From the Reformation in 1517 to the Wars of Religion (1562–98), uncertainty and strife in Europe affected the expansion of France and England in the New World. What was to follow was even worse, especially in France, where a civil war fought on the pretext of religion, as Montaigne would later write, divided the country and prevented it from concentrating its efforts on western colonization. As France weakened, Spain grew in strength. As Spain’s power increased, so did the dissenting voices within and without the country. The anxiety over Spanish material and imperial success, including the Christianization of the Natives, augmented in France and England.

During much of the sixteenth century, England had sought a foreign policy that would guarantee its own independence. This policy, as R. B. Wernham has observed, relied on three factors: the development of sea power to protect its coast; the neutralization of Scotland and Ireland; the balance between France and Spain, so that the one would defend England if the other attacked it. 1 Although Spain and England were divided by religion, the Spanish often sought good relations with England, sometimes as a balance against France. The empresa de Inglaterra, or the enterprise of England, had religious as well as economic and political dimensions, a Catholic power fighting with a Protestant country, but Philip II had strained relations with the papacy after the election of Sixtus V. Philip had not given unconditional support to putting Mary Stuart on the throne as he feared that the Guise and France would control her, resisted the excommunication of Elizabeth I, and refused to permit the excommunication of 1570 to be published in all his territories. 2

Until the 1560s, France, an ally to Scotland, was the greatest threat to England, but Spain replaced France in that role. With the ascension of Elizabeth I, England made its final break with Rome, which rendered relations with France and Spain difficult and helped create more friendly relations with Reformed Scotland. Spain sent an army into the Netherlands in 1567 to crush the rebels and Protestantism. This action also damaged England’s most lucrative overseas
Representing the New World

market, so that when the English sought alternative markets, they came up against Spanish might and interests. At the end of 1584, the secret treaty of Joinville meant that the Catholic League became a dependent ally of Spain and that France could not pursue her policy of balancing the power of Spain. The English feared the Spanish army, the finest anywhere, and, in August 1585 by the treaty of Nonsuch, Elizabeth I committed 7,000 troops to protect the Netherlands. These actions led to the clash between England and Spain in 1588. The fear of Spain and the Catholic League in France had already helped to turn up the anti-Spanish and pro-Huguenot rhetoric in England, something we can observe from the translations of narratives concerning the Spanish massacre of the French Protestants in Florida from the 1560s to Hakluyt’s “Western Discourse” in 1584 and beyond.

Having discussed the period from the deaths of Henry VIII and François I to the year of the first narrative of the Spanish massacre of the French colonists in Florida and examined the praise for Spain in England during the reign of Mary and the first important French description of Spanish cruelty in the New World, I will now analyze later trends in the relations among Spain, France, and England. More particularly, I wish to concentrate on the anti-Spanish tracts of the 1560s and 1570s to the narratives leading up to the Armada (1567–88) and the intensification of rivalry with Spain while France and England were attempting to expand and establish permanent settlements in the New World. The example of Spain now entered an intense phase.

Here, I will examine the development in France and England of anti-Spanish sentiment, much of which grew out of the conflict between Spain and the Huguenots in Florida. Even though the French and English continued to find positive models in Spanish America, their critique of Spain often became part of a mobilization of propaganda in the service of the national interests of the two countries and their desire for expansion and permanent colonies in the New World. The variety and range of French and English texts about the New World continued to increase and may have been a function of the very imitation of Spain that we have been examining. The more texts in France and England incorporated the varied and intricate texts of Spain concerning the New World, the more the French and English implied a deference or respect at one level for Spain and the more they were able to use this knowledge to challenge and displace Spanish power in the Americas.

By examining the representation of Spain in key texts from adventurers like John Hawkins and Dominique Gourges, cosmographers like Belleforest and Thevet, translations of Spanish writers like Gómara and Las Casas, Huguenot historians like Léry and Chauveton, and promoters of empire like Hakluyt the Younger, this chapter will demonstrate that the attitudes toward Spain in England and France were reaching a crisis and were becoming ever more intricate. The genres of exploration narrative, cosmography, translation, history, and government report were distinct but overlapped in some conventions and in content, so that while distinguishing them in separate parts, I will also admit their shared techniques and content. While the responses of these writers in these “genres,” or kinds of writing, to Spain were still ambivalent and contradictory,