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Introduction

Quae flagitia, ne amplius perpetrentur, cunctis rationibus iusto ac religioso principi providendum est, ut saepe dico, ne aliena scelera ipsi propter negligentiam in hoc saeculo infamiam, in altero pariant damnationem aeternam.

As I often say, a just and religious prince must by all means see to it that no greater outrages are perpetrated so that through negligence the crimes of other people do not bring him infamy in this life and eternal damnation in the next.¹

—JUAN GINÉS DE SEPÚLVEDA, *Democrates secundus*



The Spanish historian Francisco López de Gómara (1511–ca. 1559) enjoys a prominent place as one of the most despised apologists of Spanish imperialism in the sixteenth century. His *Historia general de las Indias y Conquista de México* (General history of the Indies and Conquest of Mexico), first published at Zaragoza in 1552, told the story of the principal discoveries and conquests that Spaniards had carried out until that date.² Based on a wealth of written sources and testimonies of conquistadors, it soon became the most comprehensive and frequently cited treatment of the history and geography of the American territories colonized by Spain. The most notable feature of the *Historia general* today is arguably Gómara's attempt to provide a philosophically grounded solution to the ethical and intellectual dilemmas besetting Spanish colonialism in the New World. He put forth an emphatic defense of the conquest that presented Fernando³ Cortés (1485–1547) as an exemplary model of military prowess, political leadership, and religious devotion. Gómara sought to persuade

European readers that the conquest was beneficial to the Indians and he proposed a political ideal of common good for both colonizers and colonized. He believed that the conquest was one of the greatest accomplishments in world history and commended its role in enabling the spread of the Christian gospel.

Taking up such a project was not as simple or straightforward as it might seem from a perspective familiar with the ideologies of post-Enlightenment colonialism. The writing of history within the humanist tradition provided well-established precedents for the political use of history, but the moral issues raised by the conquest of the New World made it difficult to provide a satisfactory account for the sensibilities of many of Gómara's contemporary readers. There was a well-known record of abuses that violated both the legal and moral standards of even those who considered colonization a legitimate enterprise. The issue for Gómara as a historian was not so much a forensic one regarding what the Spaniards had exactly done, or who was to blame for it, but rather a deliberative one about establishing the desirability of these pursuits. This involved assessing the good that could be attained by means such as conquest, settlement, and the subjugation of indigenous peoples. The question for Gómara, then, was how to present this history in a way that would allow him to tell his readers that, in spite of its devastation, the conquest of the New World was a worthwhile endeavor. In his attempt to produce an ethically persuasive argument in favor of Spanish imperialism, however, he failed. The purpose of my book is to examine the main issues that this failure raises in terms of the analysis of Spanish colonial writing. But before turning to the basic argument and organization of my text, I would like to discuss some rhetorical challenges confronting Gómara and his contemporaries.

Gómara was very well positioned socially and institutionally within Spain to take on such a propagandistic endeavor. As Cortés's chaplain, he was well acquainted with renowned humanist intellectuals, high-ranking royal officials, and members of the Spanish court. While he was in Cortés's service between 1540 and 1546, he had the opportunity to interview many conquistadors, peruse the maps and records of the House of Trade (*Casa de Contratación*), and access some of the accounts kept at the Council of the Indies.⁴ In addition to his privileged connections, he brought his solid humanist learning and eloquence to the task of writing an account of Spanish imperial expansion in the New World.⁵ The broad intellectual scope and concise elegant style of his

Historia general have made it a hallmark within the culture of Spanish imperialism.⁶

Paradoxically, as the *Historia general* became known throughout the Spanish possessions and Europe, it acquired notoriety for its unyielding portrayal of imperialism. Contemporary historians such as Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo y Valdés (1478–1557) and Bartolomé de las Casas (ca. 1484–1566) heavily criticized it because Gómara elevated Cortés to the stature of a great leader and hero. Others who drew extensively upon his work in their own narratives often denounced Gómara. Bernal Díaz del Castillo (ca. 1495–1584) and Inca Garcilaso de la Vega (1539–1616) left compelling testimonies of the conquistadors' discontent about Gómara's disregard for the honor and merits of some individuals who served in Mexico and Peru. Pedro de la Gasca wrote to Charles V's counselor Willem van Male that although Gómara was a truthful man, he was misinformed about some events that had transpired during his tenure in office as viceroy of Peru.⁷ When the grandson of Pedrarias Dávila (the infamous conquistador of Tierra Firme, Panama, and Nicaragua) brought suit against the royal chronicler Antonio de Herrera y Tordesillas (1559–1625) for soiling his grandfather's honor, he accused Herrera of following Gómara's narrative.⁸ Even the Council of the Indies, which was in charge of colonial administration, banned the *Historia general* in Castile a year after its publication.⁹

The more people read, quoted, and paraphrased his work, the more Gómara fell into disrepute. In his famous essays "Des Cannibales" (On cannibals) and "Des Coches" (On coaches), the French moral philosopher Michel de Montaigne (1533–1592) questioned the popularized representations of Indian barbarism and criticized the conquest of the New World. There is evidence to suggest that his understanding of the Spanish conquests was based on the *Historia general*—Montaigne merely had a different take on the events.¹⁰ Girolamo Benzoni (1519–ca. 1570) borrowed copiously from Gómara's account to condemn Spanish activities in the Americas in his *Historia del Mondo Nuovo* (History of the New World). The French translator of the 1588 Paris edition of the *Voyages et conquestes du capitaine Ferdinand Courtois* (Voyages and conquests of Captain Fernando Cortés), a translation of the *Conquista de México*, the second part of Gómara's *Historia general*, attempted to defend the author from the criticism he received for basing his account on oral sources, praising Spaniards, and attacking Indians. His basic reply to each of these points was that Gómara could not be blamed for doing what

every other historian did. His discussion regarding Gómara's defamation of the Indians is most revealing:

Plus, il charge, dit-on, bien souue[n]t sur ces pauures Indie[n]s, en faisant accroire des choses d'eux, où ils ne penserent iamais, & ceux qui dient que Gomare afferme les Indiens estre descenduz de Cam, à l'occasion, comme ie pense, d'un passage de son Histoire generale, ne font ils rie[n] accroire de luy? (1588, [5]r-v).

Moreover, he often attacks, it is said, these poor Indians, making up things about them that they would not dream of, and those who say that Gómara states that the Indians have descended from Ham, based, I believe, on a passage from his *Historia general*, are they not making something up about him?

The translator went on to transcribe and correct the translation of a passage in the *Historia general* where Gómara had stated that God may have permitted the hardship and servitude of the Indians in order to punish them for their sins. This reading clarified that Gómara had not said that *they* were descended from Ham, but rather that *Ham* had committed a lesser sin against Noah and *his* descendants had been condemned to slavery. This little vignette of French critics misrepresenting Gómara misrepresenting Indians clearly reveals how strongly negative the reaction was against him. As the translator's comments indicate, the historian's apologia for the conquest and his defamation of the Indians could not surmount the prevailing climate of hostility and mistrust in Europe toward Spanish imperialism.

Although it was one of the most widely read and translated histories of the New World in the sixteenth century, the previous examples reveal that the *Historia general* failed to convince many of its readers about the benefits of Spanish colonialism. The ethical and political problems created by Spain's imperial enterprise helped shape colonial writing in ways that merit further exploration. The impact of colonization on indigenous communities resulted in violent social changes, caused uncertainty about colonial administration in Spain, and gave rise to international condemnation. Recent critics of Spanish American colonial discourse, such as Peter Hulme (1986, 1994), José Rabasa (1993, 2000), Stephen Greenblatt (1991), and Walter Mignolo (1995), have shown how Spanish chroniclers supported European expansion by producing territorial representations that enabled the subjugation of na-

tive peoples. These analyses underscore the means whereby representations—like capital—could be reproduced and accumulated in order to create structures of social power (see Certeau 1986). But how effective were these mechanisms? What conditions did they require to be socially productive and are there plausible readings that reveal the limits of their efficacy?

Homi Bhabha (1994) convincingly argues that the contradictions and general ambivalence of colonial discourse ought to be considered its key enabling feature, as it allows for an efficient way of articulating the anxieties and desires underlying the colonizing project. Although the case of Gómara's *Historia general* in many ways confirms Bhabha's assertions, it also calls attention to the critical debate on the political liabilities of imperialism and the colonizing process that early modern Spanish colonial writing carried out within the nation-state. In other words, what discursive conditions made it possible for sixteenth-century readers to react critically to apologetic representations of the Spanish conquest such as Gómara's?

Unable simply to rely on hegemonic discourses, Spanish chroniclers attempted to figure a way out of the ethical impasses posed by the violence and destruction that went hand in hand with colonial expansion. Many of them lent their support to the imperial enterprise by deploying complex rhetorical devices that reinforced transatlantic power structures. They certainly conveyed expansionist desires in the ways they expressed wonder about the newness of the Indies, concealed the violence underlying the project, and reiterated key tropes embodying their colonizing moves. This raises the question of how these texts engaged their reading public and operated socially in the context of the cultural debate on colonization. Assessments of Spanish imperialism in the New World—whether written by Gómara, Las Casas, Benzoni, or others—reveal that the ideological premises of the discourse alone cannot account for their dispositions toward the enterprise.

Gómara provides a good example of the arguments promoting the colonial enterprise at the end of the first part of his *Historia general*:

Nu[n]ca jamas rey ny gente anduuo, y sujeto, tanto en tan breue tiempo, como la nuestra. Ny [h]a hecho ny merecido, lo que ella, assi en armas, y nauegacion, como en la predicacion del santo Euangelio, y conuersacion de idolatras. Por lo qual son Españoles dignissimos de alabança en todas las partes del mu[n]do" (1552, 1:121v).

Never did a king and people go out and subject so much in such a short time as ours, and done and merited what ours have in arms and navigation as well as in preaching the holy gospel and the conversion of idolaters, for which Spaniards are the most worthy of praise in all parts of the world.

His claims about the greatness of Spanish achievements in the New World stress their unprecedented quality as a unique development in universal history. Temporal brevity and territorial expanse combine to convey a sense of wonder that makes Spain's imperial experience worthy of Gómara's praise. Later in the passage he acknowledges that laboring in the mines, fishing for pearls, and bearing heavy loads had killed many Indians, but he dismissed these evils by arguing that God had punished those responsible. Instead of inducing a thoughtless reader to admire the conquest, he was proposing a way of arriving at an ethical decision about its overall result.

Gómara's exaltation of the conquest had to contend with the moral resistance already awakened in public discourse. Although his assessment that the conquest had been something out of the ordinary would essentially remain undisputed, there were many who expressed their dismay at the acts that Spaniards committed in the New World. In the same year that Gómara first published his *Historia general*, Las Casas's *Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las Indias* (Brief account of the destruction of the Indies) was printed in Seville. The introductory section titled "Argumento del presente epitome" (Argument of the present summary) included a poignant overview of the crimes being perpetrated in the Indies:

Todas las cosas que han acaecido en Las Indias, desde su maravilloso descubrimiento, y del principio que a ellas fueron los españoles . . . han sido tan admirables y tan no creíbles en todo género a quien no las vido, que parece haber añublado y puesto silencio y bastantes a poner olvido a todas cuantas, por hazañosas que fuesen, en los siglos pasados se vieron y oyeron en el mundo.

Entre éstas son las matanzas y estragos de gentes inocentes y despoblaciones de pueblos, provincias y reinos, que en ellas se han perpetrado, y que todas las otras no de menor espanto (1988–1998, 10:31).

All the things that have happened in the Indies, since their marvelous discovery and from the beginning when the Spaniards went there . . . have been so admirable and so incredible in every

way to one who has not seen them, that it seems to have obscured, silenced, and sufficiently made us forget all the many things, heroic as they were, seen and heard in past centuries.

Among these are the massacre and ruin of innocent peoples and the depopulation of provinces and kingdoms that have occurred there and are no less appalling than all the others.

This inversion of the discourse of wonder violently jolts readers out of their complacency to inform them of the slaughter and depopulation of Indians caused by the Spaniards. For Las Casas, the gravity of these evils vividly overshadowed any other deed in the context of human history and his inflammatory remarks were meant to stir the conscience of the king into taking action and stopping these atrocities. As Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda (1490–1573) had warned in his *Democrates secundus*: “As I often say, a just and religious prince must by all means see to it that no greater outrages are perpetrated so that through negligence the crimes of other people do not bring him infamy in this life and eternal damnation in the next” (1997, 133).

Imperialist stances were also challenged outside Spain as readers were able to develop critical perspectives concerning the impact of colonialism and question its essential claims. Although Girolamo Benzoni relied heavily on Gómara’s *Historia general* for his *Historia del Nuovo Mondo*, he was quite capable of arriving at a completely opposite conclusion:

Essendo io andato per questo nuovo mondo per ispatio di anni quattordici, come disopra è detto, & hauendo letto le Historie che gli Spagnuoli hanno scritto delle imprese da loro fatte in questi paesi, trouo che in alcune cose si sono laudati vn poco più di quello che conuiene, & specialmente, che dicono, che sono degni di gran laude, perche hanno conuertiti, & fatti Cristiani, tutti gli popoli, & nationi, da loro conquistati, & soggiogati nell’India . . . come si direbbe per forma, chi dicesse, che’l fornaiò ha cotto bene il pane. . . . Quanto più che nel Regno del Perù, & altri luoghi quantunque vi habbino publicato, che sono Cristiani figliuoli di Dio del cielo; per le dispietate crudelta, che hanno vsato fra di loro, mai non vi e stato ordine, che habbino voluto confessare tal nome (1969, 110r–v).

After having been in this New World for a space of fourteen years, as previously mentioned, and having read the histories that Spaniards have written about the enterprise they conducted in these countries, I think in some things they have praised themselves a little more than what is appropriate, and especially when they say

they are worthy of great praise for having converted and made Christians of all the peoples and nations they have conquered and subjugated in the Indies . . . as if one would say a baker has baked bread well. . . . Inasmuch as in the kingdom of Peru and in other places, although they have said they are Christians, children of the God of heaven, because of the impious cruelty they have inflicted among them, there is no way they would have wanted to confess such a name.

Benzoni observed that the religious goals of colonization were not being accomplished and the Spaniards' behavior was not conducive toward conversion. He was not criticizing the conquest on legal grounds as Las Casas did, nor did he share the Dominican friar's high regard for the Indians. Benzoni spoke of them as barbarians and uncivilized people, but it was his contempt for Spanish imperialism that led him to question Gómara's assumptions about the merits of its methods and results.

Gómara, Las Casas, and Benzoni each had his own different agenda, but none of them could avoid taking a stand on the injustices of colonialism. As there was no public consensus on the Spanish conquest, they could not expect their readers simply to submit to their rhetoric without pondering the weight of their arguments. In order to convince them, they had to engage in an ethical as well as ideological debate about the events they narrated. An ethical stance vis-à-vis the conquest would define what ends were worth pursuing and what means were adequate to achieve them, thus eliciting the kind of public criticism that we observe among Gómara's readers. The ideological affirmation of imperialism either through commonly accepted beliefs or through the discursive practices underwriting European expansion was not enough to legitimate Spanish action. Gómara, Las Casas, and Benzoni were all Roman Catholics (Gómara and Las Casas were even members of the clergy), and none of them questioned Spanish imperialism in principle. They all considered the conversion of the native inhabitants of the Indies to Christianity a worthy endeavor, along with their submission to the authority of the crown. It was after examining Spanish actions and their consequences that Las Casas and Benzoni expressed their condemnation.

The debate about colonization did not question fundamental beliefs about religion, nature, government, or society: the Europeans' assumption about the superiority of their religion and civilization remained

unshaken. The issue concerned the proper way of going about colonization. The unprecedented nature of the conquest, which Gómara and Las Casas emphasized, suggests how intellectually unprepared Spain was to deal with the moral challenges of colonialism. The main problem was that the empire developed suddenly, spanned extensive regions, affected millions of people, and initiated profound changes. By the end of the first half of the sixteenth century, the enterprise had already undergone several stages of transformation. The ongoing ideological debate about colonization can be understood within the reconfiguration of social forces taking place in the process of expansion, but it is very difficult to identify clear-cut ideological divides in this period.

In this regard, Montaigne's skeptical reading of Gómara's *Historia general* is particularly enlightening. In "Des Cannibales" he warned his readers against "s'attacher aux opinions vulgaires" [becoming attached to popular opinions] and proposed that they judge things "par la voie de la raison" [according to the way of reason] (1998, 1:339). He argued that knowledge was altered by interpretation, but truth rested in the normal course of nature without art or human invention. Things such as letters, numbers, political power, servitude, wealth and poverty, and contracts had artificially led humankind astray from the natural order. On the other hand, he regarded cannibals as beings who had not been shaped by the human spirit and still lived in a state of nature. He thus concluded that European representations of Indian barbarism embodied prejudices toward cultural difference rather than an appreciation for the virtues of the soul. He was troubled by the course his world was taking so he used the case of cannibals to illustrate that his society's way of life was unnatural and corrupt.

Stephen Greenblatt (1991, 146–151) has argued that Montaigne was a "knight of non-possession" and that his "discourse on the New World turns not toward fantasies of ownership and rule but toward shame." Montaigne's ideological analysis of cannibals, however, did not assert Indian freedom or equality; it merely criticized European society for faults such as "la trahison, la déloyauté, la tyrannie, la cruauté" [treachery, disloyalty, tyranny, and cruelty] (1998, 1:351). He worried that the Indians' transactions with Europeans would bring about their ruin because they were learning negative values from their example (1998, 1:357, 3:197). Moreover, Montaigne took an overtly imperialist stance in "Des Coches," where he discussed the conquests of Mexico and Peru.

Regarding the Indians, he said their world was “si nouveau et si enfant qu’on lui apprend encore son *a, b, c*: il n’y a pas cinquante ans qu’il ne savait ni lettres, ni poids, ni mesure, ni vêtements, ni blés, ni vignes” [so new and so infantile that it is still learning its ABCs: no more than fifty years ago it did not know letters, weights, measures, clothing, wheat, or vines] (1998, 3:197). Montaigne’s paternalistic appreciation of native peoples was based on the very same observations that Gómara had made about the things they lacked as societies, and reiterated a similar understanding of the improvements that colonization could bring to their lives.¹¹ As Tom Conley (1989, 251) has observed, in “Des Coches” Montaigne’s discourse “continues to argue obliquely against colonial development and insists that European nations would do well to curtail deficit spending, arrest plunder of the New World, and regain a balanced economy that distributes wealth more evenly among its subjects.” Montaigne presents us with an ethics of international exchange and redistribution of wealth, but this is not tantamount to a rejection of imperialist policies. His criticism of European society is actually addressing the changes needed in order to expand into other worlds.

Montaigne’s criticism in “Des Coches” of the conquests of Mexico and Peru actually concerned the way in which they had been attained. Commenting on the advantages of the Spaniards over the Indians, he stated that “quant à la dévotion, observance des lois, bonté, libéralité, loyauté, franchise, il nous a bien servi de n’en avoir pas tant qu’eux” [as for devotion, observance of laws, kindness, liberality, loyalty, and frankness, it has served us well not to have as much of these qualities as they do] (1998, 3:198). He regretted that Spaniards had achieved their victories based on factors such as trickery and deceit, their unexpected arrival, and military technology, and asserted that if these disparities were removed, then there would have been no basis for all their victories. He did not question conquest or empire per se, instead he wished that the enterprise had fallen into hands that would have carried it out with higher virtue:

Que n’est tombée sous Alexandre, ou sous ces anciens Grecs et Romains, une si noble conquête, et une si grande mutation et altération de tant d’empires et de peuples, sous des mains qui eussent doucement poli et défriché ce qu’il y avait de sauvage, et eussent conforté et promu les bonnes semences que nature y avait produit: mêlant non seulement à la culture des terres et ornement des villes les arts de deçà, en tant qu’elles y eussent été

nécessaires, mais aussi mêlant les vertus Grecques et Romaines aux originelles du pays (1998, 3:199–200).

