Introduction

Although best known for his masterpiece *Don Quixote de la Mancha*, published in two parts in 1605 and 1615, Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra (1547–1616) began writing decades earlier, composing works for the stage that have understandably received much less attention from literary critics than his tales of the would-be knight errant of La Mancha. However, his theatrical pieces have earned the respect of scholars of Spanish literature in their own right. Among Cervantes's dramatic works, *La destrucción de Numancia* stands out most, particularly for its historical plot, its difference in style and structure from the *comedia nueva* of Lope de Vega (1562–1635), and the contrasting critical analyses it has received since its initial publication in 1784 by Don Antonio de Sancha.[1]

The play is unique in Cervantine drama in that it is a history play inspired by Classical and neo-Classical tragedy, but it also attracts scholarly attention because its writer was a member of a group of pre-Lopean playwrights whose works flourished in the 1570s and 1580s. Stefano Arata reminds us that 'los que no consiguieron adaptarse a la nueva pauta, impuesta por Lope y su escuela, tuvieron que hacerse de lado y abandonar el mundo de la farándula'.[2] He refers to the

1 The original publication was entitled *Viage al Parnaso, compuesto por Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra. Dirigido a D. Rodrigo de Tapia, Caballero del hábito de Santiago, etc. Publícanse ahora de nuevo una Tragedia y una Comedia inéditas del mismo Cervantes: aquélla intitulada La Numancia: ésta El Trato de Argel. En Madrid por don Antonio de Sancha. Año de MDCCLXXXIV*. The play was initally composed between 1581 and 1585.

2 Stefano Arata, '*La conquista de Jerusalén*, Cervantes y la generación teatral de 1580', *Crit*, 54 (1992), 9–112 (p. 9). This publication contains an article by Arata and a complete reproduction of the manuscript of the play *La conquista de Jerusalén por Godofre de Bullón*, which the author says could be the play *La Jerusalén* to which Cervantes refers in his 'Adjunta al Parnaso' (1614). The manuscript can be found in the library of the Royal Palace in Madrid with the shelf marking Ms II-460, ff. 246–69.

'generación perdida' of Spanish dramatists, namely Juan de la Cueva (1543–1612), Cristóbal de Virués (1550?-1609), Andrés Rey de Artieda (1549–1613), Lupercio Leonardo de Argensola (1559–1613), Jerónimo Bermúdez (1530?-1605?), Gabriel Lobo Lasso de la Vega (1559–1623), and Cervantes himself.[3] Their style of theatrical works, mainly tragic in nature and modeled on historical or legendary events and partially on classical dramatic structures, became so economically unviable that they had to rely trades, or adapt to the *comedia nueva*, to make a living. *La Numancia* appears to belong to the tradition of its predecessors and contemporaries by providing commentaries on Spanish society, politics, religion, and foreign policy in the 1570s and 80s by portraying historical events on stage.

Most of the critics who have hailed *La Numancia* classify the work as propaganda for Spain's imperialist and religious expansion in the sixteenth century, but I contend that the seemingly patriotic stance that Cervantes takes within this work is a façade that cleverly conceals a deeper message of criticism of the actions of the government of Philip II of Spain (1556–1598) and the corrupt and often hypocritical operations of the Roman Catholic Church and the Holy Inquisition. The siege and destruction of the Celtiberian city within *La Numancia* draws attention to the play's depiction of imperialism in contrast to the Numantians' humanity, which is central to my argument.

3 There has been disagreement concerning the dates of Cueva, Bermúdez, and Lobo Lasso de la Vega. For Cueva, I follow the dates given by José María Reyes Cano, who has found baptismal and death records for Cueva: 'Documentos relativos a Juan de la Cueva: Nuevos datos para su biografía', *AH*, 196 (1981), 107–135. For Bermúdez, I follow the dates given by Mitchell D. Triwedi, stating that the Galician friar was last mentioned alive in the records of his monastery in 1604 and by 1606 he appeared on the list of those who had died: 'Introducción' to *Primeras tragedias españolas* by Jerónimo Bermúdez, ed. by Mitchell D. Triwedi (Madrid: Castalia, 1975). For Lasso de la Vega's dates, I follow Alfredo Hermenegildo's observation that the author's portrait published at the front of his *Primera parte del Cortés Valeroso y Mexicana* in 1588 states that the writer is 29 years old. See Alfredo Hermenegildo, 'Introducción' in *Tragedia de la destruyción de Constantinopla* by Gabriel Lobo Lasso de la Vega, ed. by Alfredo Hermenegildo (Kassel: Reichenberger, 1983).

