of the time), but the author sure does seem to know a thing or two about the subject. Lots and lots, actually. Okay. Fine. Basically, for the most part (well, the first 2/3 anyway), *Them and Us* is a very engrossing, well written, thoroughly researched and well crafted work of modern, more or less scientific thought. The last third gets rather bogged down however, as the author attempts to reinforce his NP theory and ideas about "teemosis" with all sorts of additional examples of how pretty much all forms of human behavior can be traced directly back to the supposition that Them (Neanderthals) originally preyed on Us and forced us to very suddenly evolve into homicidal, predatory maniacs who eventually took over the world. And what's wrong with all that Neanderthal induced human violence, right? Well, of course that's all bad. Very, very, very bad. So near the end of the book, the author cites former US president George W. Bush (not once but TWICE), Roman Catholics (at least twice) and US involvement in the Vietnam war (more than once, even though Australia, where Vendramini resides AND also South Korea were right there with US - something you can also find out on Wikipedia, by the way) and a slew of other events and people he considers negative in the history of mankind, to bolster his fancy NP theory that... well... the devil (those hairy scary Neanderthals) may have originally made us do it, but them (us Americans) really need to learn how to just tame down, like the English and German troops did for that famous Christmas Truce on Christmas Eve in 1914. Well, that is, before they resumed killing each other en masse for several years after that. But hey! He among us who is without sin, right? Okay. Fine. Basically, for the first 2/3 of this book, I was thinking five stars, but then Mr. Vendramini sort of came off as rather preachy. Okay. Fine. It's all about Them and Us, right? There are the American English speakers and there are the Commonwealth English speakers. Sort of... US and them. Or them and US. Or something like that. I suppose it depends on where you were born and on just how much you want to paint the United States (or ANY other group of 99.9% genetically similar modern humans) as the bad guy and ignore any and all wrongdoings in British history (even though the United States is obviously an English speaking country that rose to prominence at exactly the same time that the British Empire was waning, and is clearly an extension of globalized British-American civilization). But look at old dopey me! When I shelled out my money for *Them and Us*, I thought it was a book about Neanderthals, not a pseudo-political sermon. I could handle the sermon, I suppose, but then Vendramini spends much of the last chapter comparing himself to Charles Darwin. And that takes some serious ego there, buddy. To summarize, there's a lot of interesting content in this book. It's a very fascinating read in many ways, but in other ways it's an over-hyped, ego driven new spin on a lot of scientific data that's already been put forth. That's why Vendramini can put nearly 800 references in his book, you see. The only thing really revolutionary about what he's saying that I can

see, is that he thinks that Neanderthals were hair covered and more ape-like than they've been depicted by the scientific community for quite some time now. Cool! I'm down with that! Oh, and also, of course, he's pushing his very possibly, quite astute ideas about "teemosis," or roughly speaking, how predation induced stresses can be passed down to offspring who, despite never encountering the deadly animals that terrorized their ancestors end up having the instinctive fear of those predators literally bred into them. So, the teemosis process is micro-evolutionary, as opposed to macro-evolutionary, in nature. So... if the US is currently an aggressive country (that has troops in many of the places that the British either still do or formerly did have), maybe it's because of the way our ancestors were treated by... them. Hmm.Nah! See... I like the British. Despite being an American, I actually have Scottish, Irish and Welsh ancestry (and German - those OTHER Vikings who stayed on the other side of the Channel), so sorry, no "Them and Us" mentality for me, brothers and sisters from across the seas! Peace out to you, one and all.Lastly, a BIGFOOT SIZED word of warning to anyone who might be interested in buying this book because they heard about it on Bigfoot Hotspot Radio (www.blogtalkradio.com/bigfoothotspot). Vendramini does not appear to believe in Sasquatch, Yeti or any of those other bipedal hominds that are still sighted by all sorts of people in various places around the world to this very day. In fact, here's exactly what he has to say about it: "But, while it is amusing to hear that Mesopotamians 4000 years ago believed in a legendary crocodile-like dragon with wings, claws and fiery breath called an Enuma Elish, it is somewhat more disconcerting to realise that up to 3 million Americans believe they have had a personal encounter with an alien. And, despite scientific investigations that have produced not one actual yeti (sic), Sasquatch or abominable snowman, millions of people around the world still firmly believe in their existence."Schucks! Us Americans is so gullible! Believin' in aliens and all them extant hominids that obviously ain't out there anyways. Thank you, Mr. Vendramini, for enlightening all us poor dumb people. I is ever so grateful that you decided to write your enlightening book. Ta da! Cue the god beams piercing down from the clouds. And then there was light! Vendramini light, that is. All hail the book of Vendramini.

I absolutely loved this book. I bought it over a year ago from his website. I'm not a scientist so I can't vouch for its accuracy but even if it's complete hogwash, it's still fascinating and an entertaining read. I loved the story Vendramini paints and would love to see it made in to one of those fun Animal planet or History channel hypothetical documentaries like they do for cryptozoology. I definitely think he's on to something with our overzealous anthropomorphism in models of Neanderthal and other prehistoric humanoids. There is a glaring lack of evidence for clothing in

Neanderthal and given their geographic location, it isn't a stretch to believe they may have been hairy. Also, considering our own innate viciousness, it isn't also a stretch to believe they may have hunted us and later on vice versa. The fact that there is ONLY male neanderthal DNA in our genome (verified after Vendramini's book came out) lends to a more sinister picture than just peaceful interbreeding. Anyway. I highly recommend this book as entertainment, pop science or both. Either way you take it, it's an incredibly fun and fast read.

Technically, it's a hypothesis, not a theory, but it's a great read, nonetheless. Written more for the lay person as opposed to the trained academic/scientist. Even if you don't agree with his thesis, I would still highly recommend this book. Even if many of his premises are wrong, he addresses many questions of human evolution that mainstream science has not even begun to adequately explain. So if nothing else, this book will hopefully induce some deep contemplation within the reader. Who knows..... maybe the next great theory will manifest from someone who read this book. At times, we must dissect false science before we can "discover" true science. Only a rudimentary understanding of human evolution is needed before reading this book.

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