Why did such a noble conquest not fall upon Alexander, or upon these ancient Greeks and Romans, and such a great mutation and alteration of so many empires and peoples upon hands that would have gently polished and cleared away what was savage, and reinforced and promoted the good seeds that nature had produced there: not only combining the arts here with the culture of the lands and the adornment of towns, as had been necessary there, but also combining Greek and Roman virtues with the original ones of the country?

Montaigne understood that conquest was an endeavor worth pursuing when it led to the betterment of the subject people. His emphasis on virtue sets forth an ethical standard for the development of imperialism, instead of questioning the need for its existence. He argued that the conquest had gone wrong because it gave priority to economic value over the well-being of native communities:

Au rebours, nous nous sommes servis de leur ignorance et inexpérience à les plier plus facilement vers la trahison, luxure, avarice, et vers toute sorte d'inhumanité et de cruauté, à l'exemple et patron de nos mœurs. Qui mit jamais à tel prix le service de la mercadence et de la trafique? Tant de villes rasées, tant de nations exterminées, tant de millions de peuples passés au fil de l'épée, et la plus riche et belle partie du monde bouleversée, pour la négociation des perles et du poivre: mécaniques victoires (1998, 3:200).

On the contrary, we take advantage of their ignorance and inexperience to incline them more easily toward treachery, lust, avarice, and every sort of inhumanity and cruelty, after the example and pattern of our ways. Who ever put such a price on the service of commerce and trade? So many towns razed, so many nations exterminated, so many millions of people put to the blade of the sword, and the richest and most beautiful part of the world turned upside down, for the transaction of pearls and pepper: mechanical victories.

Montaigne's reading of Gómara offers us a lesson on the ethics of imperialism. There is a limit to the actions that a civilizing mission can justify, which is determined by the values that a society claims to uphold. The primacy of economic value cannot sustain the effort because

it defies the very principle upon which the subordination of one community to another is undertaken, that is, to attain a higher end. According to Montaigne, the New World should have been subjugated through virtuous qualities so that the ends and means would be consistent:

Nous tenons d'eux-mêmes ces narrations, car ils ne les avouent pas seulement, ils s'en vantent, et les prêchent. Serait-ce pour témoignage de leur justice, ou zèle envers la religion? Certes ce sont voies trop diverses, et ennemies d'une si sainte fin. S'ils se fussent proposé d'étendre notre foi, ils eussent considéré que ce n'est pas en possession de terres qu'elle s'amplifie, mais en possession d'hommes, et se fussent trop contentés des meurtres que la nécessité de la guerre apporte, sans y mêler indifféremment une boucherie. . . . Si que plusieurs de chefs ont été punis à mort, sur les lieux de leur conquête, par ordonnance des Rois de Castille, justement offensés de l'horreur de leurs déportements, et quasi tous désestimés et mal-voulus (1998, 3:204).

We have these accounts from their own selves, for they not only acknowledge them, they brag and preach about them. Is this a testament of their justice or zeal toward religion? Surely these ways are too different and contrary to such a holy end. If they intended to extend our faith, they would have considered that it is not enlarged from the possession of land, but from the possession of men, and they would have been overly content with the deaths brought on by the necessities of war, without indifferently adding carnage. . . . Thus many leaders have been punished with death, in the places of their conquest, by order of the monarchs of Castile, justly offended by the horror of their behavior, and almost all of them were disesteemed and disliked.

Montaigne rejected the conquest, for he did not find its methods defensible. Quite another thing was his view of the monarchs of Castile whom he portrayed as righteously concerned about justice. He understood that the excesses of the Spaniards were detrimental to the goal of evangelization and therefore he chose to condemn them. For Montaigne, interpreting the conquest was chiefly an ethical task, but his criticism did not compromise his sympathy toward the imperialist project of transforming the New World by means of European trade, civility, arts, and culture. He gave primacy to the end of "improving" the lives of indigenous peoples, for in its attainment he based the very principle of empire.

Montaigne's idealization of imperialism devised the rhetoric that would fashion more powerful and efficient discourses of colonization. When Gómara examined the ethics of the conquest, he gave thorough consideration to the injustices committed by the Spaniards.¹² His decision to support the conquest in spite of its drawbacks was a more direct way of confronting the problems posed by colonialism. His main difference with the French philosopher was that neither purity of soul nor consistency between ends and means concerned him. Montaigne's notion of imperialism was probably closer to the one formulated by Las Casas, whose projects of peaceful colonization relied on virtuous men developing bonds of friendship in order to attract the native inhabitants to the service of the monarchs. Gómara had rejected Las Casas's propositions as a naïve formulation that, although desirable, was unattainable. The ethical debate on means focused on the questions of how conquest should be carried out as a method of colonization (as in Montaigne's reading of Gómara) and whether the conquest was acceptable for making the Indians subjects of the Spanish crown (as in Las Casas's criticism in his *Brevísima relación*). The relative weight of the empire's political, economic, and religious goals was also at stake in these varied reactions to the accounts of colonization, but all three continued to be regarded as desirable forms of hegemony. The ideological divide between Gómara's pragmatism and Montaigne's emphasis on purity of soul reveals that the criticism of Spanish expansion led to the development of new principles of dominance that would come to life in the second wave of European imperialism.

This book seeks to explore why Gómara's *Historia general* failed to reconcile the contradictions of Spanish imperialism. Evaluating the efficacy of ideologies of colonization, it examines the main impediments he encountered in producing an ethically persuasive argument. I have organized four chapters thematically to focus on how he confronted the main problems he faced, namely, (1) his use of the historical genre for the creation of a hegemonic discourse; (2) his reinterpretation of Christian tradition to explain New World geography, ethnicity, and dominion; (3) his treatment of processes of discovery and conquest to construct a coherent narrative of colonization and articulate a colonizing mission; and (4) his deployment of political theory to present the injustices of the conquest as a necessary evil and to envision the creation of a colonial political community founded on the patriarchal authority of the conquistador.

On the uses of history, the first chapter analyzes how the changes in colonial policy during the 1540s imposed serious limitations on Spanish historians to promote apologetic views of the conquest. It examines how Gómara endeavored to use his *Historia general* to further the interests of his patron Cortés as well as the cause of the conquistadors in general. Gómara regarded histories of the Indies as a genre that would allow him to provide a comprehensive account of Spanish colonization for national and international audiences. The censorship of Oviedo and Sepúlveda for their negative statements concerning the capacity of the Indians made Gómara aware of the obstacles he faced within the intellectual and political climate of the time. Institutionalization in preceding decades had conferred an aura of authority on the genre, but at the same time it had created the condition of its own impediment as concern for the treatment of the Indians and the disputes about the legitimacy of the Spanish conquest intensified. With its moral and political obligations as a colonial power in question, Spain moved to strengthen the legal grounds of its claims to empire and limited the conquistadors' authority over the native population.

Hoping that his *Historia* would attain official recognition, Gómara sought to circumvent the prevailing contradictions in the field and create a form of hegemonic discourse. He proposed a formula of compromise that could give representation to the conflicting interests involved in imperial expansion. Gómara relied on Cortés's personal relations at the court as a powerful network to gain intellectual authority and effectively influence public opinion on colonial policy. He saw in Cortés a figure capable of conveying a notion of common good in colonial relations, but his efforts to put forth an imperialist agenda failed to persuade his readers. Gómara's history was censored, and although there is no documentation available to clarify the grounds of the prohibition, we know that the censorship practices of the time mainly addressed textual disagreements with legal and theological principles or served an arbitral role between conflicting parties. Gómara's account soiled the honor of some conquerors, and thus conflicted with the interests of many individuals who aspired to public recognition of their identities. Moreover, his formulation presenting Cortés as the embodiment of virtue and achievement failed to articulate an imperial mission because it could not reconcile the interests of the conquistadors as a collectivity with the crown's concern for legitimacy. The negative reception and prohibition of the *Historia general* suggest that his argument came at the end of an

era, when it was no longer possible to reach a social consensus on conquest and colonization.

The story of Gómara's failure makes it necessary to more closely examine the ideological foundations grounding his historiographical project. Many scholars have called attention to the critical importance of territorial representations and "proto-ethnographic" discourse to account for the efficacy of Spanish colonial discourse. Chapter 2 examines Gómara's use of Christian conceptions of universal history, world geography, and cultural diversity as a justification for colonization. Departing from Nicene interpretations of the Roman Empire as divinely ordained to facilitate the spread of Christianity, he could articulate the meaning of the discovery of the Indies within the providentialist view of history centered on the redemption of humankind. Gómara was able to assert Spain's sovereignty in the New World by reinterpreting Christian theories about the unity of the earth, the common descent of mankind from Adam and Eve, and Noah's resettlement of the world after the Flood. He draws a parallel between Noah's alleged exploration of the Mediterranean—naming and partitioning among his sons the three continents known to the ancients—and Spanish explorations unveiling the existence of the Indies. Spanish legal discourse on dominion in the works of Juan López de Palacios Rubios and Francisco de Vitoria was based on Noah's donation of territory and the consent of his descendants in the occupation of the continents. Relying on the notion of Noah's universal dominion, Gómara was able to narrate the pope's partition of the world between the Spaniards and the Portuguese as a legitimate act of donation. Recurrently weaving these notions into his narrative of exploration and conquest, he used sacred history to formulate a historical and geographical discourse in support of Spanish territorial claims.

Putting forth an interpretation of the nature of the Indians and their place in world history was also essential for justifying imperial expansion. Gómara explained human diversity by the existence of branches of human descent, which, having a common lineage, also shared basic traits in morals, civility, and religion. Assuming a monogenetic stance on the origin of the Indians allowed Gómara to articulate a narrative of imperial policy toward them. Based on a stern condemnation of their ways of life, Gómara's geocentric, providentialist discourse provided an explanation for the subordination of native communities to the Spaniards within the divine plan of human redemption. Beginning his work with a reflection on man's desire to learn the secrets of the world

because of its diversity, Gómara links the foundations of Spanish expansion in Christian tradition to a passage in the second book of Esdras that relates knowledge and the exercise of dominion over the world. Their common thread was that the diversification of human lineages brought about impiety among men, but Ezra stated that Israel would inherit the world as the chosen people. In this light, Gómara's analysis of indigenous capacity in terms of civility and moral disposition presents them as a lineage gone astray from the path of salvation. His Eurocentric understanding of cartography and human history tied the debate to the theological foundations of Spanish dominion in the New World, the very same grounds on which Spanish legal theorists had contested the conquest and colonial institutions such as the *encomienda*. Using this Christian framework, Gómara sought to resolve the contradictions haunting the imperial project on the issues of dominion and the nature of the Indians.

Gómara also sought to provide a way of articulating the goals of Spanish expansion within a well-defined imperial mission, but to do so he needed to construct an account that reconciled the incompatibilities among the various objectives organizing Spain's activities in the New World. Focusing on the empire and its narratives, Chapter 3 studies Gómara's attempt to overcome the lack of social consensus and conflicting interests of the diverse sectors involved in colonization. A critical issue was to deal with the historiographical record about the discovery of the Indies, which made it difficult to give a sense of coherence to Spain's imperial history. He adjusted his own narrative to articulate a story of the empire's beginnings that would account for the colonization project. Gómara tried to show how the discovery had allowed the Catholic Monarchs to set forth a principle of colonial difference defining Spain's mission in the Indies. He interpreted colonization as a mechanism for material and cultural exchange, reiterating this logic throughout his account of exploration and conquest in other regions. He employed this narrative of exchange to show how the various goals of the colonial enterprise could transform the New World and consistently lead to the common good of Spaniards and Indians.

Exchange served as a powerful instrument to encompass and conceptualize the processes of discovery, conquest, evangelization, and economic exploitation of the Indies. Gómara's reliance on colonial difference to account for the dynamic of intercultural relations between Spaniards and Indians, however, would ultimately expose the moral

and political shortcomings of colonization. Gómara's account suggests that the subordination of Indians in imperial encounters resulted from a clash between their knowledge systems and those of their invaders. He relied on the protocols of warfare established in the royal instructions to explain how conquistadors interacted with Indians in these situations, but the legal changes that the crown implemented in the procedures of war carried negative implications for previous conquests. The main problem was that Spaniards had used a document called the Requirement as a legal instrument legitimating the use of force. Gómara, in turn, reframed the protocol as the preaching of a sermon, thus he avoided explaining how the major conquests could have been conducted shortly before on the basis of an already obsolete legal procedure. Using the topos of the *savage critic*, he availed himself of indigenous voices to criticize the Spaniards, but only to place the blame for colonial violence on their resistance or misguided collaboration. The Indians fail to develop adequate responses to the Spaniards in Gómara's account, mainly because they lack the moral resources to generate effective modes of resistance against their conquerors. Gómara implied that the disparity between Indians and Spaniards was ultimately to blame for the evils of the conquest. At the same time, however, this difference helped him explain the kind of benefits colonization could bring for both Spain and the Indies.

The fourth and final chapter discusses the ethical foundations of imperialism. Conquest raised the issues of justice and morality within the state because the plunder that soldiers carried out in other nations was objectionable in principle to Christians. The early church fathers such as Augustine and Lactantius made this clear when criticizing the Skeptics' argument that justice and wisdom were not compatible. This is the underlying philosophical issue that Spanish colonial discourse confronted when determining whether the Spanish monarchs could justly colonize the Indies. In fact, the basic legal principle guiding war and governance in the Indies was based on the premise that the monarch and his subjects engaged in colonization must endeavor to extend the faith in those regions and not dominate them or enrich themselves. The historiographical record on colonization, however, revealed that the Spaniards had in fact been motivated by greed and committed grave injustices against the native populations of the Indies. Gómara took on the task of showing that the conquistador's pursuit of self-interest was compatible with a notion of common good in colonial relations, arguing

that peaceful approaches to evangelization were doomed to fail. He presents the insatiable desire for riches and the lust of the conquistador as the main condition determining how the colonization process unfolded in the New World. He highlights the conquest of Mexico, however, as an exception and a model of how the conquistador could channel his greed and masculinity in accordance with Christian principles of empire. Articulating the Spanish conception of honor, he puts forth a patriarchal notion of colonial order where the economic, military, and sexual activities of the conquistador served to maintain the stability of the social system.

Gómara addresses the negative aspects of colonization in order to propose the necessary changes for a just society in the New World. Focusing mainly on the rebellions of Peru, he critically examines the consequences in the Indies of the reforms promoted by Las Casas. Gómara's willingness to accept the evils of colonialism results from his optimism about the social reforms carried out by the crown in the mid-sixteenth century. Applying the concepts of *conditional action* and *self-sufficiency* from Aristotle's *Politics*, Gómara was able to construct the idea of a colonial political community where Spanish imperialism brought improvements to Indian life by reorganizing the structures of tribute and labor in their communities. He understood that this could be achieved through a shift from acquisition to exchange, where the surplus value of the colonial economy would provide for Spanish households. In turn, through property and enterprise, the new structures of taxation would help liberate the Indians from pre-conquest forms of subjection. Gómara's solution for the ethical contradictions of the colonial enterprise, however, could not overcome international criticism and an emerging anti-Spanish discourse, now known as the "Black Legend." Despite his attempts to rally his readers in support of Spain's imperial expansion, his efforts clashed with the political agendas and ethical standards of the day.

Gómara's lack of success is a revealing example of the conditions undermining discourses of domination. The debates about the justice of the conquest were far from redeeming Spanish colonialism, rather they deterred people from accepting the acts carried out by the conquistadors. Outrage over the crimes committed by the Spaniards against the Indians appear in the public record as early as 1524 or 1525, when Peter Martyr (Pietro Martire d'Anghiera, 1456–1526) condemned the enslavement of the Lucayos (the native inhabitants of the Bahamas) in

his *Decades*. Most of the writers who have become part of the canon of colonial writing did not consider it contradictory to simultaneously expose these crimes *and* support Spanish imperialism. This discursive economy created the impediments that would plague subsequent histories of the Indies. As concern for the well-being of the Indians mounted, figures such as Las Casas were able to effectively argue against the legality of the entire process of colonization. Gómara's praise of the conquest was an ill-timed effort to set forth an ideology capable of mobilizing support for transatlantic power structures. The crucial role of international criticism in challenging the claims and assumptions of these accounts illuminates how colonial discourse encountered its own limitations to establish more influential and efficacious ideological foundations.

NOTES

1. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations of quoted passages were done by Scott Sessions.

2. Gómara organized his *Historia general de las Indias y Conquista de México* into two parts. The first part contains an explanation of world geography, the location of the Indies, a narration of Columbus's discoveries, and the colonization of Hispaniola, followed by an account of the most important explorations and conquests organized region by region. It concludes with miscellaneous notes on topics such as Indian slavery, the Council of the Indies, the colonization of the Canaries, the route to the Indies, and a "Praise of Spaniards." In the second part, the conquest of Mexico is framed within Fernando Cortés's biography, beginning with his birth and ending with his death. Gómara traced his path through Santo Domingo, Cuba, and Mexico, as well as his expedition to Honduras and his trips back and forth to Spain. He also included detailed descriptions of Aztec life, which are still considered valuable sources for the study of Mesoamerican cultures.

3. Also known as Hernando or Hernán, I have chosen to use Fernando because this is the name most frequently employed in his letters (Cortés 1993, 159, 309, 310, 451, 454) and by nearly all of his contemporaries.

4. For more information on Gómara's biography and connections, see Lewis (1983, 21–67) and Ramos (1972, 111–145).

5. Regarding Gómara's achievements in the *Historia general*, see Lewis (1983, 312).

6. Gómara's style has been commended by scholars such as Raúl Porras Barrenechea (1941), Ramón Iglesia (1942), José Durand (1952), Rolf Eberenz Greoles (1979), and Robert Lewis (1983, 1986).

7. A commentary on this letter can be found in Lewis (1983, 294–295).

8. On this lawsuit, see Roa-de-la-Carrera (2001) and Chapter 1 that follows.

9. The causes for the prohibition are unknown; for a more detailed analysis, see Chapter 1.

10. In "Des Coches," Montaigne's discussion of the Spaniards' reading of the Requirement combined Gómara's accounts of incidents taking place, respectively, with the lord of Cenú (Colombia) and with the lord of Tabasco (Mexico). He also followed Gómara's version of the conquests of Mexico and Peru, and his condemnation of Spanish boasting is likely a reaction to the "Praise of Spaniards" chapter in the *Historia general*. His description of Indian ways of life in "Des Cannibales" also closely matches those provided by Gómara. For a discussion about the relation between Montaigne and Gómara, see Bataillon (1959) and Conley (1989). On "Des Coches," see Conley (1992, 135–162).

11. Tom Conley (1989, 252) states that "Montaigne fashions his experience of the Indian other through the productive alterity of his textual means. These essays refuse to arrogate the figure or the rights of the other into its own discourse." Similarly, María Antonia Garcés (1992, 156–157) argues that although Gómara was Eurocentric and unwilling "to examine the foundations of his knowledge of the world," in Montaigne "America appears as a point of departure for a radical inquiry into difference." In contrast, Aldo Scaglione's analysis of Montaigne's treatment of the myth of the Noble Savage shows that he "remains essentially the humanist who uses the theme of the Indian . . . to confirm the humanists' myth of modern man as a moral and psychological pigmy" (1976, 68). Michael Ryan (1981, 520–521) contends that the humanists were not shaken by the exotic because diversity was intelligible for them within the Christian and Platonist traditions. He also suggests that skeptics like Montaigne confronted diversity as a problem in relation to the overwhelming availability of texts, not to challenge their own Eurocentric biases.

