

Subversive Seduction

TRAVIS LANDRY

Darwin, Sexual Selection, and the Spanish Novel

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 nineteenth-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.

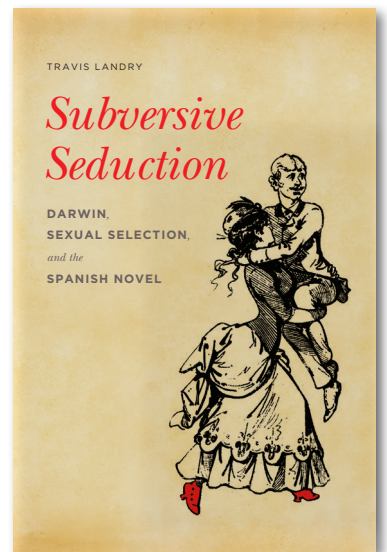
TRAVIS LANDRY is assistant professor of Spanish at Kenyon College.

"A fascinating book. Landry's work is groundbreaking because he never leaves Darwin behind to explore Spanish literature outfitted merely with a couple of Darwinian catchphrases. Rather, he has read and reread *The Descent of Man*, and, much like Darwin working in nature, comes to see the workings of Darwinian principles infusing ideas and practices in Spanish culture, far more deeply than has previously been shown."

—DALE PRATT,
Brigham Young University

"Travis Landry has an enviable gift for selecting the best quote to support an argument and it is truly a pleasure to read a book about canonical novels that has something new to say on every page."

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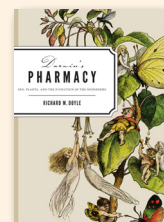
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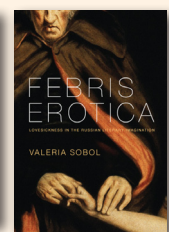
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