

The Spider Network: The Wild Story of a Maths Genius and One of the Greatest Scams in Financial History
David Enrich

Well written, though the number of characters makes it a bit hard to follow. Terribly sad, a fable for our times.

Gripping, and altogether too sad. I hate sad endings. Hayes, the story's protagonist, is languishing in prison for a long while to come.

The great moral of the story is a total lack of morals. The book does not depict a single honest person in the entire financial industry. The characters that come off best are Tom Hayes' long-suffering wife and former girlfriend. One suspects that they too had their dark sides, to remain allied with a man who was so clearly involved in behavior that was immoral, even if they did not know how illegal it might be.

It is well written, though it suffers from being too strong on history and thus a bit weak on plot. There are so many characters it is hard to keep track. Enrich does his best to give each of them one or two memorable attributes, to make them stick in your mind, but it is ultimately overwhelming.

Gross excess is a leitmotif throughout the book. How much money does one need? Can money buy happiness? How much is enough? Enrich does a good job of depicting Hayes' struggles with that question. His portrayal of a man of modest tastes who comes into more money than he knows what to do with is a story for our times.