12. Jonathan Loesberg (1983, 255–256) has suggested that Gómara himself had created the conditions for Montaigne to read his text in an inverted way, arguing that Gómara's interest in creating a "formal order" in his account was situated above any concern for the contents involved. I would argue, however, that the possibility of inversion existed because Gómara openly discussed the problematic aspects of the conquest.

C H A P T E R 1

Gómara and the
Politics of Consensus

HISTORY AS INFLUENCE:
THE EMPEROR AND THE CONQUEROR



In 1541 Fernando Cortés joined Emperor Charles V's campaign to capture Algiers on the Mediterranean coast of North Africa. After the siege of the city had scarcely begun, a storm destroyed 140 of the 450 vessels transporting the imperial troops. The forces defending the city had fiercely attacked the besiegers, whose firearms had been rendered inoperable by the rain. In view of the peril, the fleet's commander, Andrea Doria, sent word to the emperor to retire his troops and went to await him at Cape Matifou.¹ Charles, who was commanding the expedition, met with the members of his council of war, who decided withdrawing the imperial troops was their best course of action. Willing to put his military skill to the test, Cortés offered to take Algiers with a group of Spanish and Italian soldiers who had besieged the city, but he was unable to change the emperor's decision to lift the siege and abandon the undertaking.

Gómara, who claimed to have been there on that occasion, later expressed his surprise at the lack of consideration that the offer from a soldier as experienced as Cortés received. In his account of the incident, Gómara evoked the situation that the conquistador already had faced in 1519, when he scuttled his ships and with a few hundred men launched the conquest of Mexico. He added that Cortés's plan had the support of the men engaged in the siege, but he was excluded from the council and could not make his voice heard by the emperor (1552, 2:139r).

This brief episode ended the military career of Cortés and initiated the unsuccessful legal campaign for his "vassals and privileges," which he would only abandon shortly before his death in December 1547. Ten years after the failed siege of Algiers, Gómara completed his account of the episode in the *Historia general*. Although the conquistador failed to attain greater recognition as a military leader in his life, the public voice of the historian could confer higher honors upon him. His exclusion from the war council must have taught Gómara that Cortés's reputation had its limits. His determination to assume a leadership role in Algiers took on a parodistic resonance of his old exploits in Mexico. The lack of consideration that Cortés received from the emperor suggests the little esteem Charles held for the accomplishments of Spaniards in the Indies. Girolamo Benzoni would use the same episode in his *Historia del Mondo Nuovo* to diminish the heroic image of the conquistadors in the Indies. Stating that they had fought "brutti animali, & proprie bestie Occidentali" [brutish creatures and typical western beasts], he quoted the commentary of a Spanish noble on Cortés's proposition: "questa bestia pensa d'hauer à fare co[n] i suoi Indianelli, doue diece huomini à cauallo bastano à rompere venticinque mila" [this beast thinks he is dealing with his little Indians, where ten men on horses are enough to defeat twenty-five thousand] (Benzoni 1969, 50v-51r). The reputation that Cortés had gained in the conquest of Mexico could only give him recognition in accordance with the value the crown gave to conquistador service in the Indies.

Gómara chose to praise the wars carried out by the Spaniards to conquer the native populations of the Indies. Like other Europeans of his time, he held the conviction of the Spanish conquistadors' intellectual and military superiority over the Indians, but at the same time he considered that the services they had lent to the king had great merit. Gómara argued that the colonization of the New World had been as beneficial to the Spaniards as for the Indians; but his history of the

Indies loudly echoed the interests of Cortés's heirs and, at least in theory, those who were reaping the benefits of the conquest and indigenous labor. However narrow the group of people whose views it represented, the significance of the *Historia general* lies in the part it played in framing – rhetorically and conceptually – the cultural debate concerning the history of the Indies. Many aspects of the text are questionable and do not stand up to critical scrutiny in view of the documentary record, but the *Historia general* offers valuable insights into the central historical problems raised by Spanish imperialism in the New World.

Gómara's historiographical discourse reveals his strong desire to give coherent expression to the conflicting interests that took part in governing the Indies. In writing the *Historia general*, he relied on the efficacy of historical discourse to illuminate the character of relationships that had developed between Spain and the New World and to shape its future. In his dedication of the *Historia general*, Gómara explicitly suggested to the emperor the principle that should govern his policy with respect to the Indies: "Justo es pues que vuestra majestad fauorezca la conquista, y los conquistadores, mirando mucho por los conquistados" [It is just for your majesty to favor the conquest and the conquistadors, closely looking after the conquered] (1552, 1:[ii]v). Favoring the conquistadors meant protecting the privileges that they had attained in the wars of conquest, especially their authority over the native population, whereas looking after the conquered meant no more than protecting Indians from suffering further injuries than those already inflicted. Such a suggestion was not inappropriate at the time inasmuch as history, which was viewed in this tradition as a *magistra vitae* or "teacher of life," offered a mirror in which a prince could observe his own actions and decide on the most adequate courses of action to follow.² In light of the political function of advice or propaganda recognized in the writing of history, Gómara's historiographical activities also constituted a means of service to the emperor. When promoting the interests of individuals such as Cortés in the intellectual realm, however, he transformed his historiographical activities into a vehicle of social action. Inasmuch as the *Historia general* attempted to solicit the emperor's favor for the conquistadors, Gómara's intervention to define the place of the conquerors and the conquered in the colonies takes on less of an advisory role than that of an advocate. His advocacy requires him to design a way of providing political solvency to his historiographical practice within the context of imperial Spain.

The conditions in which the history of the Indies as a genre could exert influence upon colonial politics derive from the modes of inquiry that served to produce representations of the New World. Knowing the colonized territories was a matter of reconnaissance, occupation, military control, economic exploitation, evangelization, and political reorganization. The most obvious example of the intimate relationship between intellectual life and the activities of colonization can be seen in the case of the House of Trade, the institution in charge of supervising commerce and navigation between Spain and her overseas possessions. Clarence Haring (1964, 298–314) has shown that the House of Trade directed the production of knowledge necessary to support the maritime activities that sustained the operations of expansion and communication in the colonial world. Navigation and commerce in the Indies established the problems and objectives that guided the development of Spanish cartography and naval science in the sixteenth century. These intellectual activities, in turn, provided the training, means of evaluation, principles, and tools with which maritime operations were conducted. The development of Indies historiography was nurtured by the world of explorers, conquistadors, missionaries, and royal officials employed in the colonial government (Sánchez Alonso 1941–1950, 1:359). Given that the administration of the colonies had to arbitrate between conflicting goals, the formulation of the Indies as a subject of knowledge came to reflect the contradictions created in the process of colonial expansion. The conquistadors, missionaries, and royal functionaries who actively dedicated themselves to lobbying for laws, privileges, concessions, and royal favors provided the narratives that would then be employed in historical discourse. In like manner, the historical genre acquired a relevance of its own vis-à-vis the social practices of the colonizing process.

The main questions here are how the historiographical discourse of the Indies developed and what kind of social presence did it achieve in the emerging empire. Rather than simply widening the thematic repertoires of history, the new writings made intelligible the emergence of a system of colonization in the New World. Given that the intellectual problem of the Indies was formulated in relation to the experiences and necessities of colonial expansion, it is essential to situate this historiography within this social context. The production of the *Historia general* provides an excellent case to examine the institutional mechanisms that gave rise to the locus of the historian of the Indies in the creation of a New World empire.

HISTORIOGRAPHY AND EMPIRE-BUILDING

When the *Historia general* first came out in 1552, it appears that the history of the Indies already was consolidated as a discursive practice. For Gómara and his contemporaries, writing a history of the Indies meant relying on a certain tradition. As a field of intellectual activity, the genre enjoyed a kind of established social presence and included figures recognized in the world of books as well as in the public sphere. In terms of subject matter, it was an area rich in materials, tasks to be realized, and issues that required explanation. Histories of the Indies served the cultural function of formulating cognitive relationships with the New World through concepts, representations, and accounts. In this regard, they also served an important role in the political and administrative realms. Gómara recognized the development of a discourse concerning the Indies as a response to the needs of the reading public. In his *Anales*, among the events of 1535, he noted: “Publica G[onzal]o Hernandez de Ouiedo la primera parte de la historia gen[era]l y natural de Indias, que fué bien receuida” [Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo publishes the first part of the *Historia general y natural de las Indias* (General and natural history of the Indies), which was well received] (Gómara 1912, 231). When writing his *Historia general*, Gómara will consider the demand for such an account as one of the conditions in which his text would manage to achieve social and cultural efficacy.

We know that Gómara had begun working on the *Historia general* by 1545. In the dedication of his *Crónica de los Barbarrojas* (Chronicle of the Barbarossas), he announced that he was composing the other work “para que venga á noticia de todo el viejo mundo el mundo nuevo, y sepan todos tantas cosas, tan extrañas y admirables como en él hay, las quales no se entienden bien segun su grandeça” [so that the New World would come to the notice of all the Old World, and everyone would know such things, as strange and admirable as exist there, which are not well understood according to their grandeur] (Gómara 1853, 337).³ Gómara hoped that his history would have an impact on European perceptions of the Indies. In the front matter of his work he included a small section addressed “A los trasladores” (To translators), where he noted:

Algunos por ventura querran trasladar esta [h]istoria en otra lengua, para que los de su nacion entiendan las marauillas, y gra[n]deza de las Indias. Y conozcan que las obras ygualan, y aun sobrepuyan, a la fama que dellas anda por todo el mundo (1552, 1:ii)r).

Some by chance might wish to translate this history into another language, so that those of their nation may understand the marvels and grandeur of the Indies. And they would know that the works equal, and even surpass, their reputation, which travels throughout the world.

Gómara thought that his work would have international appeal and should be written for readers interested in understanding “the marvels and grandeur of the Indies.” Moreover, he supposed that there would be translators wishing to prepare a Latin edition and he concluded his remarks with a warning that he was composing one of his own “para que no tomen trabajo en ello” [so they should not take up working on it]. Gómara wanted to present the New World to both vernacular and erudite readers. From his perspective, the Indies had a public image or, in his own words, a “reputation . . . throughout the world,” which made it necessary to relate the most precise information about its geography and history. The *Historia general* came to satisfy a public interest for information about the human and natural realities of the Indies.

Gómara attempted to carve out a space for his history of the Indies in the public sphere. He has been characterized as a historian who was highly conscious of the literary and historical world of his time (Merriman 1912, xxvii–xxxiii; Lewis 1983, 73, 103–125). The kind of prestige that the historical genre held for him may be appreciated in some of the annotations he made in his *Anales* about historians of the period. When relating the death of King Ferdinand the Catholic (1516), instead of discussing the life of the monarch, he provided a list of his chroniclers and pointed out Jerónimo Zurita as the best historian of his reign (Gómara 1912, 191).⁴ On various occasions, Gómara included certain entries related to the activities of historians among the events of the year, such as the completion of a certain text or the appointment of certain chroniclers.⁵ This shows that Gómara considered the writing of history to be an event shaping his contemporary world—so much, in fact, that in his *Anales* he managed to present himself as a historical figure:

Nace Fran[cis]co Lopez en Gómara domingo de mañana, que fué día de la Purificación de nuestra Señora que llaman Candelaria, el qual hizo estos años, y las guerras de mar de nuestros tiempos, y la historia de las indias con la conquista de México, y piensa otras obrillas, y pues lo ha trabajado es razon que lo goçe en compañía de tantos buenos varones (1912, 182).

Francisco López is born in Gómara, on a Sunday morning, the Day of the Purification of Our Lady they call Candelaria, the man who wrote these Annals, and the Naval Wars of Our Times, and the History of the Indies with the Conquest of Mexico, and is considering other shorter works, and because he has worked hard at it, it is reasonable for him to enjoy the company of such fine men.

The attention that Gómara devoted to history as an intellectual activity among the key events of the sixteenth century suggests that he oriented the production of his own discourse to interact with other historians. In addition to making himself a public figure, in the writing of history he found a means of participating in the political life of the state.⁶ This is particularly evident with respect to his historiographical practices, which gave him a privileged space for political action and confrontation. Among the events that established the main discursive precedents on the subject matter of the Indies, Gómara in his *Anales* (1912, 248, 258) records the efforts of Las Casas to contradict Sepúlveda's justification of the conquest and to block the publication of Oviedo's *Historia general y natural*. This confrontation of ideas and accounts motivated him to advance a principle of social good to guide imperial policy in the New World. When Gómara suggested that the emperor should "favor the conquest and the conquistadors" in the dedication of the *Historia general*, he was taking a position as to which form of colonial government was best. His dedication clearly explains the kind of civil service that his work intended to offer:

Y ta[m]bien es razon que todos ayuden, y ennoblezcan las Indias, vnos con santa predicacio[n], otros con buenos co[n]sejos, otros con prouechosas granjerias, otros con loables costu[m]bres y policia. Por lo qual [h]e yo escrito la [h]istoria (1552, 1:ii)v).

And it is also reasonable for everyone to help and ennoble the Indies, some with holy preaching, others with good advice, others with profitable enterprises, others with laudable customs and policy, which is the reason why I have written the *Historia*.

His attitude with respect to the diffusion of his work is consistent with the tone of humanist historiographical practice oriented toward the development of an elaborate rhetorical style and the promotion of the interests of individuals, families, or communities.⁷ Among the enor-

mous variety of texts written on themes related to the New World during this period, history was the genre that had the most literary prestige and cultural impact. Genres like the letter, the *relación*, or even the collections of travelers' accounts could only provide fragmentary glimpses of the Indies, but writing history made it possible to present an overview of the different regions of the New World and their historical development. This overarching perspective, with its capacity for assembling, summarizing, and interpreting events, gave the genre political utility. In the case of Italian humanism, the propagandistic potential of history was commonly put to the service of principalities and city-states, fulfilling a public function important enough for many political leaders to commission them (Hay 1977, 99). There is no doubt that the kind of diffusion and appeal that history enjoyed made it a strategic genre for defining and debating the modes of relationships that had been developing between Spain and the New World.

Gómara hoped that his *Historia general* would serve to promote the kind of evangelical, administrative, and economically exploitive activities that from his perspective of history helped to ennoble the Indies. His strategy for making his discourse influential is based on the kind of relationship that he established within the historiographical tradition. His method of positioning himself in the historiographical practice of his time rested on two main characteristics that had developed in the genre up until that moment: the type of authority that its authors achieved as public figures, and the complete absence of a work that presented a sufficiently comprehensive view of the conquest of the New World. Nowhere is this more clearly evident than on the back of the *Historia general's* title page where he provided a list of "[h]istoriadores de Indias" [historians of the Indies] (1552, 1:[i]v), including Peter Martyr, Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo y Valdés, Fernando Cortés, and Francisco López de Gómara.

This list heading the front matter of the *Historia general* offers a good indication with respect to the possible criteria for forming a historiographical canon of the Indies in the sixteenth century. It also permits us to understand the way in which Gómara intended to situate himself before this tradition in order to compose his *Historia general*. To the list of authors' names who could be considered historians of the Indies, Gómara added a brief annotation about the works they had written:

Pedro Martyr de Angleria clerigo Milanese escriuió en Latin la [h]istoria de Indias en decadas, que llama Oceanas, hasta el año de mil y quinientos y veinte y seys.

Fernando Cortes escriuió al Emperador sus cosas en cartas.

Gonçalo Fernandez de Ouiedo, y Ualdes, escriuió el año de mil y quinientos y treynta y cinco la primera parte de la general, y natural [h]istoria de las Indias.

Francisco Lopez de Gomara, clerigo, escriue la pressente [h]istoria de las Indias, y conquista de Mexico, en este año de mil y quinientos, y cinquenta y dos (1552, 1:[i]v).

Pietro Martire d'Anghiera, Milanese cleric, wrote in Latin the history of the Indies in decades, which he calls *Oceanas*, up to the year 1526.

Fernando Cortés wrote about his things to the emperor in letters.

Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo y Valdés, in 1535, wrote the first part of the *Historia general y natural de las Indias*.

Francisco López de Gómara, cleric, writes the present *Historia de las Indias, y conquista de Mexico*, in this year 1552.

Gómara's comments here distinguish the works according to the range of information their authors provided about the Indies. Martyr covered events "up to the year 1526," Cortés wrote about "his things," Oviedo had written "the first part," but Gómara offered a comprehensive work. The subject had a certain relevance for Gómara, for in his dedication he explained to Charles: "Intitulola a vuestra majestad, no porque no sabe las cosas de Indias mejor que yo, sino porque las vea juntas con algunas particularidades tan aplazibles [*sic*] como nueuas, y verdaderas" [I dedicate this to your majesty, not because you do not know the affairs of the Indies better than I, but because you may see them together with some particularities as pleasing as they are novel and true] (1552, 1:[ii]v). The promotional significance that this kind of comprehensive perspective could have is reaffirmed in the way that subsequent editions continued to present the work to the public. The long title of these editions emphasized that the work presented a complete picture of the history of the Indies to date: "Primera y segunda parte de la historia general de las Indias con todo el descubrimiento y cosas notables que han acaecido dende que se ganaron [h]a[s]ta el año de 1551" [The first and second part of the general history of the Indies with all the discovery and notable things that have occurred since they were acquired up until the year 1551] (1553a, 1:[i]r).⁸

Along with purporting to supply a comprehensive view of the conquests, Gómara's annotated list of authors constructed the canon of the history of the Indies based upon each text's authority and importance. His list distinguished between the works of authors who achieved the title of historian and those of other writers who also gave accounts of discoveries and conquests, but were not considered worthy of mention. After the list, Gómara went on to state his criteria of inclusion and exclusion in the canon:

Estos autores [h]an escrito mucho de Indias, y impresso sus obras, q[ue] son d[e] substancia. Todos los demas, q[ue] anda[n] impressos escriuen lo suyo, y poco. Por lo qual no entran en el numero de [h]istoriadores. Que si tal fuesse todos los capitanes, y pilotos que dan relacion de sus entradas y nauegaciones, los quales son muchos, se dirian [h]istoriadores (1552, 1:i)v).

These authors have written much about the Indies, and published their works, which are substantial. All the others who have been published write about their own, and little, therefore they do not enter into the number of historians. If that were the case, all the captains and pilots who gave accounts of their incursions and voyages, who are many, would be called historians.

The authors Gómara considered historians were those whose printed works stood out for the richness of their writing and the range or depth of their subject matter. Meanwhile, the other authors who “write about their own, and little” – that is to say, those who had reported on events limited to a particular expedition – did not make the list. His implicit way of configuring the canon of the genre established a correlation between the position of authority of those who received the title of historians and their intellectual weight within the tradition.

The inclusion of Cortés, in particular, suggests a way of understanding the canon of the history of the Indies centered principally on the prestige that such texts could acquire from a social perspective, for his *Cartas de relación* (Letters of relation) were thematically rather limited. The idea of presenting Cortés as a historian of the Indies could be explained by the reception that his *Cartas* enjoyed in Europe. There is considerable evidence that Cortés's *Letters* were perceived in their moment as narratives of “substance” from the point of view of their style and content. On the one hand, the *Cartas de relación* were published in a

Latin edition translated by Pietro Savorgnano, who praised Cortés's narration of the conquest of Mexico.⁹ Savorgnano had titled the text *Praeclara Ferdina[n]di Cortesii de Noua maris Oceani Hyspania Narratio Sacratissimo ac Inuictissimo Carolo Romanoru[m] Imperatori semper Augusto, Hyspaniaru[m] & c[h]ristianorum Regi* (The admirable narration of Fernando Cortés concerning the New Spain of the Ocean Sea, addressed to the most holy and triumphant Charles, emperor of the Romans, forever august, king of the Spaniards and Christians). Its dedication to Pope Clement VII reveals that Savorgnano thought highly of the narrative as well as the content, which he compared to the acts of Hannibal and Alexander the Great (Cortés 1524, [ii]r). On the other hand, the prestige of the conquistador's text is already clearly expressed in the edition's colophon, which suggests that Fernando, *infante* of Spain and archduke of Austria, provided Savorgnano with the Spanish text and entrusted its translation to him (R. Commissione Colombiana 1892–1896, part 3, vol. 2:326–328).¹⁰

The aforementioned list of historians of the Indies shows that Gómara was positioning himself politically and institutionally in the Spain of Charles V. This would explain his association with Cortés, who, in spite of not having had the favor of the crown in some of his affairs, nevertheless enjoyed a certain political presence in the Spanish court and had become a public celebrity. Oviedo presented Cortés as a figure of authority in his *Historia general y natural*:

El marqués, después que vino de las Indias . . . se fué a la corte de Su Majestad, e fué muy bien rescebido e aceptado del Emperador, e continuó su corte, como señor de estado, e con muy buena casa e auctoridad, e con muchos gastos (1992, 4:265).