In order to clarify terms, it is necessary to discuss the significance of empire, imperialism, and tyranny in the sixteenth century, and to establish the usage of these terms here. Cervantes was not an advocate of what have become twenty-first-century ideals of democracy, justice, and self-rule that so many in our times strive to achieve and disseminate. However, as an intellectual, he was certainly aware of what was said to constitute tyranny and the inherent injustice that that particular form of rule implies; it is the despotic notion of imperialism, that of one nation overtaking, occupying, and annexing another without thought to the potential consequences for either the conquerors or the conquered, or to stating a just cause for such behaviour, that I believe Cervantes wishes to portray negatively in *La Numancia*.

It is necessary, however, to explore further the concepts of empire in sixteenth-century Spain and how they evolved into the notion of empire that existed in the time period of *La Numancia*'s composition. In his book about Spanish influence in Rome in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Thomas James Dandalet explains that many Golden Age Spaniards considered their rulers to be the rightful heirs of the Roman Empire.[4] In their state-sponsored histories of Spain, both Florián de Ocampo (1499?-1555?) and Ambrosio de Morales (1513–1591), writing for Charles V (Holy Roman Emperor (1519–1558); King Charles I of Spain (1516–1556) and Philip II respectively, disregarded the traditional legend of the founding of Rome by Romulus in 753 BC;[5] instead, they attribute the establishment of the Eternal City to ancient Spanish kings, thus 'establishing Spain's place in the classical past' and giving Spanish 'national origins' to the Roman Empire.[6]

According to Spaniards of the Golden Age, the Roman Empire fell because it lacked the cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, temperance,

4 Thomas James Dandalet, *Spanish Rome: 1500–1700* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2001).

5 Florián de Ocampo, *Primera crónica general de España, que mandó componer el rey Alonso vista enmendada por Florián de Ocampo* (Zamora: Augustín de Paz y Juan de Picardo, 1541) and Ambrosio de Morales, *Corónica general de España* (Alcalá de Henares: Iuan Iñíguez de Lequerica, 1574).

6 Dandalet, p. 43.

and fortitude;[7] Gothic hordes from northern Europe raided Rome and deposed the last of the Caesars, Romulus Augustulus (AD 475–476), in AD 476. Europe maintained its spiritual leader in the pope, but suddenly lacked a temporal world ruler in the emperor. This was the purpose of creating the Holy Roman Empire on Christmas Day 800, when Pope St. Leo III (795–816; canonised in 1673) crowned Charlemagne, King of the Franks (786–814), as Emperor Charles I (800–814):

> The Empire thus renewed in Charlemagne was regarded as indeed the Roman Empire itself through the theory of the translation of the Empire. As Constantine had translated the Empire to the East, so now in Charlemagne it was translated back to the West. Thus Charlemagne's title carried with it in theory the full Roman headship of the world, the universal world rule.[8]

Charlemagne's empire made him the most powerful European ruler since the fall of Rome 324 years earlier, and his military might became even more necessary with the rapid spread of Islamic strength across northern Africa and into Iberia.

After Charlemagne's death, his empire was split up amongst his heirs, and the Holy Roman Empire began its descent into impotence. The constant conflict between pope and emperor usually favoured the pope over the centuries, as the emperor had no legal grounds on which to demand allegiance from the other European heads of states outside of the Empire. There was a series of treaties and alliances formed between the papacy, the Empire, and the other nations that pitted these powers against each other. The lust for more power, wealth, and territory plagued all the ambitious personalities of the Middle Ages, and the pope, being a head of state himself as well as the leader of the Church, was no exception. In fact, since he was the spiritual leader and possessed the power to excommunicate those who sided against him, he was able to persuade many leaders to fight under his banner. This immense power piqued the curiosity of others regarding the Pontiff's position. Charles V's grandfather, Emperor Maximilian I (1493–1519) upon ascending

