

but non-trivial ("I picture the reader as a smart old attorney," he says, "who expects . . . some convincing arguments before he makes up his mind").

**THE DRAGONS OF EDEN:**  
**Speculations on the**  
**Evolution of Human**  
**Intelligence**  
 by Carl Sagan  
 Random, 1977, 264 pp. \$8.95  
 L of C 76-53472  
 ISBN 0-394-41045-9

Having explored the possibility of extra-terrestrial intelligence in *The Cosmic Connection*, Sagan, a witty and elegant astronomer, examines the infinite mysteries of the human brain. Natural selection, he assures us, has served as a kind of "intellectual sieve," producing intelligence increasingly competent to deal with the laws of nature. It has been a slow process. In this captivating history of cerebral development, Sagan reminds us that it was only a few hundred million years ago that an organism with more information in its brain than in its genes appeared. We still share with our less well-endowed fellow primates three inborn fears—of falling, of snakes, of the dark. But thanks to the neocortex, which grew up around our more primitive brain structures some 30 million years ago, we have a culture that includes language, logic, intuition, and myths. The human brain, Sagan predicts, will continue to evolve—with the help of its talented competitor, the computer.

**SNAKES—A NATURAL**  
**HISTORY**  
 by H. W. Parker, revised  
 by A. G. C. Grandison  
 Cornell & British Museum  
 (Natural History), 1977,  
 124 pp.  
 \$8.95 cloth, \$3.95 paper  
 L of C 76-54625  
 ISBN 0-8014-1095-9  
 ISBN 0-8014-9164-9 pbk

The 11 families of snakes in a blend of scientific data and sympathy. This short book, newly revised from the 1965 edition, with enlarged full-color plates, is authoritative enough for professional herpetologists but will not overwhelm well-read modern youngsters who make pets of garter snakes. Necessarily sprinkled with such technical terms as "keratin"—one of the three layers of a snake's skin—the text's sometimes pedantic authenticity is relieved by striking images ("a livery of warning colours") and British matter-of-factness (Typhlopidae, or "blind" snakes, "essentially subterranean creatures," feed on "small invertebrates, especially ants").