The marquis, after he arrived from the Indies . . . went to the court of His Majesty, and was very well received and accepted by the Emperor, and remained in his court, as a lord of state, and with a very fine household and considerable authority, and with many expenses.¹¹

The aura of authority and social importance that Cortés seems to have enjoyed from the status he had acquired explains, at least from Gómara's perspective, how his *Cartas de relación* could have warranted a degree of prominence in the historical genre comparable to that of the works of Martyr and Oviedo, both of whom wrote about the Indies as royal

chroniclers. The significance of this appeal to the authority of tradition rests on the conditions of production that define the relationship the genre maintained with Spanish imperial practices.

IN THE SERVICE OF THE KING: HISTORIANS AND ADMINISTRATORS

Histories of the Indies came to play an instrumental role in the administrative arrangements of the colonial regime mainly because their authors had strong links to the crown. Peter Martyr, in particular, came to perceive the genre as an activity through which it was possible to exercise considerable intellectual influence in the political realm. Martyr's success as an author is quite apparent, for in the sixteenth century his work was widely used as a source on the subject.¹² The prominent place that he came to occupy in the affairs of the New World since the reign of the Catholic Monarchs also demonstrates his presence as an intellectual figure in the public sphere. The historians Oviedo, Las Casas, and Gómara not only saw him as one more author who had written about the Indies, they also referred to him as a figure of authority. Las Casas claimed that Martyr was the most reliable early historian of the Indies and that Spaniards who had returned from there informed him about everything "como un hombre de auctoridad" [as a man of authority] (1988-1998, 3:348, 4:1474). Gómara, in spite of criticizing him, attributed to Martyr the importance of being the first to write about matters of the Indies "en estilo" [in style] (1552, 1:25v). Oviedo, who accused him of being an "auctor de lo falso" [author of the false], still considered him an "hombre grave e de auctoridad . . . que se osó escrebir al Papa e a los reyes e príncipes extraños" [important man of authority . . . who dared to write to the pope and to foreign kings and princes] (1992, 1:14).¹³ Moreover, all three recognized his various positions as prothonotary apostolic, a member of the Council of the Indies, royal chronicler, and the abbot of Jamaica.¹⁴

The elevated institutional stature that historians of the Indies bestowed upon Martyr set the tone of the genre at least until the moment Gómara wrote his *Historia general*. Although Martyr does not seem to have received a commission from the monarchs to write about the Indies, there is sufficient evidence that he wrote his *Decades of the New World* from an official position. Las Casas saw a very definite relationship between Martyr's position on the Council of the Indies and his histo-

riographical activities. In his *Historia de las Indias* (History of the Indies) he said that Martyr “se le presentaban las cosas que de nuevo acaecían y iban destas Indias” [was presented things that just happened and came from these Indies], and added “Esto se hacía porque, por aquel tiempo [en] que esto escribía, era del Consejo de Indias” [This was done because, at the time he wrote this, he was on the Council of the Indies] (1988–1998, 4:1474). Martyr’s political influence as a historian of the Indies and a royal advisor, no doubt, was enormous if one takes into account that the king and his advisors did not have direct contact with the Indies. Even though Martyr had never been there either, he tried to inform himself about everything that was happening through the testimony of Spaniards who were returning from the New World. He managed to gather as much information about the Indies as possible at that time, thus his *Decades* were able to greatly shape the image that the king and his colleagues on the Royal Council were formulating about the colonies.

The task of chronicler of the Indies lent a kind of service to the crown that chroniclers of other Spanish kingdoms could not match. Oviedo insisted in his *Historia general y natural* on the importance of writing based on personal experience, assuming that telling the truth was the service that history rendered to the king and his council: “Y si dijeren que al Rey e a su Consejo se sirvió así, como esos doctos cronistas lo apuntaron, no todas veces sabe el Rey por tales cartas todo lo que consuena con la verdad” [And if they say that this served the king and his council, as these learned chroniclers note, the king does not always learn through such letters everything that conforms with the truth] (1992, 4:271). The context of this statement is his criticism of Peter Martyr and Bernardo Gentile, for even though they wrote in a “buen estilo” [good style], they were not sufficiently concerned with the quality of the information that they used in their writings.¹⁵ Oviedo’s concern was based on a concrete administrative problem, for until they began to name functionaries who already had served in the New World, the major difficulty that confronted the Council of the Indies was the lack of knowledge its members had about the lands they had to govern (Merriman 1962, 3:622). The distance and lack of contact with the Indies of those in charge of their administration caused an enormous responsibility to fall upon the historian who was instrumental in mediating their relationship with the New World. Historians like Oviedo and Las Casas would systematically question the veracity and propriety of

previous accounts because of the influence these representations of history could have on future decisions made by the king's functionaries.

The relationship between the history of the Indies and the administrative world clearly surpassed the traditional function of monitoring the conduct of kings and advising by way of example (Carbia 1934, 17-25). The *licenciado* Juan de Ovando y Godoy ordered the official creation of the position of chronicler of the Indies in 1571 after an inspection of the Council of the Indies in which he discovered that it was nearly impossible to get reliable information about the New World (Carbia 1934, 97-103). There are sufficient reasons, however, to suggest that creating this official position did nothing more than legally formalize a kind of historiographical practice that already found itself relatively institutionalized during the reign of Charles V. The task of writing histories of the Indies had been carried out by royal chroniclers like Martyr, who undoubtedly enjoyed the backing of the crown in the production of their writings.¹⁶ After Martyr's death, the crown appointed Antonio de Guevara as chronicler of Castile with the task of continuing to write the chronicle of the Indies begun in the *Decades*. Although he never wrote a single line to fulfill his commission, the appointment reveals that the crown was institutionalizing the genre. A royal *cédula* of December 7, 1526, made the position official and ordered that all of Martyr's papers be put in Guevara's possession so that he could carry out this work (Carbia 1934, 76; Keniston 1958, 276). This kind of legal assistance was also given to Oviedo when he was named royal chronicler (August 18, 1532) with the support of the Council of the Indies.¹⁷ None of this occurred in Gómara's case, but he may have intended to join the list of Indies historians through unofficial means.¹⁸ Insofar as he operated within a more or less established tradition of histories of the Indies, Gómara could aspire to occupy a position among those who had served the crown or gained influence with their writings. It is not possible to determine if he tried to be named chronicler or not, but the *Historia general* contributed to others perceiving him in this manner.¹⁹

In the time between Martyr and Oviedo the history of the Indies had achieved a more defined profile within the colonial administration. Beginning with the publication of the first edition of Oviedo's *Historia general y natural* in 1535, the genre assumed a very precise informative function within the institutional apparatus, playing a major role in defining the modes of colonial relationships between Spain and the Indies. Oviedo thought that the importance of the service he provided

the crown required the assistance of legal instruments as he explicitly pointed out to his readers:

[T]engo cédulas y mandamientos de la Cesárea Majestad para que todos sus gobernadores e justicias e oficiales de todas las Indias me den aviso e relación verdadera de todo lo que fuere digno de historia por testimonios auténticos, firmados de sus nombres e signados de escribanos públicos, de manera que hagan fe. Porque, como tan celosos príncipes de la verdad e tan amigos della, quieren que esta Historia Natural e General de sus Indias se escriba muy al proprio (1992, 1:13–14).

I have *cédulas* and orders from the Caesarian Majesty for all his governors, justices, and officials throughout the Indies to give me information and true account about everything that may be worthy of history by authentic testimonies, signed with their names and notarized by public scribes, in a manner that would establish faith. For, as such zealous princes and friends of the truth, they want this *Natural and General History of their Indies* written quite properly.

Oviedo gave his historiographical activity the dignity of a juridical process, which he made clear to the reader when declaring that he relied upon legal instruments to obtain sworn testimonies before notaries and then utilized them in writing his history. The parallel that he established with juridical systems of proof went further than the analogy in the preceding passage. Oviedo explicitly declared that the procedures he employed to summon information from royal officials had legal validity. The function that these methods fulfilled in his history was that of providing a guarantee of truth to the readers for whom history was their access to information about the New World. In the case of the functionaries on the Council of the Indies who had to make legislative decisions or arbitrate lawsuits and petitions originating in the Indies, Oviedo's production strategy seemed particularly appropriate for the circumstances.

The council's original proposal to the emperor on May 7, 1532, had been for Oviedo, then located on the island of Hispaniola, to travel around the Indies gathering materials to send to Spain, but the chronicler would negotiate the conditions of his position and obtain the crown's authority to summon depositions from "all its governors, justices, and officials throughout the Indies" on December 15, 1532.²⁰ With an annual salary of thirty thousand *maravedíes*, he set out to write a history of the Indies that aspired to achieve the status of juridical truth. The relationship that Oviedo's historiographical practice established with the colonial

administration was so important that his appointment as chronicler stipulated that the Council of the Indies had to see “antes que se imprima ni publique lo que escribiere” [what he wrote before it was printed and published] (Tudela 1992, cxviii). The work was in fact examined and amended by the council before its publication as revealed in the colophon of the first edition and the “carta missiua” that Oviedo addressed to Cardinal Francisco García de Loaysa, the emperor’s confessor and president of the Council of the Indies (1535, 191v–193r).

The influence that a historian like Oviedo could have in administrative and governmental tasks was complex and made it indispensable for the Council of the Indies to review the work, because those who directed these affairs from Spain wanted to have the last word on the image they were projecting to the public. Oviedo implicitly recognized the preeminence and authority of the council in matters of government when he declared that “que lo que toca a la gobernación, no es lo que principalmente se me manda escribir, ni su Cesárea Majestad quiere saber de mí, pues su Real Consejo de Indias asisten tan grandes e señalados varones” [what concerns governance is not mainly what I am ordered to write, nor does his Caesarian Majesty want to learn from me, for such great and outstanding gentlemen serve on his Royal Council of the Indies] (1992, 1:226). Nevertheless, the influence that Oviedo could exercise on colonial administration through his *Historia general y natural* is based on the ignorance of the members of the council and their distance from the New World. This is precisely what Oviedo told the council president in his “carta missiua”:

[S]i en esto hobiere descuido, visto está qué tales andarán las ovejas si los pastores a quien fueren encomendadas no fueren cuales los han menester. E tanto es mayor el peligro, quanto el camino es más luengo, y Vuestra Señoría Reverendísima tan apartado de lo ver, e tanta dubda como ocurre en saberse acá la verdad (1992, 1:6).

If sufficient care is not given the matter, it is clear that the sheep will wander about if the shepherds are not up for the task. And the peril is so much greater, for the journey is longer, and Your Most Reverend Lordship is so far away to see it, and so much uncertainty occurs here for the truth to be known.

The administrative backing that Oviedo enjoyed while writing his *Historia general y natural* guides the course of his historiographical activ-

ity. His conception of the art of writing history was based on a guarantee of truth whose foundation was a complementary combination of the legal framework of the production of his discourse and his personal experience in the Indies. Oviedo made this abundantly clear in the preface of the first edition of his *Historia general y natural*:

[E]l capitan Gonçalo herna[n]dez de Oviedo & valdes: alcaide de la fortaleza de la ciudad de sancto Domingo de la ysla Española & cronista de la sacra cesarea & catholica magestades del emperador don Carlos quinto de tal nombre rey de España: & de la serenissima & muy poderosa reyna doña Juana su madre nuestros señores. Por cuyo mandado el auctor escriuió las cosas maravillosas que ay en diuersas yslas & partes destas Indias & imperio de la corona real de Castilla: segun lo vido & supo en veynte & dos años & mas que ha que biue & reside en aquellas partes (1535, [i]v).

Captain Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo y Valdés, *alcalde* of the fort of the city of Santo Domingo on the island of Hispaniola, and chronicler of the Holy Caesarian and Catholic Majesties of Emperor *don* Charles V, king of Spain, and of the most serene and very powerful Queen *doña* Juana, his mother, our lords. By whose order the author wrote about the marvelous things that exist in the different islands and parts of these Indies and empire of the royal crown of Castile: according to what he saw and learned in the twenty-two years or more that he has lived and resided in those parts.

The role that historiographical discourse played at that time in relation to the colonial administration was one of presenting a view of what had happened in the Indies. This did not mean that history was defining government policies any more than in the general sense of promoting the interests of certain sectors. The historian's power to narrate events was significant, but his ability to influence royal officials depended on his skill at gaining public recognition. In Oviedo's case, the *Historia general y natural* appears to have had a favorable reception in the Council of the Indies and considerable literary success with the public (Amador de los Ríos 1851, lxiv; Gómara 1912, 231; Las Casas 1988–1998, 5:1856–1857). It is difficult to determine the degree of authority that the *Historia general y natural* achieved, but the words of Pedro Mexía (1497–1551), who was appointed cosmographer of the House of Trade in 1537, confirm the prestige that Oviedo's position as royal chronicler conferred to him. In his *Historia del emperador* (History of the emperor), published around 1547–1551, Mexía wrote that the

Indies “se avían conquistado y traydo a conosçimiento de la Fe. E hoy día lo están, por la manera que Gonçalo Hernández de Oviedo, coronista de las cosas de Yndias, lo escriue largo; al qual yo me rremito en este propósito” [had been conquered and brought to the knowledge of the Faith, and are today, in the manner that Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo, chronicler of the things of the Indies, writes at length, to whom I defer in this matter] (1945, 351). The authority that Oviedo had as “el coronista que tiene espeçial y particular cuydado de las cosas de Yndias” [the chronicler who has special and particular care of the matters concerning the Indies] (Mexía 1945, 113) shows how his work could consolidate certain views of the Indies and influence someone as prominent as Mexía among Spanish intellectuals at that time.

Oviedo initially relied on his advantageous position to develop an influential historiographical practice, but between 1535 and 1548 political conditions had changed. The first part of the *Historia general y natural* (books 1–19) was published in 1535 in Seville and reprinted with modifications and additions at Salamanca in 1547 and Valladolid in 1557. As previously noted, Gómara mentioned two events in his *Anales* that were related to this work: the positive reception it had in 1535 and Las Casas’s attempt to “estoruar la Historia General y Natural de Indias, que Gonçalo Hernandes de Ouyedo coronista mostró al Consejo Real de Castilla para la imprimir” [block the *Historia general y natural de Indias* that the chronicler Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo showed the Royal Council of Castile in order to publish it] in 1548 (Gómara 1912, 231, 258). Although Oviedo did not mention the incident in his writings, Gómara may have been referring to an attempt to publish the second part of the *Historia general y natural* (books 20–38). Oviedo had planned to publish the second part around 1542, according to a letter he sent to Viceroy Antonio de Mendoza (Tudela 1992, cxxxiii). It is possible that he may have presented a version of his manuscript, containing the first and second parts, to the Council of the Indies around 1548, for the 1547 Salamanca edition only includes the first. At this time Oviedo declared that he hoped to publish the “primera parte, acrescentada y enmendada” [first part, enlarged and amended] and the second, while he would continue working on the third (Oviedo 1992, 1:142; Tudela 1992, cxxxix–cxl). If he had really submitted the second part, it is quite possible that the council had not yet agreed to approve its publication. In any case, Las Casas was in Spain between 1547 and 1556 and had good reason to interfere with the *Historia general y natural*.

CONTESTED HISTORIES IN A CHANGING DISCURSIVE LANDSCAPE

Gómara intended to create an authoritative account of the conquest of the Indies, but he had to contend with a contested field and changing politics. This situation is well exemplified in Las Casas's criticism of Oviedo. Las Casas considered the *Historia general y natural* dangerous mainly because of the images that Oviedo propagated with respect to the conquest, the *encomienda*, and the Indians. In his *Historia de las Indias*, Las Casas was greatly concerned about the impact that Oviedo's characterizations of the Indians might have on his readers. The problem for Las Casas was the kind of authority that Oviedo's work was acquiring among the European public:

Levántoles a éstos destas islas y a otros muchos y a todos los destas Indias falsísimos testimonios, cierto, infamándolos de grandes pecados y de ser bestias; porque nunca abrió la boca, en tocando en indios, sino para decir mal dellos. Y estas infamias han volado cuasi por todo el mundo, como ha días que temerariamente publicó su falsa historia, dándole el mundo crédito, el cuál él no merecía por sus falsedades grandes y muchas que dixo destas gentes. Pero el mundo no considera más de que se ponga en molde (1988–1998, 5:1856–1857).

He raised the most false testimonies against those of these islands and many others throughout these Indies, in fact, accusing them of great sins and of being beasts, for he never opened his mouth, with respect to the Indians, except to speak ill of them. And these infamies have spread nearly throughout the world, in as many days since he recklessly published his false history, the world giving him credit, which he did not deserve for his great and many falsities that he said about these people. But the world believes nothing more than what is put in print.

The question of the capacity of the Indians had a central importance in the debates concerning the justice of the conquest and the treatment of the indigenous population. The debate was evolving throughout the first half of the sixteenth century, but around 1548, when Oviedo may have presented his work to the council for its approval, it had acquired enormous importance in the political realm.

The debate directly affected the aspirations of the Spanish conquistadors and settlers to become lords. The expectation of the Spaniards

was to receive an *encomienda* in return for the services they had rendered to the crown in the conquest and colonization of the Indies. The *encomienda* system had its roots in medieval Spain where the war of territorial expansion was formalized through royal concessions of territorial jurisdiction, vassals, and titles of nobility (Elliott 1984a, 156–158; Lockhart and Schwartz 1983, 19–22).²¹ Whatever service Spaniards had lent to the crown, time-honored Spanish custom mandated their subsequent reward in compensation for their efforts. Recompense in war normally consisted of the right to a share of the spoils after sacking a city. In the Indies, the crown preferentially granted *encomiendas* or *repartimientos* as incentives for its vassals to conquer and settle territory. The Indian *encomiendas* placed certain indigenous communities under the authority of a conquistador or a settler who had the responsibility of seeing to their evangelization and received the right to extract tribute in labor or goods from them.²² In this sense the *encomienda* satisfied a dual necessity: it permitted the organization of native labor and evangelization,²³ and it served to compensate the activities of conquest and settlement of the new territories. But as soon as the attacks on the capacity of the Indians fell into discredit, the advisability of maintaining the *encomienda* regime was put into question.

The indigenous situation began to receive closer attention as soon as accusations of injustices committed in the conquests and *encomiendas* surfaced. The mistreatment and abuses endured by the Indians at the hands of the Spaniards became a serious concern when the pattern of their demographic decline had become evident.²⁴ The experience of colonization contradicted the idea that the native population could derive some benefit from being submitted to the authority of the conquistadors. John Elliott (1984b, 304–310) has stated that agitation concerning the well-being of the indigenous population reached its peak when Charles V returned to Spain in 1541 and did not culminate until 1550 in the long debate in Valladolid between Las Casas and Sepúlveda.²⁵ The importance that this debate had for historiographical discourse fundamentally rests in the fact that it transformed the conditions within which forms of textual authority could be established. The historiographical treatment of questions referring to the Indians and the conquests had to delicately navigate between the pressures of the conquistadors and *encomenderos*, the campaigns of those who advocated indigenous freedom and the abolition of the *encomienda*, and the complicated situation of a colonial administration incapable of implement-

ing effective solutions to the problems that the process of colonization presented.

