



# **The Caveman Mystique: Pop-Darwinism and the Debates Over Sex, Violence, and Science**

*Martha McCaughey*

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Has evolution made men promiscuous skirt chasers? Pop-Darwinian claims about men's irrepressible heterosexuality have become increasingly common, and increasingly common excuses for men's sexual aggression. *The Caveman Mystique* traces such claims about the hairier sex through evolutionary science and popular culture. After outlining the social and historical context of the rise of pop-Darwinism's assertions about male sexuality and their appeal to many men, Martha McCaughey shows how evolutionary discourse can get lived out as the biological truth of male sexuality.

Although evolutionary scientists want to use their theories to solve social problems, evolutionary narratives get invoked by men looking for a Darwinian defense of bad-boy behaviors. McCaughey argues that evolution has nearly replaced religion as a moral guide for understanding who we are and what we must overcome to be good people.

Bringing together insights from the fields of science studies, body studies, feminist theory and queer theory, *The Caveman Mystique* offers a fresh understanding of science, science popularization, and the impact of science on men's identities making a convincing case for deconstructing, rather than defending, the caveman.

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