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Curiosity and Modernity in Early Modern Spain

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Curiosity is the pursuit of knowledge by empirical means. And, while curiosity killed the cat and got Adam and Eve thrown out of the Garden, curiosity became perceived in the early modern period as the currency of cultural progress. It led to scientific discoveries and life-changing insights derived from exploration, to massive encyclopedic ventures, to intense self-study, to the surveillance of the Inquisition, to the voyeurism of pornography, and to the tremendous popularity of tabloid journalism. In 16th-century Iberia, this new curiosity was importantly expressed in encyclopedic projects—from the government's census-taking to the Inquisition's public surveillance of private lives, to the scientific recording and organizing of the exotic far reaches of the empire in all its particularity. This Special Issue focuses on the fascination with curiosity in early modern Spain as expressed in a wealth of different cultural productions—literary to artistic, political, scientific, racial, and religious, as well as explorations of gender.

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