

Romanticism and the Gold Standard: Money, Literature, and Economic Debate in Britain 1790-1830 (Palgrave Studies in the Enlightenment, Romanticism and the Cultures of Print)

Alexander Dick



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In 1816, the British government did something no one had ever done before: it introduced the first official gold standard in history. Through a close analysis of the pamphlets, reviews, lectures, journalism, editorials, poems, and novels surrounding the gold standard, this book examines its significance to the culture and literature of Romantic-era Britain. The gold standard was not a material object or universal concept, but a self-reflexive discourse that raised fundamental questions about knowledge, value, and social life. While politicians and financial experts believed that gold was the key to the nation's economic confidence, writers such as Ricardo, Malthus, Coleridge, Shelley, Austen, and Scott transformed the debates on the standard into a new disposition reflecting the difficulties and ambivalence of modern commerce: embarrassment. In this comprehensive and authoritative study, the author demonstrates the importance of monetary controversies to the story of Romanticism and of literary analysis to our understanding of money.

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