



Darwin and the General Reader: The Reception of Darwin's Theory of Evolution in the British Periodical Press, 1859-1872

Alvar Ellegård

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Drawing on his investigation of over one hundred mid-Victorian British newspapers and periodicals, Alvar Ellegård describes and analyzes the impact of Darwin's theory of evolution during the first dozen years after the publication of the *Origin of Species*. Although Darwin's book caused an immediate stir in literary and scientific periodicals, the popular press largely ignored it. Only after the work's implications for theology and the nature of man became evident did general publications feel compelled to react; each social group responded according to his own political and religious prejudices. Ellegård charts the impact of this revolution in science, maintaining that although the idea of evolution was generally accepted, Darwin's primary contribution, the theory of natural selection, was either ignored or rejected among the public.

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