

‘GUYnecology’ and ‘Phallacy’: Two new books take on the ups and downs of male appendages

It can stretch up to nine times your body length (if you’re a barnacle); be a detachable tentacle covered in suckers (if you’re an argonaut octopus); or even see, using light-sensing cells that guide it smoothly to its destination (if you’re a Japanese yellow swallowtail butterfly). Or, it can be a limp, fleshy tube, hardly worth writing home about, if you’re a human.

It is the penis, as you’ll know if you’ve read [Phallacy: Life Lessons from the Animal Penis](#), biologist and journalist Emily Willingham’s recent exploration of phallic diversity across the animal kingdom.

Meanwhile, another book argues that what we need is even more penis science. [GUYnecology: The Missing Science of Men’s Reproductive Health](#), by Yale sociologist Rene Almeling, asks why medicine has failed to fully probe “the male gonad,” as one scientist put it, and its role in human reproduction.

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At first glance, these two very different books appear to point to the same enduring truth: that scientists—and readers—remain as penis-obsessed as ever. Or, as Willingham puts it, “Nothing gets clicks like a story about dicks.”

Actually, it’s the opposite. In both, the flashy focus on the male member serves as a Trojan horse (pun intended) for a very different message: that a culture of phallus-worship has slanted the science in crucial and sometimes unexpected ways.

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