Oviedo's *Historia general y natural* attempted to legitimate the territorial dominion that Spain exercised over the New World, the plundering of indigenous territories that had been carried out in the conquests, the subjection of the native population to the service regimen of the *encomienda* and, in some cases, Indian slavery. Concomitantly, although he criticized the excesses of some conquistadors and *encomenderos*, he fundamentally tried to justify the destruction of the indigenous population and present the conquest of the Indies as a process that had produced great benefits for the New World. Oviedo's argument is based in part on the opinion concerning the capacity of the Indians that Las Casas had attempted to combat:

Porque, en la verdad, segund afirman todos los que saben estas Indias (o parte dellas), en ninguna provincia de las islas o de la Tierra Firme, de las que los cristianos han visto hasta agora, han faltado ni faltan algunos sodomitas, demás de ser todos idólatras, con otros muchos vicios, y tan feos, que muchos dellos, por su torpeza y fealdad, no se podrían escuchar sin mucho asco y vergüenza, ni yo los podría escrebir por su mucho número y suciedad (1992, 1:67).

Because, in truth, according to what everyone who knows these Indies (or part of them) says, in no province of the islands or the mainland, which Christians have seen up to now, have there lacked or are there lacking any sodomites, the rest all being idolaters, with many other vices, and so ugly, that many of them, for their stupidity and foulness, could not be heard without much disgust and shame, nor could I write about them for their great number and filthiness.

Based on this representation of the Indians, Oviedo could interpret the destruction of the native population as divine punishment and justify the need for the *encomienda* and native slavery. At the same time, he was conscious of the objections that had been raised against these kinds of colonizing practices and he had to deal with them. Nevertheless, he maintained his position and testified negatively about "el ser y capacidad de los indios" [the condition and capacity of the Indians] before the Council of the Indies on at least two occasions, at Toledo in 1525 and Medina del Campo in 1532.

Oviedo figured that, given the conflicting opinions that existed among the missionaries of different religious orders, he could support

his negative assessment of the Indians based on his personal experience. For him it was fundamentally a question of conscience until an official decision was reached among the theologians who advised the crown:

Así que yo me remito a estos religiosos dotos, después que estén acordados. Y entre tanto, esté sobre aviso quien indios tuviere, para los tratar como a prójimos, e vele cada cual sobre su conciencia (1992, 1:68).

Thus I defer to these learned religious, until after they come to an agreement. And in the meantime, whoever possesses Indians should be on his guard, in order to treat them as neighbors, and each one tend to his own conscience.

The position adopted by Oviedo recognizes the importance that the decisions of theologians and legal scholars had on the public conscience. These theological and juridical resolutions came to alter the idea of what constituted a good conscience in both public and private spheres with respect to the treatment of the Indians. In the 1540s, these new conditions changed the way authors could write about the Indies.

Openly expressing his support of the conquest, Gómara's intervention attempted to maintain the old status quo after the confrontation had already reached its turning point. The struggle sustained before theologians and lawyers by various missionaries initially led to continued vacillation in the legislation and policies adopted with respect to the Indians. Their efforts to stop the abuses were met by opposition from corrupt royal officials, some of whom had an economic stake in *encomiendas* or were accepting bribes from Spanish settlers.²⁶ In spite of Las Casas's successful 1519 confrontation with Juan de Quevedo in defense of Indian freedom and Cardinal Adrian of Utrecht's similar intervention in the Spanish court the following year, powerful interests still managed to subvert Charles V's 1520 order to abolish the *encomienda*. In subsequent years, further negative legislative effects resulted from testimonies attacking the Indians' capacity made before the Council of the Indies by *fray* Tomás Ortiz in 1525 and *fray* Domingo de Betanzos in 1533 and 1545. Their accusations helped the council's president, Cardinal Loaysa, secure the revocation in 1525 and 1534 of some royal decrees aimed at eliminating Indian slavery (Gómara 1552, 1:117v-118r; Hanke 1974, 11-13, 18-19; Adorno 1992b, 49-50). These negative characterizations of the native inhabitants, however, began to lose their

political and rhetorical efficacy as the intellectual debate over the Indies changed.

By the time Gómara met Cortés in the siege of Algiers, the ideologies that supported the previous policies in the Indies were already loosing their persuasive force. In the period between 1537 and 1549, the objections against Indian slavery, the *encomienda*, and the conquests had acquired such importance that earlier views of colonization were no longer tenable within the social consensus. Rolena Adorno (1992b) has shown that around the middle of the sixteenth century, broad generalizations, whether positive or negative, gave way to a more differentiated approach based on situations and conditions in specific locations. The first important change came when *fray* Bernardino de Minaya solicited the intervention of Pope Paul III in favor of the native population in 1537. The result of Minaya's efforts was the proclamation of the bulls *Altitudo divini consilii*, *Veritas ipsa*, and *Sublimis Deus*, where the ecclesiastical jurisdiction over the Indians was upheld, their enslavement was condemned, and opinions stating that they were irrational and incapable of receiving the Christian faith were classified as heretical. The papal bulls were accompanied by a pastoral letter setting the penalty of excommunication for those who persisted in the practices condemned in the bulls. J. H. Parry (1940, 27–29) states that, upon his return to Spain, Minaya was sent to prison and Charles solicited the revocation of the bulls that threatened royal authority over the Indies. Minaya's incarceration and the petition for revocation show the degree of concern with which the crown received Paul III's bulls, whose major effect was to provide an answer to the kind of questions that somebody like Oviedo would have previously deemed a matter of conscience.

The interplay of interests and value systems had also changed in the process, thus creating new constraints for the historian. The *visita* or inspection of the Council of the Indies and the promulgation of the New Laws in 1542, abolishing the *encomienda* and prohibiting the Spaniards' utilization of Indians for personal service, suggest that reaffirming imperial authority required a political formula of compromise with the papal decrees of 1537.²⁷ According to Anthony Pagden (1990b, 6), one of the fundamental concerns of the crown was to show its adherence to the ethical and political principles of Christianity. For a crown that based its rights over the Indies in the Alexandrian bull of concession (1493), the most appropriate course of action from a political perspective was to proceed in harmony with Paul III's bulls or, if this was

not possible, try to obtain their revocation through proper channels. Although the questions concerning Indian slavery and their capacity to receive the faith were settled by these decrees, the debate drifted away from the theological realm into the problem of deciding the best mode of governing the Indians and incorporating them into Christian society.

Gómara also faced other factors that contributed to changing the strategic situation of the discourse. The position that many conquistadors and colonial administrators continued to sustain in the face of the New Laws placed them in difficult political terrain. The resistance of *encomenderos* in Mexico and the rebellion of conquistadors in Peru had led to the revocation in 1545 of the laws eliminating the *encomienda*, but Las Casas had managed to transform the debate from the topic of the capacity of the Indians to the treatment they received from the Spaniards (Adorno 1992b). If he accused them of violating the rights of the Indians, the rebellion in Peru completed the polarization of the conquistadors against the royal authorities.²⁸ The colonists' crimes not only were a liability to the emperor's political authority, they were an outrage against the very social system that the crown was attempting to establish in the New World. Their resistance to carry out the crown's ordinances clearly placed in doubt their capacity to oversee the integration of the native population into colonial society. The *encomenderos'* failure to secure their grants "a perpetuidad, con jurisdicción civil y criminal sobre los indios" [in perpetuity, with civil and criminal jurisdiction over the Indians], and the monarch's suspension of the conquests in 1550 reveal that the position of the conquistadors and *encomenderos* had lost credibility before the crown.²⁹

Establishing a hegemonic discourse within governmental and administrative circles presented serious difficulties for Gómara, even when deploying forms of textual affiliation to create a sense of intellectual authority. Spanish discourses on colonization could accommodate polemic or compromise, but they could not achieve authority or consensus. An example of this is Sepúlveda's *Democrates secundus* (ca. 1544), a treatise composed by the prestigious Aristotelian scholar at the request of Cardinal Loaysa in order to justify the conquest and the right of the conquistadors to have *encomiendas*. In spite of the fact that his *Democrates secundus* had been commissioned by Loaysa, who was president of the Council of the Indies at the time, permission for its publication was denied by the institution. Sepúlveda appealed the decision to the Council

of Castile, which appointed a commission of theologians who also decided against it. The text circulated in the court in manuscript form and, according to Sepúlveda, received the approval of everyone who read it, but it never achieved the backing of the crown to render “service to God and the king” that Loaysa hoped it might (Hanke 1974, 61–64). His *Apologia pro libro de justis belli causis* (Defense of the book on the subject of just war), subsequently published in Rome in 1555, defended his *Democrates secundus*, but it was banned and confiscated by order of the Council of the Indies (León Pinelo 1629, 66).

The lack of a well-established discourse of colonization is apparent in the outcome of the Valladolid debate, which did not settle the question of whether it was appropriate to identify the conquest with the values of the empire (Adorno 1988). The seven treatises that Las Casas published in Seville in 1552 proposed a disassociation between Spanish imperial claims and the conduct of the conquistadors.³⁰ By that time it was already evident that the Indians had an established position as subjects of the crown who should benefit from the colonial relationship between Spain and the Indies, rather than just being objects of economic exploitation. It was in response to this controversy that Gómara proposed a concept of common good consisting of recompensing the conquerors and, at the same time, protecting the conquered. This idea of colonial government was founded on an equilibrium between distributive justice (granting favors to the conquistadors for their services) and commutative justice (guaranteeing the good treatment of the indigenous population) and therefore called attention to the ways and means of achieving justice in the New World. The way in which the *Historia general* discusses the realization of colonial ideals in the Indies undoubtedly responds to the conditions set by the debate. Moreover, by referring his readers to Sepúlveda for the justification of the conquest Gómara was searching for a way out of the ideological stalemate constraining the empire.

Gómara confronted the difficult task of influencing public views where others had failed. The debate over the nature of the Indians, which a decade earlier Oviedo merely left to the individual’s conscience, had become stained by political pragmatism and ideological struggle. When Las Casas questioned and rejected the assumptions of Oviedo’s defamatory discourse, he attributed his opinions to the self-interest of an owner of Indian slaves (1988–1998, 5:2384). Although Las Casas (1988–1998, 4:1326–1335, 1523, 1527, 5:1855–1861, 2381–2401) supported his

refutation of Oviedo's ideas with historical argumentation, the discursive context also had changed. These conditions framed the way Gómara understood his position vis-à-vis the historiographical tradition of the Indies and how his own practice could achieve political and intellectual viability. The manner in which he strategically situated himself in the discourse is revealed by his portrayal of Cortés as the model conquistador. Therefore, it is necessary to examine their relationship in order to explain Gómara's method of intellectual production and the ways in which his writing interacted with forms of political activity during the reign of Charles V.

THE AUTHORITY OF DISCOURSE: THE *HISTORIA GENERAL* AND THE WORLD OF FERNANDO CORTÉS

Gómara was entering a contentious arena when he started writing the history of the conquest. He evidently knew of the impediments confronting him, and it is likely that he went to Aragon to obtain the royal imprimatur for his work in order to circumvent the censorship within the kingdom of Castile. He likely sought to disseminate his history in order to influence public views of the conquest and help create a hegemonic discourse on colonization. The contradictions of Spanish imperialism must have been daunting, but Gómara's project sought to draw its strength from featuring Cortés as the charismatic hero of the conquest. Gómara's remembrance of the deceased conqueror served to further the honor of his family by creating an exalted portrait of his merits, virtues, and accomplishments. Given that political action took place in networks of personal relations within a patrimonial system, Gómara was negotiating his personal stake not only in the history of the conquest, but also in the politics of empire, which most often were played out in the court.

Gómara's historiographical project, therefore, must be understood in relation to the intellectual atmosphere and practices of the courtesan world. Although his position in the Spanish court is not clearly known, various documents describe him as a "clérigo, residente en la corte de sus Magestades" [cleric, resident in the court of their Majesties].³¹ Less opaque is the manner in which the courtesan environment shaped the character of Gómara's historiographical activity. His first encounter with this world occurred during his stay in Italy (possibly between 1531 and 1541), where he witnessed events in the papal court and had contact

with political and intellectual figures such as Olaus Magnus (1490–1557) and Diego Hurtado de Mendoza (1503–1575).³² Gómara conducted his historiographical activity as a form of service that he attempted to render by treating topics of interest among the figures of social, intellectual, or political authority associated with the court of Charles V. For example, in his *Anales* he consistently listed events and information primarily relevant to the great political concerns of the crown or other incidents that would attract the attention of the court. Topics that continually reappear include the dangers presented by the Ottoman Turks, events occurring in the Indies, the conflicts between Spain and France (first between Ferdinand of Aragón and Louis XII of France, then between Charles V and François I), and the heresy of Martin Luther. This way of approaching historiographical practice is evident in the way Gómara presented his *Crónica de los Barbarrojas* to don Pedro Álvarez de Osorio, the marquis of Astorga. In order to explain why it was important to write about the Barbarossa corsairs, he appealed to the kind of presence that the problem of Ottoman aggression had in the political consciousness of the period:

¡Ojalá tan fácilmente se pudiese remediar como llorar, proveer como leer! Muy bien tiene entendido todo esto el Emperador nuestro Señor, y ha procurado ya y aun probado el remedio dello. . . . [N]i puede entender así ligeramente una cosa como esta que requiere costa, poder y consejo (1853, 334).

O if it could be as easily remedied as crying [or] dispatched as reading! The emperor, our lord, has understood all this very well and has already provided and even proven its remedy. . . . Nor can he take lightly something like this which requires expenditure, power, and counsel.

The positions that Gómara took on matters concerning the intellectual and political environment he encountered at the court fundamentally derived from his experience while working in the service of Cortés. He had probably met the marquis in Algiers while taking part in Charles V's aborted 1541 expedition and continued in the conquistador's service until his death.³³ This relationship must have had a fundamental impact on Gómara's career if we follow the opinion of Robert Lewis (1983, 30–31) who suggested that his presence in Charles V's court resulted from his association with Cortés. At least this is undoubtedly

correct with respect to his activities as a historian, for Gómara was already serving as Cortés's chaplain when he began to write his early works. He understood his historiographical activity within the framework of his working relationship with the conquistador, as is evident in the dedication of his *Crónica de los Barbarrojas*. He explained to the marquis of Astorga that he wrote to "hacer[le] servicio . . . porque habeys tomado deudo con el marques del Valle, cuya historia yo escrivo, casando á Don Alvaro Perez de Ossorio vuestro hijo mayor con su hija mayor Doña Maria" [do him service . . . because you have become an in-law of the marquis of the Valley, whose history I am writing, your oldest son *don* Álvaro Pérez de Osorio being married to his oldest daughter *doña* María] (1853, 332).

Gómara's relationship with the conquistador and his relatives also influenced the positions he took in the *Historia general*. One document explicitly states that Martín Cortés, the primogenitive heir of the marquis, paid him for writing the second part of the *Historia general*, or the *Conquista de México*.³⁴ After Fernando Cortés's death, Gómara continued working in the service of his son Martín for at least twelve more years. The payment that he gave him for the *Historia general* suggests that Gómara had received the commission to write the work from the marquis before his death in 1547 or else Martín Cortés subsequently commissioned it to leave a record of his father's services to the crown.³⁵ In either case, it is important to note that the work served in a sufficiently explicit way to give prestige to the name of Fernando Cortés and promote the interests of his family. The *Conquista de México* not only exalted Cortés the individual, it also emphasized the value of his services to the emperor and presented them as one of the foundations of the colonial empire. Gómara's account served his patron's interests in such a specific manner that it may have had some legal utility for the family at the time of reclaiming recompense from the crown.³⁶

The degree to which the *Historia general* served Cortés's interests was evident to contemporary historians as well. The best-known case of this is that of Bernal Díaz del Castillo who reacted against the way that Gómara had lauded Cortés's role in his account of the conquest of Mexico. Rolena Adorno (1988) has shown that Díaz's criticism of the *Conquista de México* was mediated by his own personal interests, but it most certainly was motivated by Gómara's treatment of Cortés and the conquest. Similar reactions can also be found among historians whose economic interests were not directly affected by the account. Oviedo

probably had Gómara's *Historia general* in mind when he said that he had "visto algunos memoriales o acuerdos escritos por algunos aficionados suyos, a quienes se les encomendaría que escribiesen en su alabanza, o ellos, por su comedimiento, harían por complacer a sus subcesores, o por cualquier causa que a ello les moviese" [seen some memorials or remembrances written by some fans of his, who were commissioned to write in praise of him, or they, out of courtesy, would do it to please his descendents, or for any other reason that moved them] (1992, 4:265). In a similar manner, Las Casas (1988–1998, 5:1870, 2251, 2256, 2382, 2466–2472) thought that Gómara's narrative in the *Historia general* was influenced by his position in Cortés's service as "su capellán y criado después de marqués" [his chaplain and servant after becoming the marquis]. Because of the way Gómara presented Cortés, Las Casas supposed that the composition of the work owed a substantial debt to the conquistador's collaboration:

Así que Gómara mucho se alarga imponiendo a Cortés, su amo, lo que en aquellos tiempos no sólo por pensamiento, estando despierto, pero ni durmiendo, por sueños, parece poder pasarle. Pero como el mismo Cortés, después de marqués, dictó lo que había de escribir Gómara, no podía sino fingir de sí todo lo que le era favorable; porque, como subió tan de súbito [sic] de tan baxo a tan alto estado, ni aun hijo de hombre, sino de Júpiter, desde su origen quisiera ser estimado.

Y así, de este jaez (y por este camino) fue toda la historia de Gómara ordenada, porque no escribió otra cosa sino lo que Cortés de sí mismo testificaba; con que al mundo – que no sabía de su principio, medio y fin cosa – Cortés y Gómara encandilaron (1988–1998, 5:1871).

Thus Gómara greatly extends himself, attributing to Cortés, his master, what in those times not only could seemingly come into his mind while awake, but also asleep in his dreams. But as Cortés himself, after becoming a marquis, dictated what Gómara had to write, he could not but make up everything that was favorable to him; for rising so suddenly from so low to such a high status, he wished his origin to be esteemed as not just a son of man, but of Jupiter.

And thus in this manner (and in this way) all of Gómara's *Historia* was put together, because he did not write anything other than what Cortés himself testified, so that Cortés and Gómara blinded the world, which knew nothing about his beginning, middle, and end.

The comments of Las Casas and Oviedo suggest the extent that Gómara's praise of Cortés conformed to the image that the conqueror and his descendants wanted to disseminate. The public function of his *Historia general* specifically was to promote Cortés's desire to appear as a "man of status" in the Spain of Charles V. The concept of service that guided Gómara's composition operated within the limited social, political, and intellectual scope of his patron's personal interests. The servile relationship that he had with Cortés was the condition of production that defined the economy of enunciation of his discourse within the framework of courtesan culture. In his dedication to Charles, he assumed that he could coherently represent the interests of Cortés as an individual, the conquistadors as a collectivity, and the crown as an institution, along with the common good of the Indies. By 1552, however, it was impossible to talk about conquistadors, Indians, friars, advisors, governors, and *encomenderos* in a general manner without compromising, in one way or another, the stakes of the different individuals involved. The political viability of Gómara's discourse fundamentally rested on the receptivity that certain sectors of the court had toward the position and values that the conquistador embodied.

