sion: that for any (trophic) species, life is pretty simple, with two sources of food and two enemies, and this is largely independent of the complexity of the system in which the species is embedded. Intuitively this helps explain the apparent paradoxes in the stability/complexity arguments about communities. Also, it can justify a focus on the complicated dynamics in single-resourceprey-predator interactions. Does the mathematical superstructure clarify or obscure the consequences of the empirical generalizations? For me, the arguments in this book show what can, and especially what cannot, be deduced. It is not clear how a bridge could be built between the topology and the dynamics of food webs. Are we to have a separate geometry and calculus? The authors believe they will be combined, but we do not yet have the generality envisioned at the start. And what do we do next-more analysis or better field observations?

This is more than a matter of taste, and it is important that the pros and cons be set out as lucidly as possible. The basic ideas are elegant, but, unfortunately, the structure of the book is open to criticism. It is not stated overtly, but the book is in fact a reprint of papers by the three authors over the last 13 years, with linking text by Cohen and a listing of all the food webs. This leads to some repetition and hinders the coherent development and evaluation of the arguments. For those who have not read these papers the book is a useful collection. For those who want access to the data, the appendix detailing the 113 webs will be valuable.

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