



Charles Darwin and Victorian Visual Culture (Cambridge Studies in Nineteenth-Century Literature and Culture)

Jonathan Smith

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Although *The Origin of Species* contained just a single visual illustration, Charles Darwin's other books, from his monograph on barnacles in the early 1850s to his volume on earthworms in 1881, were copiously illustrated by well-known artists and engravers. In this 2006 book, Jonathan Smith explains how Darwin managed to illustrate the unillustratable - his theories of natural selection - by manipulating and modifying the visual conventions of natural history, using images to support the claims made in his texts. Moreover, Smith looks outward to analyse the relationships between Darwin's illustrations and Victorian visual culture, especially the late-Victorian debates about aesthetics, and shows how Darwin's evolutionary explanation of beauty, based on his observations of colour and the visual in nature, were a direct challenge to the aesthetics of John Ruskin. The many illustrations reproduced here enhance this fascinating study of a little known aspect of Darwin's lasting influence on literature, art and culture.

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