Over the course of his life, Cortés had managed to secure the amity of individuals of influence and authority in the court of the emperor. His marriage to *doña* Juana de Zúñiga—the daughter of the count of Aguilar, *don* Carlos Arellano—had guaranteed him a certain social prestige and presence in the court. This relationship also gave political solvency to his position, at least from the perspective of Gómara, who suggests that his father-in-law and his father-in-law's brother were "fauorecidos del Emperador" [favored by the emperor] (1552, 2:114r). Along with the count of Aguilar, Cortés's influential political allies in the court included the admiral of Castile and the duke of Béjar (Madariaga 1986, 488). These alliances validated the emperor's favors and mercies to Cortés such as the title of "Marquis of the Valley of Oaxaca" and certain other personal gestures that granted him certain distinction (Madariaga 1986, 523–526). Given the importance of familial ties and personal relationships in political practices at that time, the individual figure of Cortés could easily be subsumed within the position of a sector of the court operating within the kingdom's social structures of political participation.

It is important to clarify, however, that these relationships based on familial alliances did not give Cortés real political power, but merely

a more efficient way of furthering his interests and more direct access to the crown.³⁷ John Elliott (1990, 86–99) has shown that beginning with the reign of the Catholic Monarchs the nobility lost prescriptive political power and the weight of the government began to fall upon the lawyers and secretaries who served as crown officials. This bureaucratization of governmental power in part explains the limitations that confronted Cortés when soliciting royal favors and his interest in creating alliances with important colonial administrators. Because the marquis associated with influential individuals, Gómara and his contemporaries could identify with him as a social subject in the political process of colonial government.³⁸

Two such individuals whose friendship Cortés enjoyed were Cardinal Loaysa and Francisco de los Cobos (Gómara 1552, 2:139r). As important members of the colonial administration they held opinions similar to the marquis on issues such as the conquest and the *encomienda*. Cobos was the emperor's secretary and a member of the Council of the Indies. In 1522 he was appointed "*fundidor y marcador mayor*" of the mines of Yucatán, Cuba, Coluacán, and New Spain, a charge whose jurisdiction in 1527 extended from Florida to Panuco and from Darién up to the Gulf of Venezuela (Keniston 1958, 72, 104, 105). In 1534 he managed to get his son Diego named chancellor of the Indies, a responsibility previously held by the grand chancellor, Mercurino Gattinara (Keniston 1958, 149). Loaysa was the emperor's confessor, the head of the Dominicans in Spain, and president of the Council of the Indies from its official creation in 1524 until his death in 1546.³⁹ He was also the one who encouraged Sepúlveda to write his *Democrates secundus* to justify the conquest and the *encomienda* around the time when he and others were seeking the revocation of some of the New Laws. The friendship that Cortés had with these men reinforced his position as a paradigmatic figure representing the common interests of a sector of the court and the colonial government that supported or was benefiting from the conquest. In fact, Sepúlveda (1997, 66–69) presented Cortés as a model of prudence and utilized the conquest of Mexico as an example to show how the native inhabitants were *natura servi* (slaves by nature) and therefore should be subjugated by the Spaniards.

The environment of the court at the time of the *Historia general's* composition was undoubtedly a political space of familial relationships, personal interests, and strategic alliances. This atmosphere of courtly relationships and activities made it possible for Gómara to construct a

discourse of service centered on the figure of Cortés. Surely it was a form of political elitism that could only have some degree of efficacy within a limited segment of readers. The corrections that Las Casas (1988–1998, 5:1871) made to Gómara concerning the humble origins of Cortés were intended to neutralize the kind of public appeal that Cortés could have as “not just a son of man, but of Jupiter.” The *Historia general* paid less attention to Cortés the individual than to what he could represent publicly in the context of political change in the middle of the century. The deaths of Loaysa in 1546 and Cobos and Cortés the following year brought an end to the symbolically most prestigious characters of the process of colonial expansion that Spain had conducted since the 1520s. While working on his *Historia general*, Gómara also witnessed, either directly or indirectly, the censorship of Sepúlveda’s *Democrates secundus*, the successful interventions of Las Casas in the Council of the Indies, the suspension of the conquests, and the Valladolid debate. It is quite probable that Gómara may have wanted to see in Cortés a figure capable of representing the collective interests of the conquistadors and a notion of common good under colonial rule.

Gómara’s position in the *Historia general* can be coherently interpreted by relating his work to the practices of intellectual production of the courtesan environment in which he operated. He surely participated in the “Academia de Cortés,” which brought lawyers and members of the political and ecclesiastical hierarchy together to discuss such varied topics as “la eternidad del alma” [the eternity of the soul], “la diferencia del hablar al escribir” [the difference between speaking and writing], “cual debe ser el cronista del príncipe” [who should be the prince’s chronicler], and “la diferencia de la vida rústica a la noble” [the difference between the noble life and the rustic life].⁴⁰ The period of the Academia’s activity coincides with the period in which the revocation of the New Laws was discussed and Sepúlveda composed his *Democrates secundus*. The years were marked by an atmosphere of political and intellectual tension generated by the debates concerning the nature of the Indian, the justice of the conquest, and the right of the conquistadors to keep and bequeath their *encomiendas* to their heirs. Lewis Hanke (1974, 60) has said that the debate concerning “the true capacity of the Indies . . . became more and more heated after the issuance of the New Laws of 1542, and the revocation in 1545 of the law that would have phased out the *encomienda*.” These are also the years in which Cortés

was embroiled in litigations for “his vassals and privileges” (Gómara 1552, 2:139r; Madariaga 1986, 551–556).

Demetrio Ramos (1972, 113) suggests that in these meetings were present, among others, two central figures for contemplating this courtesan context of intellectual production: Sepúlveda and Mexía. The royal chronicler Mexía was also well known as a humanist for his *Silva de varia lección*. Sepúlveda had acquired notoriety in the Indian debate with his *Democrates secundus* and his active pressure to propagate his ideas (Hanke 1974, 62–64). Gómara’s approach to writing his *Historia general* may share the kind of political and intellectual conceptualization of the New World found in these other authors’ works. In his chapter entitled “Loor de españoles” (Praise of Spaniards), Gómara openly expressed his allegiance to the *Democrates secundus*:

Yo escriuo sola, y breuemente, la conquista de Indias. Quien quisiere ver la justificacio[n] della lea al dotor Sepulueda, coronista del Emperador, que la escriuio en latin dotissimamente. Y assi quedara satisfecho del todo (1552, 1:121v).

I write only, and briefly, about the conquest of the Indies. Anyone who would like to see the justification for it should read Doctor Sepúlveda, the emperor’s chronicler, who wrote most eruditely about it in Latin. And thus you will be completely satisfied.

In deferring to Sepúlveda’s work, Gómara clearly intended to establish a kind of textual affiliation that appealed to the political and intellectual circles of the court in which Sepúlveda had remained active (Hanke 1974, 62). As a space of intellectual production the familial meetings of the Academia de Cortés and the courtesan environment in general no doubt stimulated the articulation of political concerns with the instruments of the humanist and learned culture of the time. The political elitism revealed in the *Historia general*’s transparent exaltation of Cortés finds its legitimation in the sophistication of the intellectual culture surrounding it. The narrative that Gómara employed in his account of the conquest of Mexico echoed the argument of Sepúlveda (1997, 66) concerning the qualities of “prudentia, ingenio, magnitudine animi, temperantia, humanitate, et religione” [prudence, ingenuity, magnanimity, moderation, humanity, and religion] that legitimated the conquest, but above all it demonstrated the military, legal, and political prowess of Cortés the individual. Using this kind of representation to

give social vitality to his patron's public image, Gómara attempted to serve a sector in whose public preeminence he saw the most perfect realization of his social ideals as well as the realization of the common good under the Spanish empire of the Indies.

THE LIMITS OF CONSENSUS: GÓMARA UNDER ATTACK

Sepúlveda's *Democrates secundus* helped Gómara define a theoretical framework to support his vision of the New World from the ethical and juridical point of view. In this way, he successfully achieved a certain rhetorical efficacy at the same time that he situated himself polemically and intellectually in relation to the controversy over the conquest. Gómara's move is comparable to one that Pedro Mexía contemporaneously made in his *Historia del emperador* when he deferred to Oviedo's authority to confirm that the Christian faith had been brought to the Indies. This practice of citation that both Gómara and Mexía employed in support of their texts, however, did not rest on any discursive consensus concerning the impact of the conquest in the New World. Therefore, Gómara was unable to establish a form of intellectual authority over the Indies through the mechanisms of textual affiliation. For as Oviedo's deference to the king's theologians aptly demonstrates, juridical and theological debates greatly conditioned the social communicability of the discourse. Anyone narrating or reading about Spanish discoveries and conquests in the Indies around 1552 had to contend with a wide spectrum of confrontation over the nature of the native population and the justice of the conquest.

The publication of the *Historia general* addressed the dominant ideological vacuum afflicting the imperial enterprise. Not only had the legitimacy of its methods been publicly challenged, the role of the conquest in facilitating evangelization had been called into question. The influence that friars like Las Casas were acquiring over the course of the century can be related to the increasingly greater urgency to find a more effective way of integrating the native population within Christian society. The failure of colonial society to achieve these objectives had damaging consequences from the political perspective. In this way the polemical context in which the *Historia general* appeared greatly undermined the possibility of an uncritical reception and encouraged skepticism and mistrust among its readers.

The *Historia general* was prohibited on November 17, 1553, in the city of Valladolid, just one year after its publication. The *cédula*, countersigned by Juan de Samano, secretary of the Council of the Indies,⁴¹ on behalf of Prince Philip ordered the book's seizure in the kingdoms of the crown of Castile (Pérez Pastor 1895, 93–97; Medina 1958, 262–265; CDIU 1885–1932, 14:126, 240). Two copies of the decree were immediately sent to the House of Trade—one to the treasurer Francisco Tello and the other to other officials there. The *cédula* ordered them to conduct an inspection of the fleet that was anchored at San Lúcar de Barrameda and to “no dexar ni consentir pasar ninguno de los dichos libros a las dichas Yndias y hagáis todas las diligencias que ser puedan para saver si en la flota que está presta . . . se llevan algunos de los dichos libros” [not let or allow any of the said books to pass to the Indies and make all possible diligence to know whether the fleet that is ready . . . is carrying any of the said books] (Lewis 1983, 317–318). The order applied to all cities and towns in Castile, but today the register of the decree's application is kept in the city of Seville. The prohibition forbidding the printing, sale, possession, and reading of the *Historia general* dictated:

Sabed que Francisco López de Gómara, clérigo, ha hecho un libro intitulado, “La Historia de las Indias y conquista de México,” el qual se ha impreso, y porque no conviene quel dicho libro se venda ni lea ni se impriman más libros, sino los que están impresos se recojan y traigan al Consejo Real de las Indias de Su Magestad, vos mando á todos é á cada uno de vos, según dicho es, que luego que ésta veáys os informéys y sepáis qué libros de los susodichos hay impresos en esas ciudades, villas y lugares, é todos aquellos que halláredes, los recojáis y enviéis con brevedad al dicho Consejo de las Indias (Medina 1958, 264–265).

Know that Francisco López de Gómara, cleric, has written a book titled *La Historia de las Indias y conquista de México*, which has been published, and because it is not suitable for the said book to be sold or read or more books printed, but rather those that are printed are to be collected and brought to the Royal Council of the Indies of His Majesty, I order you all and each one of you, according to what is said, that as soon as you see this inform yourselves and know what printed copies of the aforementioned book exist in these cities, towns, and places, and all those that you find, gather and send them quickly to the said Council of the Indies.

The decree was effectively transmitted by means of public proclamation. On January 8, 1554, the *licenciado* Villagómez of the Council of the Indies appeared in Seville before the notary Luis de Varsuto, who had twelve booksellers declare what editions of the work they had sold and to whom. The next day a proclamation that prohibited “tener ni vender ni imprimir ni leer” [possessing, selling, printing, and reading] Gómara’s *Historia general* was read in the plaza of San Francisco and on the docks of the city (Medina 1958, 262–264). The efforts to suppress the work were not limited to the diligence of council officials in 1553 and 1554. A *cédula* issued in Madrid on September 26, 1562, ordered the *corregidor* of the city of Soria to seize Gómara’s papers associated with the *Historia general*, inventory them, and bring them to the Council of the Indies (Medina 1958, 266). A second *cédula* similar to the earlier prohibition was issued in Bosque de Segovia on August 7, 1566, this time countersigned by Francisco de Eraso, secretary of the Council of the Indies.⁴²

Extant documentation does not reveal the reasons for the prohibition, nevertheless a plausible explanation could be found if one considers that the institution actively dedicated to bringing this about was the Council of the Indies. Although many theories on the reasons behind the prohibition exist, none of them is particularly compelling.⁴³ The policies of censorship afoot in the kingdoms of Castile shed little light on the possible reasons for the *Historia general*’s prohibition. Robert Lewis (1983, 325–326) thought that Gómara overlooked some step in the process of gaining the necessary approval for his work; however, the basic procedure established by the Catholic Monarchs in 1502 was to require a royal license authorizing publication (Elliott 1990, 225–226). The first edition had a *licencia de impresión*, or royal imprimatur, authorized by Prince Philip for the kingdoms of the crown of Aragón. The *privilegio de impresión*, or publication rights, included at the end of the work stated that “nos visto primero el dicho libro por algunas personas doctas, y hauida relacion dellas, que dicho libro es vtil, y trata fielmente la dicha [h]ystoria de las Indias, conquistas de Mexico, y descubrimientos dellas, y de las costumbres de los naturales” [we first had the said book examined by some learned persons and received their report that the said book is useful, and treats faithfully the said history of the Indies, the conquests of Mexico, and their discoveries, and the customs of the natives] (1552, 2:[140]r). The license approving its publication had been awarded by the archbishop of Zaragoza, *don* Hernando de Aragón (1552,

2:[i]v).⁴⁴ In addition to his authority for granting the imprimatur as archbishop, he had sufficient influence to have provided the position of chronicler of the kingdom of Aragón in 1548 to a historian of the stature of Jerónimo de Zurita. If the work had the support of “learned persons,” one would have to assume that the problems arose after the *Historia general* was published.

The question becomes whether the work had been reviewed by the Council of the Indies before its publication, as Lewis argued on the basis of a royal *cédula* that stated:

a Nos se a hecho relación que algunas personas han hecho e cada día hazen libros que tratan de cosas de las nuestras Yndias e los han hecho e hazen ynprimir sin nuestra licencia. Y . . . a nuestro servicio conviene que tales libros no se ynpriman ni vendan sin que primero sean vistos y examynados en el nuestro Consejo de las Yndias (1983, 325).

It has been reported to us that some persons have composed and each day compose books that deal with matters concerning our Indies and have been written and printed without our permission. And . . . it suits our service that such books not be printed and sold without first being seen and examined in our Council of the Indies.

It is important to remember, however, that this *cédula* only appeared in 1556, three years after the *Historia general's* prohibition. Lewis's argument calls attention to the preponderant role that the Council of the Indies had in the censorship of the *Historia general*. His explanation suggests that there were some points of conflict between the book and imperial policy, specifically Gómara's siding with the *encomenderos* of Peru and Mexico, his glorification of Cortés, his treatment of the vices and virtues of the Indians, and his support of forced conversion (Lewis 1983, 324).⁴⁵ Lewis concluded that the council did not want the *Historia general* circulated in the Indies “no doubt because they considered it a dangerous, inflammatory book which would feed the fires of dissent and discontent” (1983, 324). Nevertheless, even though Lewis presented convincing arguments suggesting that Gómara's *Historia general* may have displeased members of the Council of the Indies, this does not necessarily explain its censorship.

One could likewise speculate that the council may have performed an arbitral function in the banning of Gómara's *Historia general* if one considers that the prohibitions of Oviedo's *Historia general y natural* and

Sepúlveda's *Democrates secundus* were solicited by Las Casas. The cases of Oviedo and Sepúlveda would suggest that criticisms of the conquest and colonization of the Indies were getting the attention of the colonial administration. Given the affiliation of the *Historia general* with the *Democrates secundus*, Las Casas could have easily argued that Gómara's work contained ideas harmful to the Indians' well-being. The Council of the Indies had participated in censorship activities at least since the prohibition against Cortés's *Letters* in 1527. Rolena Adorno and Patrick Pautz (1999, 2:5–9) have cited a *cédula* from the Council of the Indies dated June 1, 1527, that explicitly states that Pánfilo de Narváez had solicited the prohibition because he claimed that Cortés's *Letters* had damaged his reputation. A short time later, however, Francisco Núñez got the same council to cancel the prohibition and order Narváez to return the original *cédula* and proceedings to the court. This case posed a conflict of interest among the conquistadors with respect to their honor. The Council of the Indies performed an arbitral function in this dispute similar to one it might have played if Las Casas had solicited the *Historia general's* removal from circulation.

Other evidence, however, suggests that beginning in 1550 the council was actively occupied in censoring works about the Indies and that its members were concerned about the social detriment that certain writings on the topic could cause. In this same year a council decree ordered the "governador de Tierrafirme tome los libros que hubiere en aquella provincia de los que el Doctor Sepúlveda hizo imprimir sobre cosas tocantes a las Indias sin licencia y los envíe al gobierno" [governor of Tierra Firme to seize the books in the province about matters concerning the Indies that Doctor Sepúlveda published without permission and to send them to the government] (CDIU 1885–1932, 20:212). This same decree was addressed to Peru, New Granada, Hispaniola, and New Spain and included instructions that the officials of Seville were not to allow their passage to the New World. It is also appropriate to remember that the *cédula* of 1556 stipulated that "[n]o se impriman libros tocantes a las Indias sin licencia y los impresos se tomen" [no books about the Indies are to be printed without permission and those printed are to be seized] (CDIU 1885–1932, 20:209). This policy of censorship could be interpreted as a reaction to the dominant ideas among theologians and legal scholars with respect to justice in the conquest and the treatment of the native population. The problem was that authors' statements often contradicted doctrinal and legal principles.

Such is the case with the censorship of Las Casas's treatises published in 1552 and 1553 where he debated the legal foundations of the empire and strongly criticized the conquest and the *encomienda*. Although most of these texts were printed without royal licenses, there is ample evidence that they were examined by theologians, royal functionaries, and members of the court.⁴⁶ The censorship of one of these treatises, the *Confesionario*, is particularly interesting because it left Las Casas's criticisms of the conquest and the *encomienda* intact. Las Casas figured that all the conquests carried out in the Indies had been illegitimate and therefore the conquistadors and *encomenderos* were obligated to make restitution for the damages and loss of goods that the Indians had suffered. The *Confesionario* contained rules on how confessors could grant absolution to those who had benefited from the conquest. The bibliographer Antonio de León Pinelo (1629, 62–64) explained that the Council of the Indies ordered the treatise to be seized because of the first and fifth rules, but he added that after its revision the treatise was approved. Based on what may be inferred from the corrections added to the printed edition, the problem for the council involved a legal technicality in the procedures that the confessor had to follow in order to demand from the penitent a public writ obligating the restitution of the goods acquired in the conquest. Once these points of canonical law concerning restitution were corrected, the text received its approval. The censorship of the *Confesionario* reveals that Las Casas's statements about the illegitimacy of the conquest were irrelevant to the council's censors, but discrepancies between the text and the law (even if there were only a few passages) could occasion its removal from circulation.⁴⁷

The *Historia general's* prohibition is better explained by its affiliation with Sepúlveda's *Democrates secundus* and its position with respect to the juridical problems of the conquest and the treatment of the Indians. León Pinelo simply stated that the *Historia general* "[e]s historia libre i esta mandada recoger por cedula antigua del Co[n]s[e]jo Real de las Indias" [is free history and is ordered to be seized by an old Royal Council of the Indies *cédula*] (1629, 70). Ramón Iglesia and Robert Lewis have interpreted León Pinelo's comment as a reaction to Gómara's support of the conquistadors against the crown; however, it is more probable that the banning of the text was due to its failure to reflect the juridical and theological principles that supported the construction of the empire. The meanings of the word *libre* in the *Diccionario de autoridades* (1726–1739, 4:399) that are applicable to León Pinelo's statement are

“licencioso, poco modesto, atrevido y desvergonzado” [licentious, of little modesty, insolent, and shameless] and a “persona que dice ù hace lo que le parece, sin reparar en inconvenientes” [person who says or does what he thinks, without considering the consequences]. Gómara could have been seen as an author who said what he thought “without considering the consequences,” for at the end of his *Historia general* he had explicitly embraced Sepúlveda’s *Democrates secundus*, despite the fact that it had been prohibited by both the Councils of the Indies and Castile.

