



New World Gold: Cultural Anxiety and Monetary Disorder in Early Modern Spain

Elvira Vilches

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The discovery of the New World was initially a cause for celebration. But the vast amounts of gold that Columbus and other explorers claimed from these lands altered Spanish society. The influx of such wealth contributed to the expansion of the Spanish empire, but also it raised doubts and insecurities about the meaning and function of money, the ideals of court and civility, and the structure of commerce and credit. *New World Gold* shows that, far from being a stabilizing force, the flow of gold from the Americas created anxieties among Spaniards and shaped a host of distinct behaviors, cultural practices, and intellectual pursuits on both sides of the Atlantic.

Elvira Vilches examines economic treatises, stories of travel and conquest, moralist writings, fiction, poetry, and drama to reveal that New World gold ultimately became a problematic source of power that destabilized Spain's sense of trust, truth, and worth. These cultural anxieties, she argues, rendered the discovery of gold paradoxically disastrous for Spanish society. Combining economic thought, social history, and literary theory in trans-Atlantic contexts, *New World Gold* unveils the dark side of Spain's Golden Age.

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