

from his ideas concerning the need for moderation in philosophizing. According to Laerke, Leibniz argued that only certain kinds of thinkers might need to be censored, among them atheists, enthusiasts and Libertines. What these groups had in common was not a set of beliefs (for how could enthusiasts and atheists share beliefs?), but a lack of moderation in their ideas. They were guilty of “asserting these principles with more certainty than they objectively have ... while rejecting those of others violently” (178). Immoderate behavior removed one from a proper scholarly conversation, and it was the duty of the state to intervene to prevent immoderate ideas from harming a society. But Leibniz was consistent in his reasoning when it came to suppressing dangerous ideas. Leibniz worried that a lack of moderation in repression would be worse than simply allowing the ideas to flourish, and Laerke gives several convincing examples from Leibniz’s *opus* to support his claims.

This is an impressive collection of essays. While none of them qualify as earth-shattering in importance, combined they give the reader a sufficient overview of recent work in a variety of national traditions considering the practices and theories of censorship and of recent work on the early Enlightenment.

Elvira Vilches. *New World Gold: Cultural Anxiety and Monetary Disorder in Early Modern Spain*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010. xi + 361 pp. \$45. Review by ELIZABETH R. WRIGHT, UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA.

The six chapters of *New World Gold* attest to an ambitious, precocious and impressively executed research project, in which Elvira Vilches combined the analytical tools of a cultural critic and an economic historian. At its heart is a question that vexed seventeenth-century Spanish poets, moralists and theologians: how could the Spanish Monarchy control the gold and silver of the Americas yet rule over so many impoverished subjects in its Iberian heartlands and be itself subject to foreign creditors? This “Indies paradox” was most famously voiced by the Baroque poet Francisco de Quevedo in a satire built on the refrain, “Poderoso caballero es don Dinero,” (*don* Money is a powerful gentleman). Its best known stanza traces Sir

Money's life span: "Nace en las Indias honrado / donde el mundo le acompaña; / viene a morir en España / y es en Génova enterrado. Y pues quien le trae al lado / es hermoso, aunque sea fiero." (He is born in the Indies, honored where the world hails him; he comes to die in Spain, and is buried in Genoa. And whomever he accompanies is fair, no matter how savage; in *Poesía lírica del Siglo de Oro*, ed. Elias Rivers, Madrid, Cátedra, 1979, p. 341 [translation mine]). Notwithstanding their deceptive simplicity, the verses present a quintessentially Baroque grammatical crux that questions notions of individual value; that is, *honrado* here could be an adjective denoting a virtue or the participle of an elided passive verb that suggests he is worshiped for his wealth. Vilches examines how a wide range of writers in diverse genres grappled—like Quevedo—with the increasingly complex mechanisms of international finance and the resulting distortions in notions of individual merit. To be sure, scholars of such literary movements as the picaresque novel have long explored this issue in Spain's "Golden Age" of literature. But Vilches's contribution follows from her rigorous addition of economic treatises, merchants' handbooks and theological texts to this analytical framework. Scholars of early-modern English literature will also appreciate her engagement with Mary Poovey's 2008 *Genres of the Credit Economy* and Mark Taylor's 2004 *Confidence Games*. In terms of its organization, the book spans from Columbus's first expedition to the Baroque writers of the seventeenth century. The primary organizational scheme, however, is thematic.

Chapter 1, "New World Gold," delves into how writings from the first phase of overseas expansion grapple with issues of value. Here Vilches considers such well-known *conquistadores* and colonizers as Columbus and Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo, while also drawing attention to theologians at the University of Salamanca and authors of the first guides to trans-Atlantic trade. Summing up the tension common to different genres, she notes that many intellectuals and moralists were "haunted by the Indies as an agent of change and disruption that altered the meaning and functions of money, corroded the ideals of civility, and transformed the structure of commerce" (52). As its title suggests, Chapter 2, "Selling the Indies: Columbus and the Economy of the Marvelous," Vilches expands on the line of research opened by such scholars as Margarita Zamora and Stephen Greenblatt. For

her part, Vilches examines Columbus's changing rhetorical strategies, when the promised rivers of gold from the Indies fail to materialize.

Continuing this line of inquiry, Chapter 3, "Gold: A Problematic Standard," considers some of the practical consequences of colonization, as wonder at the new lands and people encountered overseas gives way to issues related to colonial exploitation. In a compelling section, she examines how moralists and economic writers debated issues of land rights and the growing trans-Atlantic slave trade. The cultural tension that informs both Chapters 2 and 3 is the adherence to gold as the ultimate measure of worth, even as growing credit instruments were rendering value an abstract concept. While not central to her argument, Vilches also compares the Spanish "gold standard" to the different native-American systems of value, a comparative angle that attests to her work in the magnificent collection of early Americana preserved in the John Carter Brown Library.