The *Historia general* continued to be reprinted in Spanish for only a couple years after the prohibition. It was published in Zaragoza by Agustín Millán in 1552 and 1553, and by Millán in conjunction with Pedro Bernuz in 1554 and 1555; in Medina del Campo by Guillermo de Millis in 1553; and in Antwerp by Martin Nucio and by Hans de Laet in 1554.⁴⁸ It is appropriate to note that out of all these editions, only the one published in Medina del Campo omitted the *privilegio de impresión*. The two Antwerp editions alluded to a *privilegio* on the back of the title page, with Nucio’s version citing a royal privilege undersigned by P. de Lens. If the prohibition affected only the kingdoms of the crown of Castile, then there was no reason for the authorities to prohibit the editions of Aragón and Antwerp. Nevertheless, Spanish editions of the *Historia general* were only printed between 1552 and 1555, but Italian, French, and English translations of the work continued to be printed throughout the rest of the century.⁴⁹ Gómara’s *Historia* would not reappear in Spanish until 1749 in the *Historiadores primitivos de las Indias Occidentales* (Early historians of the West Indies) series originally compiled by the Spanish historian Andrés González de Barcia Carballido y Zúñiga (ca. 1654–1723).⁵⁰

The efforts of the Council of the Indies to suppress the *Historia general* contributed more to discrediting the work than to containing its diffusion. When the bibliographer Nicolás Antonio (1672, 334) indicated that Gómara’s account was considered unreliable, he mentioned Bernal Díaz del Castillo’s criticisms as well as the council’s prohibition. Although the *Historia general* achieved a limited number of printings, it became well known among contemporaries and its Spanish editions continued to circulate even beyond the sixteenth century. When Martín García was sent by the *corregidor* of Soria to look for Gómara’s papers, he declared to have found in the possession of Pedro Ruiz, the historian’s nephew, the edition of the *Historia general* published by

Agustín Millán. Then he added that “el cual dicho libro, por ser público é notorio y haber muchos en muchas partes de como él, se le quedó en poder del dicho Pedro Ruyz” [the said book, for being common knowledge and well known and there being many other copies like it in many places, was left in the possession of the said Pedro Ruiz] (Medina 1958, 268). Additional evidence of its circulation can be found in the lists of books that Luis Padilla imported to New Spain in 1600 and that Juan de Sarria brought to sell in Cuzco in 1606, which have been transcribed and discussed by Irving Leonard (1992, 247–257, 296–300, 360–384, 395–400).⁵¹

Gómara was the subject of harsh and extensive criticism not only on the part of people such as Las Casas who questioned the legitimacy of the conquest, but also by the conquistadors and their descendents interested in justifying it.⁵² The most severe attacks came from Bernal Díaz del Castillo, who commented about the perplexity he felt when reading the *Historia general* while writing his own *Historia verdadera de la conquista de la Nueva España* (True history of the conquest of New Spain). Not only was he embarrassed by its “gran retórica” [grand rhetoric], but also it seemed that “desde el principio y medio hasta el cabo no llevaba buena relación, y va muy contrario que lo que fue e pasó en la Nueva-España” [from the beginning and middle to the end it was not a good account and runs quite contrary to what went on and happened in New Spain] (1982, 33a–34a). Díaz fundamentally rejected Gómara’s characterization of the overwhelming strength of the conquistadors over the Indians. Part of the problem was that the image of great massacres tarnished the conquest, but also downplayed the effort and work that the conquistadors contributed to overcome the difficulties that the undertaking presented them. A second point that figures prominently in Díaz’s commentary on the *Historia general* is that “toda la honra y prez della la dio sólo al marqués don Hernando Cortés, e no hizo memoria de ninguno de nuestros valerosos capitanes y fuertes soldados” [all the honor and glory for it he only gives to the marquis *don* Fernando Cortés, and he does not remember any of our valiant captains and strong soldiers] (1982, 36a).

When Díaz insists that Gómara’s account is flawed, he accuses him of “sublimar” [exalting] the deeds of Cortés and altering the actions, the circumstances, or the actors (1982, 35a–36a). His irritation with the *Historia general* is so pronounced that he says that after setting two gentlemen straight on a few points concerning Cortés’s entry into Saltocan,

they “juraron que avían de romper el libro e [h]istoria de Gómara que tenían en su poder, pues tantas cosas dize fuera de lo que pasó que no son verdad” [decided that they had to tear up Gómara’s book and history, which they had in their possession, for so many things he says happened are not true] (1982, 337b). The points where Díaz accuses the *Historia general* of falsities are numerous, but ultimately they concern defending the honor of the conquistadors or condemning passages that questioned the legitimacy of the conquest. As Rolena Adorno (1988, 242–243) has demonstrated, these two aspects of the collective history of the conquistadors represented a threat to their economic well-being in their claims for favors. In either case, the fundamental issue was that Gómara’s account prejudiced the conquistadors or, in Díaz’s words, because it was “tan lejos de lo que pasó es en perjuicio de tantos” [so far from what happened, it is in prejudice of so many] (1982, 35a). In fact, in the chapter he dedicated to his criticisms of Gómara’s *Historia general*, Díaz explicitly stated that “su majestad sea servido de conocer los grandes e notables servicios que le hicimos los verdaderos conquistadores” [his majesty would be served in knowing the great and notable services that we, the real conquistadors, rendered him] (1982, 35a).

Criticisms of the *Historia general*’s veracity were common among eyewitnesses of the episodes it narrated, primarily because Gómara had accepted versions of the events that some conquistadors had given him without corroborating them. Observations on the poor quality of information that Gómara got from oral accounts are found in Díaz’s *Historia verdadera* (1982, 35a); Viceroy Pedro de la Gasca’s 1553 letter written to Willem van Male, an advisor to Charles V (Lewis 1983, 294–295); and the Inca Garcilaso de la Vega (1944, 2:266). The Inca attempted to refute Gómara’s statements about idolatry among the Incas and some episodes of the conquest of Peru. One of his concerns was to restore the honor of his father for his role during the revolt of the conquistadors of Peru in assisting the rebel leader Gonzalo Pizarro in the battle of Huarina. Likewise he defended the honor of Pizarro’s aid, Francisco de Carvajal, whose imprisonment and death he felt Gómara had narrated in an offensive manner. After impugning Gómara’s less than decorous observations on Carvajal, the Inca related in his *Historia general del Perú* (General history of Peru) an incident between Gómara and a conquistador who accused him of not having fulfilled his responsibility as a historian:

[E]s así que un soldado de los más principales y famosos del Perú, que vino a España poco después que salió la historia de Gómara, topándose con él en Valladolid, entre otras palabras que hablaron sobre este caso le dixo que por qué había escrito y hecho imprimir una mentira tan manifiesta no habiendo pasado tal. Con éstas le dixo otras palabras que no se zuffre ponerlas aquí. A las cuales respondió Gómara que no era suya la culpa, sino que de los que davan las relaciones nacidas de sus passiones. El soldado le dixo que para eso era la discreción del historiador, para no tomar relación de los tales ni escrevir mucho sin mirar mucho, para no disfamar con sus escritos a los que merecen toda honra y loor. Con esto se apartó Gómara muy confuso y pesante de haver escrito lo que levantaron a Carvajal (1944, 2:266).

It is in this manner that one of the most important and famous soldiers of Peru, who came to Spain shortly after Gómara's *Historia* was published, running across him in Valladolid, among other words they spoke about this case, asked him why he had written and published such a manifest lie when no such thing had happened. Along with these words he told him others that do not bear to be set down here, to which Gómara responded that it was not his fault, but rather that of those who gave him accounts born of their passions. The soldier told him that for this reason it was the discretion of the historian not to accept the account of such people and not to write much without much regard, so as not to defame with his writings those who deserve all honor and praise. With this Gómara was left quite confused and regretful for having written what they leveled at Carvajal.

The soldier accused Gómara of having defamed some conquistadors whose reputations he had shown little consideration for in his account. The case cited by the Inca suggests that the problem the conquistadors had with the *Historia general* mainly was that Gómara had favored certain versions of the events without considering the impact of his account on the reputations of other conquistadors.

These readings of the *Historia general* clearly reveal the centrality of honor in colonial Spanish discourse. In fact the concept was at the heart of the patriarchal ideology of colonization, because it determined the royal favors to which a conquistador could aspire in recompense for his services. Honor, or reputation, not only offered social prestige to the conquistador, it played a large part in determining his economic future. Royal favors were awarded according to a principle of distributive justice

that granted “galardones e renumeraçiones de los buenos e virtuosos trabajos e serviçios que los [h]om[br]es fazen a los reyes e príncipes e a la cosa pública de sus reynos” (Columbus 1996, 262) [rewards and remunerations of the good and virtuous works and services that men perform for kings and princes and the public welfare of their kingdoms] (1996, 72).⁵³ The conquistadors had a financial stake in representations of the conquest, for the more prominent their services to the king appeared, the greater the reward to which they could aspire. Likewise, any action that might stain a conquistador’s record of services could damage his personal interests.

In the cases of Bernal Díaz and Garcilaso de la Vega, their concern for honor was related to their own solicitations in Spain to obtain mercies from the king. Díaz had testified before the Council of the Indies in the debates over the perpetuity of the *encomienda* in 1550 and returned with royal decrees granting him certain favors (Hanke 1974, 59; Adorno 1988, 251). The Inca said he had presented himself before the *licenciado* Lope García de Castro, who rejected his petition because of the incident related by Gómara in the battle of Huarina. When the Inca attempted to dispute the circumstances of the event, the *licenciado* responded: “Tienénlo escrito los historiadores ¿y queríslo vos negar?” [Historians have written this, and you wish to deny it?] (Vega 1944, 2:216). The credit Gómara took away from the conquistadors for their services to Spain or the evil deeds he attributed to them had an impact on the response of royal officials or the king himself to the social and economic aspirations of the conquistadors or their heirs.

The rejection and condemnation that the conquistadors or their descendants leveled at the *Historia general* reveal that writing Indies history was seen primarily as a space in which to advance the interests of individuals who aspired to the recognition of their values and identities in the cultural realm. In the history of the Indies, however, the honor of the conquistadors and that of the monarchs were not always compatible.

The contradiction between the two intensified around the beginning of the seventeenth century. As the main thrust of the conquest came to an end and the crown faced international criticism for its imperialist policies, the values and identities of the conquistadors lost social currency within Spanish colonialism. The weight that these conditions had in historical discourse are evident in the lawsuit that *don* Francisco Arias Dávila, the count of Puñonrostro, brought against the

chronicler Antonio de Herrera y Tordesillas in the Council of the Indies around 1602–1610 for his treatment of Pedrarias Dávila in his *Historia general de las Indias Occidentales* (General history of the West Indies). The count presented his quarrel against Herrera as a case of damage to his honor:

[E]n lo que trata de Pedrarias Davila, mi Abuelo, pone muchas cosas yndignas de hystoria tan grave, e de lo que merescen los seruycios de mi Abuelo, fechos en España e en las Indias; porque pone muchas cosas en perxuycio de su [h]onrra, fynxiendo pryncipalmente al Hystoriador de Hernando Cortés, a quien los demas quél alega syguieron, siendo todo lo que disce tan contrario de la verdad, como consta por los prevylexios de las mercedes que los antebesores [sic] de Vuestra Maxestad le fyscieron, en remuneracion de sus seruycios, ques a lo que más se [h]a de creer (CDIA 1864–1884, 37:76).

Concerning Pedrarias Dávila, my grandfather, he writes many things unworthy of such serious history and of what the services of my grandfather performed in Spain and in the Indies merit; because he writes many things in prejudice of his honor, mainly copying Fernando Cortés's historian, whom he alleges everybody else followed, everything he says being so contrary to the truth, as is clear by the privileges and favors that the ancestors of His Majesty did him, in remuneration of his services, which is what has to be more believed.

The count wanted Herrera to revise some statements about his grandfather that, he argued, were not consistent with his services and prejudiced his honor. At stake here was simply his reputation as a servant of the king. Puñonrostro in fact employs the royal favor as proof that Pedrarias Dávila had rendered good service to the king. It is significant, however, that he would link Herrera's treatment of his grandfather to Gómara's *Historia general*.⁵⁴ That the count thought he could use "the historian of Fernando Cortés" to discredit Herrera suggests the problematic place that Gómara's work had come to have in historical tradition.

Herrera refused to change his *Historia* so as not to compromise the credibility of his account, arguing that Spain's honor before foreign nations was a stake. He repeatedly insisted that he did not follow any historian but rather the papers that were given to him (CDIA 1864–1884, 37:106–108). His evidence contained a detailed refutation of the

memorial presented by the count in which each point was supported primarily by specific references to the royal papers to which he added what was established in historiographical texts.⁵⁵ His handling of such texts was based on a concept of tradition that established no one authority, but rather a condition of factual guarantee in his historiographical practice. When Herrera said “la tradyscion ansi lo tiene” [tradition considers it so] (CDIA 1864–1884, 37:117), he was referring to establishing a consensus in different texts only with respect to the facts. Among the authors he cited are figures of such diverse opinions concerning the conquest as Martyr, Oviedo, Las Casas, Gómara, Benzoni, and Theodor de Bry. That Herrera would consider them all as indispensable sources demonstrates that the European criticisms of Spanish imperialism had undermined the moral authority of the historian in the representation of the conquest. In this new economy of enunciation focused on removing infamy from Spain and its monarchs, the *Historia general* resonated only because it corresponded in certain facts with other historical accounts.

Herrera needed to compare the accounts already circulated about the conquest, including authors who had criticized the Spaniards’ activities in the New World, because it was the only way that he could gain the trust of his readers. The reason why the tradition was important for Herrera was related only to the integrity of the facts and contents of the history. The difference of opinions that the authors he cited held with respect to the conquest did not matter. Herrera felt responsible to this tradition because any other way would compromise his mission as a historian to convince foreign nations that the monarchs and their advisors had justly conducted their affairs in the Indies. The point for Herrera, however, was not to debate whether injustices had been committed, but rather to determine who was responsible:

Vease pues, si atentas las santysimas ynstruciones e ordenes questos Catholicos Reyes dieron, es más xusto que las culpas e pecados que se cometieron contra los yndios, caigan sobrellos, o sobre las personas que non las complieron (CDIA 1864–1884, 37:142).

See then, considering the most holy instructions and orders that these Catholic Monarchs issued, whether it is more just that the transgressions and sins committed against the Indians would fall upon them, or upon the persons who did not carry them out.

Herrera thought that if he changed his *Historia*, then it would lose credibility before foreign nations and Pedrarias's transgressions would fall upon the Catholic Monarchs and the "nation" because it would not be clear that he had failed to carry out royal instructions. Herrera's response gave precedence to defending the honor of the monarchs and the Spanish nation. For Herrera, the object of history was justice, therefore the historian's practice consisted of examining the way in which the monarchs and different members of the community had tried to carry out the Alexandrian bull of donation and tended to the governance of the Indies for the common good. In other words, what mattered to him was evaluating the realization of the social ideals expressed in juridical discourse.

In 1603 the count had reached an agreement with Herrera in order to "moderar algunos afectos con xustas condyciones" [moderate some affects with just conditions; that is, tone down his language where appropriate], but the count wanted changes of content, which Herrera refused, stating that "tocar en el fecho non lo fará, antes se dexará faser mil pedazos" [changing the facts he will not do, he would rather be cut into a thousand pieces] (CDIA 1864-1884, 37:320). After examining the case, the resolution of Sobrino and López de Bolaños found that Herrera, "escribiendo cada cosa que la falló, a nadie faser agravio en lo quescrive" [writing everything as he found it, does not affront anyone in what he writes] (CDIA 1864-1884, 37:327). This decision subjected the composition of the account to a group of legal principles to ascertain its "degree of certainty" and whether it offended others. On the first point, the count's claims were too general for determining that the chronicler's statements were false, while Herrera's responding proofs supported the veracity of the specific facts that he related. With regard to the central issue in the case, once it was established that a sufficient degree of certainty existed with respect to the facts, then no offense was recognized.

Gómara's project of constructing an authoritative narrative of colonization in the *Historia general* appeared at a time when the focus on conquests had given way to a concern for integrating the indigenous population within the colonial social system. The limitations that kept his *Historia general* from achieving an influential role in imperialist Spanish culture lay mainly in the fact that it revealed the contradictions existing between the historical record and the political obligations that the crown had assumed as a colonial power. The difficulties that Span-

iards confronted when interpreting the violence in the colonizing process could not be sufficiently addressed through representations of human history or imperialist ideological formulations. Examining the ways in which the colonial discourse confronted the moral failings of the enterprise of the Indies sheds light on the cultural mechanisms of denial and the inherent ideological weakness of the colonizing project. The conditions that had initially made histories of the Indies politically and socially influential within imperial Spain were shattered by the demand for a coherent answer to the ethical challenges posed by conquest and colonization.

NOTES

1. Andrea Doria was a veteran of naval campaigns against the Turks. In 1532 he led the fleet that captured Coron, Patras, and the castles protecting the entrance to the Gulf of Corinth. The following year, under the direction of Álvaro Bazán, he managed to disperse the Turkish fleet in Lepanto. On Charles V's struggle against the Turks in the Mediterranean, see Merriman (1962, 3:288-351).

2. The idea of history as the teacher of life comes from Cicero's *De oratore* (1959-1960, 2:36): "Historia uero testis temporum, lux ueritatis, uita memoriae, magistra uitae, nuntia uetustatis, quam uoce alia nisi oratoris immortalitati commendatur?" [History, true witness of the times, beacon of truth, giver of life to memory, teacher of life, messenger of antiquity, whose voice but the orator's could ensure its immortality?]. This didactic function of history was turned into an attractive tool of political reflection by advising rulers through the example of past events. Royal chronicler Lucio Marineo Sículo used this Ciceronian concept to explain the political utility of history: "La qual como sea por testimonio de muchos maestra de la vida humana, testigo de los tiempos passados, conseruadora de la memoria, mensajera de la verdad, por cierto da mucha causa de deleyte y de honesta vtilidad a los gra[n]des principes y señores, y generalmente a todos los hombres deseosos del saber" [The one which is, according to the testimony of many, the teacher of human life, witness of times past, keeper of memory, messenger of truth, certainly the cause of much delight and honest utility for great princes and lords, and generally to all men desirous of knowledge] (1539, [3]r). On the didactic role of history, see Rómulo Carbia (1934, 21-23) and Walter Mignolo (1982, 77, 94).

3. Gómara tells the marquis of Astorga more precisely that he is composing "la [h]ystoria de vuestro consuegro" [the history of your son's father-in-law], Cortés, but because he conceived the *Conquista de México* as an integral part of the *Historia general de las Indias*, it should be considered part of the same project.

