



Subversive Seduction: Darwin, Sexual Selection, and the Spanish Novel (McLellan Endowed Series)

Travis Landry

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Male-male rivalry and female passive choice, the two principal tenets of Darwinian sexual selection, raise important ethical questions in *The Descent of Man*--and in the decades since--about the subjugation of women. If female choice is a key component of evolutionary success, what impact does the constraint of women's choices have on society? The elaborate courtship plots of 19th century Spanish novels, with their fixation on suitors and selectors, rivalry, and seduction, were attempts to grapple with the question of female agency in a patriarchal society. By reading Darwin through the lens of the Spanish realist novel and vice versa, Travis Landry brings new insights to our understanding of both: while Darwin's theories have often been seen as biologically deterministic, Landry asserts that Darwin's theory of sexual selection was characterized by an open ended dynamic whose oxymoronic emphasis on "passive" female choice carries the potential for revolutionary change in the status of women.

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