Chapter 4, "The New World of Money," focuses on how the authors of dialogues, commercial handbooks, and theological treatises came to terms with the expanding money market instruments used to finance international trade. She offers particularly insightful comments on merchants' guidebooks of the mid-sixteenth century, such as Saravia de la Calle's *Instrucción de mercaderes* (Instructions for merchants, 1544, 1547) and the Dominican Tomás Mercado's *Suma de tratos y contratos* (Guide to negotiations and contracts, 1569). Not unlike the bumper crop of books on personal finance that have appeared since our own economic meltdown of 2008, the proliferation of such texts in sixteenth-century Spain reflects that: "from the king on down to the average citizen, it was almost impossible to grasp that the flood of American bullion could be dried up by interest rates and mortgaged debt" (208). One result of this anxiety was that many writers demonized or caricatured the Genoese financiers who provided the Spanish crown with desperately needed liquidity. Vilches, in contemplating attacks on the Genoese and other financial intermediaries, raises thorny issues related to alterity. Though she briefly discusses the tradition of money lending as it relates to Spain's *conversos* (converted Jews and their descendants), she book does not delve into the question of minority identities. In fact, a similar issue relates to *Moriscos*, the descendants of the Muslims forced to convert

to Christianity after the 1492 conquest of Granada. One of the many calumnies used to defend their 1609 expulsion from Spain was that they compulsively hoarded gold, thereby distorting the economy. One hopes that she or someone else inspired by her nimble examination of diverse writings on the subject of financial intermediaries will probe further into this question.

Overall, Chapters 1-4 are most useful for expanding the horizons of literary scholars by proposing connections to a broad range of economic and theological treatises. Shifting focus, Chapter 5 (“Writing about Debt”) and Chapter 6 (“The Indies, Value, and Wealth”) reflect on how debt and credit shape imaginative literature. Summing up the literary projection of New World gold, Vilches notes that “the picaresque novel, Cervantes’s fiction, the urban aristocratic setting of the *comedia*, and the post-Cervantine novella all created new ways of understanding the relative importance of persons in relation to the rising power of money by illustrating new routes of wealth while evoking nostalgia for the nonpecuniary past” (212). She offers fascinating discussions of the emergence of a decidedly Baroque topos of the world upside down, whereby Spain becomes the Indies. A particularly memorable formulation is found in *El criticón* (1657), the monumental Baroque novel by the Jesuit Baltasar Gracian. In one section, a Frenchman laments his nation did not get an Indies, to which *Fortuna* replies that it has an even better source of easy riches—Spain. That is, just as Columbus traded valueless glass beads for New World gold, so the French now swindle Spaniards with unproductive luxury items in exchange for their gold and silver (243). Vilches also offers perceptive remarks on Juan Ruiz de Alarcón’s *La verdad sospechosa* (The Suspect Truth), which Corneille adapted for his *Le Menteur*. She contemplates the famous monologue in which the young protagonist, just arriving at court from the University of Salamanca, woos a glamorous young woman by saying he is a wealthy *Indiano* (colonist returning from the New World). In Vilches’s reading, the sumptuous but fictitious summer feast he describes to make this lady jealous culminates a long line of New World texts, starting with Columbus’s first reports to Ferdinand and Isabella. Spain’s exploitation of overseas mines may not have produced a rich metropolis in the long run, but Vilches makes the convincing argument that its great profusion of literary

experiments had a powerful vein of inspiration in its American dream.

This thesis, backed by the examination of diverse texts, will make this study of interest to a wide range of students and scholars of early modern Europe and the colonial Americas. Non-Hispanists may, however, find that the breadth and range of sources Vilches discusses require further orientation. An appendix to define technical terms of finance and identify the many lesser-known writers mentioned would be a helpful addition to a paperback reprint. For now, readers might pair *New World Gold* with studies by John H. Elliott for orientation on the historical context, or with the essays on “Golden Age” literature by the contributors to the *Cambridge History of Spanish Literature* (ed. David T. Gies). Despite this difficulty, readers from early-modern English studies and other fields outside of Hispanism need not be daunted. With the thematic organization, individual chapters work well as stand-alone studies, whether to provide comparative analysis for individual research or in graduate seminars. Even advanced undergraduates could benefit from the book, particularly in light of how much financial anxiety has informed their own college years. For instance, the “Conclusion” along with the last two chapters would provide a fresh and illuminating perspective on Baroque literature of Spain. The first two chapters could enrich a study of Columbus’s travel log or Cortés’s “Letters from Mexico.” Whether read in parts or as a whole, Vilches’s book offers the reader a layered and insightful examination of early modern Spain’s “Golden Age,” attune to all the contradictions that follow from this term.

Alban K. Forcione. *Majesty and Humanity: Kings and Their Doubles in the Political Drama of the Spanish Golden Age*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009. x + 286 pp. Review by LAURA BASS, TULANE UNIVERSITY

Most well known for his groundbreaking books on the novelistic universe of Miguel de Cervantes, Alban Forcione brings to us in *Majesty and Humanity* a no less original study of the theater of Golden Age Spain in relation to absolutist monarchy, that most theatrical of institutions of the Baroque. In doing so, he newly enriches the body of scholarship that has emerged in the past two decades to challenge