4. The list seems sufficiently exhaustive: “Fueron sus coronistas fray Juan Bauprista Mantuano, Ao. de Palenzia, Antonio de Nibrixa, Pedro Martir milanes, fray Bernardino Gentile de Scicilcia, Hernando del Pulgar, Tristan de Silua, Gracia Dei gallego, Hernando de Riuera, y Carualjal. Escriuieron tambien algo Andres Bernal, Gco. Frz. de Ouiedo, y otros, empero escriue mejor que todos Geronimo Çorita en la historia que nombra de las empresas del Rey Don Fernando el Catholico” [His chroniclers were fray Juan Bautista Mantuano, Alonso de Palencia, Antonio de Nebrija, the Milanese Peter Martyr, *fray* Bernardo Gentile of Sicily, Hernando del Pulgar, Tristán de Silva, the Galician Gracia Dei, Hernando de Rivera, and [Lorenzo Galíndez de] Carvajal. Andrés Bernál[dez], Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo, and others wrote some, but Jerónimo Zurita writes better than all of them in the history that he calls *Las empresas del rey don Fernando el Católico* (The enterprises of King *don* Ferdinand the Catholic)] (Gómara 1912, 191).

5. Although Gómara’s discussion of the historians of his time in the *Anales* is by no means comprehensive, the events that he covers in the text (1912, 166, 187, 231, 233, 235, 244, 248, 258, 263) include the dispatch of Peter Martyr to Egypt in 1501; the completion of the histories of Pedro Bembo in 1513, Paolo Giovio in 1544, and Marco Guazzo in 1551; the publication of Oviedo’s *Historia general y natural* in 1535; the appointment in Rome of Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda as chronicler in 1536, and in Spain Florián de Ocampo in 1539 and Jerónimo Zurita in 1547; and the interventions of Las Casas against the publication of Sepúlveda’s *Democrates secundus* in 1546 and Oviedo’s *Historia general y natural* in 1548.

6. The service of humanist historians in positions of a political character is well established. Moreover, history itself constituted a form of civil service to the extent that it could be utilized to stimulate loyalty to a king or show the justice of a cause (Barnes 1962, 100; Gilbert 1965, 218–219; Hay 1977, 89; Breisach 1994, 154–155).

7. On this aspect of humanist historiography, see Gilbert (1965, 203–235) and Hay (1977, 89).

8. The editions of Agustín Millán at Zaragoza (Gómara 1553a) and Guillermo Millis at Medina del Campo (1553b) are the first to modify the original title of 1552. Gómara must have approved the change because it is retained in the revised and enlarged editions published by Millán with Pedro Bernuz at Zaragoza (1554a, 1555), and in Antwerp by Jan Steels (1554b, 1554c), Martin Nuyts (1554d, 1554e), and Hans de Laet (1554f, 1554g). Subsequent Italian translations would keep this variant title, but it disappears in the French and English editions. On the editions of the *Historia general* and its variants, see Wagner (1924).

9. The Latin edition was published in Nuremberg in 1524. See JCBL (1980, nos. 524/1, 5, 8), Sabin (1868–1936, nos. 16947–16948), HARRISSE (1866, nos.

125–126), Sanz (1960, nos. 933–934, 937–938), Medina (1958, nos. 70–71), and Church (1951, nos. 53–54).

10. The colophon of the text makes it clear that the printing occurred in Nuremberg when the *infante* Fernando presided over the Imperial Assembly in 1524 (Cortés 1524, 49r). Subsequently, the *infante* presented a copy of Savorgnano's translation to Carlo Contarini, patrician and ambassador of Venice (R. Commissione Colombiana 1892–1896, part 3, vol. 2:345). Contarini said that, when he gave him the copy, the *infante* had shown him a series of objects from New Spain that Charles V had sent to him. Among these items were plumes, skins, religious paraphernalia, and a mosaic tablet with images of the native gods. If Charles had sent him all these items, surely he would have included a copy of Cortés's *Cartas de relación*.

11. Pedro Mexía's *Historia del emperador* (History of the emperor) corroborates this statement: "bibió muchos años en grande honrra y estimaçión, ganada y mereçida por su persona, que verdaderamente fué señalada, y mereçió que su fama sea çelebrada, como lo será, en los tiempos venideros" [he lived many years in great honor and esteem, attained and merited by his persona, which truly was outstanding, and deserved that his fame be celebrated, as it will be, in the times to come] (1945, 115).

12. Martyr's *Decades of the New World* were both criticized and consulted by historians of the Indies such as Oviedo, Las Casas, and Gómara. In fact, Paolo Giovio cites it as his source on matters concerning the Indies in his *Historiarum sui temporis* (1550, 252–254) and it remained a relevant authority at least until 1580 when it was used in the *Historia de las Indias Occidentales*, which was prepared for the sultan Murad III (Elliott 1992, 88). The importance of Martyr's *Decades* in the sixteenth century has been emphasized by Parry (1981, 34) and Hirsch (1965, 41).

13. Here Oviedo does not mention Martyr by name, but undoubtedly he is referring to him because he will reiterate the same criticism explicitly in other parts of his *Historia general y natural* (1992, 2:82–83, 4:267–268, 271). Moreover, Martyr's *Decades* were specifically addressed to Popes Leo X and Clement VII, and King Frederick III of Naples, the cardinal of Aragón's uncle.

14. Oviedo calls him "el protonotario Pedro Mártir" [the prothonotary Peter Martyr] and mentions that he and Bernardo Gentile were "historiógrafos de Su Magestad" [historiographers of His Majesty] (1992, 4:271). Gómara mentions him as the first abbot of Jamaica in the *Historia general* (1552, 1:25v) and as "cronista de los Reyes Católicos" [chronicler of the Catholic Monarchs] in the *Anales* (1912: 191). Las Casas, in turn, was present when he was made a member of the Council of the Indies (1988–1998, 4:1474, 5:2047, 2198). On the positions occupied by Martyr, see Thacher (1903, 1:3–33) and Alba (1989).

15. Bernardo Gentile appears in Gómara (1912, 191), who mentions him in the *Anales* as "Bernardino Gentil" among the chroniclers of King Ferdinand the Catholic. See also Merriman's note 6 in Gómara (1912, 44–45).

16. Martyr's appointment as royal chronicler probably was related to his activity of writing about the Indies in his *Decades*. Francisco Esteve Barba (1964, 67) thought that the position of chronicler of the Indies existed since 1526, the year in which Martyr died and Guevara received the commission to continue his work. As previously discussed, however, the testimony of Las Casas suggests that Martyr also conducted his historiographical activity with some institutional backing.

17. On Oviedo's appointment as royal chronicler, see Carbia (1934, 76–78), Esteve Barba (1964), and the extensive study of Tudela (1992, cxviii–cxix).

18. With regard to Italian historiography, Felix Gilbert (1965, 218–219) states that an individual could be appointed to the position of royal chronicler with the charge of completing some kind of specific historiographical commission or as recompense after the fact. This was likely the case in Spain with Gómara.

19. In 1563 the *bachiller* Juan Ruiz referred to Gómara as “*coronista de su magestad*” [chronicler of his majesty] in a letter granting power of attorney. Robert Lewis (1983, 54–55) has suggested that Ruiz was thinking about the *Anales*; however, there is no evidence of this. It is more likely that Gómara, if anything, merely had the public's unofficial recognition as “chronicler of his majesty” from his *Historia general*, the only one of his works that was published. Ruiz was a cleric from the town of Gómara and served as one of the executors of López de Gómara's will. In this power of attorney letter Ruiz authorized Pedro Moreno to recover money from debts that had not been paid to Gómara. A copy of the document may be consulted in Lewis (1983, 359–369).

20. On these *cédulas*, see Tudela (1992, cxviii–cxix).

21. John Elliott (1984a, 155) also considers relevant the *donatários*, or proprietary titles, used by the Portuguese to compensate individuals who served the crown in the occupation and development of certain territories. The system was employed in Madeira and the Azores in the fifteenth century, and then in Brazil, which in 1534 was still divided into twelve hereditary captaincies.

22. On the *encomienda* in the colonization of the Indies, see Gibson (1966, 48–67), Haring (1947, 42–74), Simpson (1982), Elliott (1984a, 162–171, 188–196), and Lockhart and Schwartz (1983, 68–73, 92–96). Slavery also served to punish native resistance and provided a stimulus to colonization in the case of the Caribbean. See Palencia-Roth (1993).

23. The *encomienda* guaranteed the subordination of the Indians to the colonial process because it offered a system of coercion whereby they were subjected to the authority of the monarchs; they would serve as the workforce in mining, agriculture, and the Spaniards' personal service; and they would be evangelized by the missionaries.

24. Ernst Schäfer has suggested that one of the causes motivating Charles V to make major legal and institutional reforms in the government of the Indies

in 1542 was the Cortes of Valladolid's request for him to "remediar las crueldades que se hacen en las Indias contra los Indios, porque dello será Dios muy servido y las Indias se conservarán y no se despoblarán, como se van despoblando" [remedy the cruelties that are committed in the Indies against the Indians, because God will be greatly served and the Indies will be preserved and not depopulated, as they continue being depopulated now] (1935, 61-62).

25. See also Hanke (1974), Zavala (1988, 255-318), and Adorno (1992b).

26. The most renowned case is that of Diego Beltrán, a member of the Council of the Indies who accepted gifts and money from Cortés, Diego de Almagro, Hernando Pizarro, and Gonzalo de Olmos (Schäfer 1935, 64).

27. On this *visita* and the New Laws, see Schäfer (1935, 61-70).

28. Events in Peru concerned the crown even before the conquistadors' rebellion. Schäfer (1935, 62) stated that the emperor had been closely following developments since 1540, when the proceedings against the Pizarro brothers for the death of Diego de Almagro began.

29. According to Lewis Hanke (1974, 57-61), Las Casas and *fray* Rodrigo de Andrada played a central role in this process. They got the Council of the Indies to postpone its decision about the concession of rights in perpetuity to the *encomenderos* in 1550. Also, their recommendation in 1543 of revoking conquest permits was echoed in the Council of the Indies' suggestion of July 3, 1549, to suspend them and the emperor's order of April 16, 1550, which put the suspension into effect.

30. The objectives of these treatises basically were (1) to affirm the rights of the monarchs of Castile concerning the Indies, (2) to show the illegitimacy of the conquests in relation to the legal foundations of the empire in the New World, and (3) to obtain the elimination of the *encomienda*. *Fray* Domingo de Soto prepared a summary of the controversy titled *Aquí se contiene vna disputa o controuersia* (Here is contained a dispute or controversy) and printed in Seville by Sebastián Trugillo in 1552 (JCBL 1980, no. 552/9). On the Valladolid debate, see Hanke (1974, 67-71) and Adorno (1992b, 58-62).

31. These documents dated 1553 and 1558 refer to debts that Martín Cortés, the marquis of the Valley, had deferred to him as a form of payment. Transcriptions of them may be consulted in Lewis (1983, 332-348, 354-357).

32. Olaus was elected archbishop of Sweden in 1544 and was well known for his *Carta marina* (Map of the sea) [1539] and *Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus* (History of the northern peoples) [1555]. In the *Historia general*, Gómara calls him "Olaog, Godo, arçobispo de Upsalia" [Olaus, the Goth, archbishop of Uppsala] and says he had long conversations with him in Bologna and Venice (1552, 1:4v). Don Diego Hurtado de Mendoza, in turn, had a long intellectual and political career. Gómara refers to him as a "varon notable y señalado en estos reynos en letras y negoçios" [notable gentleman, distinguished in these kingdoms in letters and business matters] (1853, 430). They had stayed together

in 1540 when *don* Diego was the ambassador of Spain in Venice (1539–1546). On this period of Gómara's life, see Lewis (1983, 28–31).

33. For a more detailed discussion of the relationship between Cortés and Gómara, see Lewis (1983, 31–35).

34. The commission received by Gómara is documented in an order of payment that the second marquis of the Valley, Martín Cortés, made out to Gómara in Madrid on March 4, 1553. A transcription of the document may be consulted in Lewis (1983, 330).

35. Gómara was working on the *Conquista de México* at least by 1545, when he mentions this work in a dedication to the marquis of Astorga (1853, 332–333).

36. The best example of this is the failure of Inca Garcilaso de la Vega to obtain mercies for his father's services around 1561, discussed later in this chapter.

37. Salvador de Madariaga (1986, 524) thinks that Charles V came to consult Cortés about matters concerning the Indies. It is difficult to determine if the conquistador managed to achieve such a degree of political authority with the emperor, but the contemporary testimony of Sepúlveda (1987, 142) indicates that Charles was present at one of the meetings in which Cortés recounted his experiences in the New World.

38. The political aura that Cortés had acquired increased when he returned from New Spain in 1540. The Council of the Indies sent representatives to receive him and reserved him a seat among the great magistrates when he attended its sessions (Madariaga 1986, 550).

39. On the roles of Loaysa and Cobos in the council, see Merriman (1962, 3:621–662). On Cobos and his influence in Charles's government, see Keniston (1958).

40. Information about the Academia de Cortés is scarce and comes from Pedro de Navarra (1565, 42r–43r). Its treatment in secondary sources is also limited (Madariaga 1986, 556–557; Ramos 1972, 113–114; Lewis 1983, 33–34).

41. Schäfer (1935, 38–39) has shown that Juan de Samano was official secretary beginning in 1513 under the orders of Lope de Conchillos, was appointed to the Council of the Indies in 1519, and was already "Secretario para los negocios de las Indias" [secretary for the transactions of the Indies] in 1522, a position he held until his death in 1558.

42. According to Schäfer (1935, 369), Francisco de Eraso was secretary of the council between 1559 and 1570.

43. Roger Merriman (1912, xvii–xix) stated that Gómara's extravagant elegies of Cortés displeased the crown. Merriman thought that Charles wanted to diminish the conquistador's prominence and limit his power in the territories he had acquired. Henry Raup Wagner (1924, 29–30) suggested that the prohibition could merely have been against the Medina del Campo edition, which lacked

the *privilegio*, and that Cortés's relatives may have requested the recall of earlier editions. Ramón Iglesia (1942, 119–133) returned to Merriman's theory, adding Gómara's criticisms of Charles V's ingratitude, the *Historia general*'s liberty of judgment with respect to colonial policies, and Las Casas's possible intervention. Marcel Bataillon (1956), on the other hand, interpreted the *Historia general*'s prohibition as an effort of the crown to neutralize Cortés's political influence in New Spain. His argument is based on a comparison of three prohibitions recorded in the *Copilata de leyes de Indias* against Cortés's Letters in 1527 and against Gómara's *Historia* in 1553 and 1566 (the latter, Bataillon argued, coincided with the conspiracy of the second marquis of the Valley, Martín Cortés, in Mexico). The hypothesis of the conflict between the crown and the conquistadors – particularly Fernando Cortés – as a social group, however, does not completely explain the prohibition. See the critical commentary on each of these theories in Robert Lewis (1983, 317–326).

44. Hernando de Aragón was the grandson of King Ferdinand the Catholic and had been raised in the court. He became the archbishop of Zaragoza in 1539 at the insistence of Charles V, and Philip II named him viceroy of Aragón in 1566. See Colás Latorre, Criado Mainar, and Miguel García (1998).

45. Ramón Iglesia (1942, 120–129) offered a very similar reading concerning possible conflicts that the *Historia general* posed with respect to imperial politics.

46. In the "Argumento" (Argument) of his *Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las Indias*, Las Casas explained that he had composed the text at the request of the court after he had related the massacres conducted by the conquistadors (1988–1998, 10:31). Then, in the work's prologue, Las Casas (1988–1998, 10:32–33) stated that he had presented a version of the text to the archbishop of Toledo, who presented it to Prince Philip. At the time of publication the text was not only previously known in the court, but the printing itself was done to present the text to the prince. See also Wagner (1967, 107–120).

47. In her examination of the censorship of Jerónimo Román's *Repúblicas del mundo*, Rolena Adorno (1992a) has demonstrated that the Council of Castile ignored the petitions of the Council of the Indies in 1575 to seize the book and remove some objectionable passages. Taking into account the second publication of the work in 1595 with royal permission, she convincingly concluded that "[s]tern condemnations of the conquistadors were evidently not a matter that merited royal concern" (1992a, 817).

48. There were five printings in all, although the number increases when counting the editions that basically have the same typeset but a different title page (JCBL 1980, nos. 552/22, 553/30–31, 554/28–32, 555/29).

49. The first foreign-language editions published in the sixteenth century include Italian translations by Agustino Cravaliz published in Rome in 1556 (JCBL 1980, no. 556/22) and by Lucio Mauro in 1557 (JCBL 1980, nos. 557/22 and 565/26); French by M. Fumée in 1568 (JCBL 1980, no. 568/10) and by

Guillaume le Breton in 1588 (JCBL 1980, no. 588/35); and English by T. Nicholas in 1578 (JCBL 1980, no. 578/41). The Italian translations were regularly reprinted from 1556 until the late 1570s and then in 1599; the French, from 1568 to 1588; and the English only once (1596) before the end of the century. On Cravaliz's translations see Lucia Binotti (1992).

50. Barcia's series played a central role in the incorporation of Gómara's text into the colonial canon. Bibliographical references of this edition are found in JCBL (1980, no. 749/29) and, for a detailed description of its contents, Sabin (1868–1936, no. 3350).

51. Padilla's list mentions one copy of the *Historia* and the protocol of Francisco Dávalos lists two copies among Sarria's books (Leonard 1992, 373, 400).

52. Las Casas's criticisms are found in his *Historia de las Indias* (1527–1559), those of Díaz in his *Historia verdadera* (ca. 1550–1568), and those of the Inca in his *Comentarios reales* (1609), *Historia general del Perú* (1617), and his annotations in the margins of his personal copy of Gómara's *Historia*. A wider debate concerning these historians' criticisms is found in the works of Ramón Iglesia (1944, 77–96, for Díaz; 1942, 130–152, for Las Casas, Díaz, and the Inca), Joaquín Ramírez Cabañas (1943), José Luis Martínez (1981), Robert Lewis (1986), Rolena Adorno (1988, 241–245), and José Antonio Rodríguez Garrido (1993). It is also relevant to consider the synthesis that Lewis (1983, 294–297) presents on sixteenth- and seventeenth-century opinions about Gómara's *Historia*.

53. Christopher Columbus, in his *Libro de privilegios* (Book of privileges), talks about these royal favors as granting nobility, honor, and mercies together: “[E]ntre los otros galardones e remuneraciones que los reyes pueden fazer a los que bien e lealmente les sirven, es honrarlos e sublimarlos entre los otros de su linage, e los ennobleçer e decorar e honrar, e les faser otros muchos bienes e graçias e mercedes” (1996, 262) [Among other rewards and remunerations that kings can give to those who well and loyally serve them, is the honor and exaltation of them above others of their lineage, and ennoblement, decoration, and honor of them, as well as the conferral on them of many benefits, gifts, and favors] (1996, 72).

54. One of Herrera's refutations leaves no doubt that he was referring to Gómara: “Quando al Coronista de Cortés, que disce la parte contraria que su Agüelo tobo con una sog a la garganta, nunco [sic] tal se a fallado, nin Gómara xamás estobo en las Indias” [Regarding Cortés's chronicler, whom the opposing party says that his grandfather had a rope to his neck, this has never been established, nor was Gómara ever in the Indies] (CDIA 1864–1884, 37:271–272).

55. According to the Colegio Hispano-Boloniense's classification of the report, Herrera employed three types of evidence: the papers and letters of the

bishop of Chiapas, the bishop of Darién, and two religious who wrote to the king; what the histories say; and “los papeles, cartas, libros e escrituras que se fallaron en los Archivos de los Secretarios que subcedieron en los Rexistros e Protocolos de las Indias, e en los Archivos del Colexio de San Gregorio de Valladolid” [the papers, letters, books, and writings that are found in the Archives of the Secretaries who succeeded in the post of the Registries and Protocols of the Indies, and in the Archives of the Colegio de San Gregorio in Valladolid] (CDIA 1864–1884, 37:101–103).