7 Ibid., p. 81.

8 Frances A. Yates, *Astraea: The Imperial Theme in the Sixteenth Century* (London: Routledge and Kegan, 1975), p. 2

the imperial throne expressed his aspirations towards the papal throne, and even entertained thoughts of pursuing the reestablishment of the Byzantine Empire, which fell in 1453 to the Ottoman Turks, and claiming that imperial crown for himself.[9]

So, when Maximilian died, Charles was elected emperor and with his vast inheritances from his paternal and maternal grandparents, he invoked in the imaginations of the people the possible return to greatness in Europe and the world under one monarch and one Catholic faith. Controlling almost every strategic point in Europe, either through direct control or tactical marriages, Charles made the Holy Roman Empire more of a true empire than at any other time in the institution's existence since Charlemagne. More than a mere titular emperor, as most of his predecessors were, Charles was the rightful ruler of most of Europe, at one time holding over sixty titles.[10] Along with his power on the continent, Charles V held the unique position being 'el primero y el único emperador euroamericano'.[11] With the conquest of the New World, Charles, along with his supporters and his enemies, knew that the scales of power, which had so long weighed in favour of the Holy Father in Rome, had now shifted towards the emperor.

Charles, though, made it clear in his first official act as emperor in the Cortes of La Coruña in 1520 that his imperial mission would be to maintain what he possessed already and not to seek to annex what belonged to other princes, especially Christian princes.[12] The two forms of imperialism at his disposal were that of the Christian Empire and that of the Universal Monarch. The latter held the potential for the ending of the world's problems under one ruler, the *monarca universal*, the *Dominus mundi* or lord of the world.[13] With the commencement of the Reformation causing a threat to the power of the Church, the political stability of Europe also faltered. Seizing absolute control over

9 Friedrich Heer, *The Holy Roman Empire*, trans. by Janet Sondheimer (London: Phoenix, 1968), p. 139.

10 Ibid., p. 149.

11 Ramón Menéndez Pidal, *Idea imperial de Carlos V* (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1955), p. 32.

12 Ibid., p. 20.

13 Yates, p. 5.

the situation would have been considered a desirable option by many. Instead he chose the *universitas christiana*.

Charles V certainly had the opportunities early in his reign to expand his holdings and become the universal monarch, but he balked at them in order to preserve tranquillity among Christians. In 1525, his forces defeated those of the aggressive King Francis I of France (1515–1547) in the battle of Pavia. The French king was captured, and Charles's advisors urged him to march on Paris in an attempt to pacify Francis's movements against Italy and the Holy Roman Empire; nevertheless, the young emperor refused and Francis was ransomed only to incite further troubles against Charles. Then after the sack of Rome in 1527, which resulted from Pope Clement VII's (1523–1534) endeavour to gain more territory for himself in the name of the Church by threatening to invade Charles's Italian kingdom of Naples and speculating beyond the borders of the Papal States in the North, the Holy Father was besieged inside Rome's Castel Sant'Angelo. Although the Holy Roman Emperor had finally gained superiority over the pope, Charles relaxed his grip on Clement for the common good of Christianity. Charles felt it was his duty to defend Christendom in partnership with the pope, and even when the pope did not share this belief, Charles's purpose did not falter.[14]

Charles V was a true man of empire in that he concerned himself with the welfare of each of his dominions, but his initial reception in Iberia, which is most relevant here, is indicative of the anxiety towards possible overlordship by a foreign ruler; however, Spain came to embrace him. Iberia's kingdoms were separate states with their own *fueros*, and these were respected after the union of Castile and Aragon by the Catholic Monarchs Isabella I (1474–1504) and Ferdinand V (King of Castile (1474–1504); King Ferdinand II of Aragón (1479–1516)). The succession of Charles, the first monarch to hold both crowns alone, placed on the thrones a Flemish prince who brought with him more foreigners to assist him in his rule.[15] The advent of non-Spaniards

14 G. R. Elton, *Reformation Europe: 1517–1559* (Glasgow: Fontana/Collins, 1963), p. 37.

15 From this point, I will refer to the sovereigns as Kings of Spain, even though political unification of the crowns of Castile and Aragón did not occur until the 1700s.

sparked opposition, such as the *Comuneros* revolt (1520–1522), but the Spanish leaders soon realised the importance their kingdoms held in Charles's empire. He respected the rights of the individual states, and soon succumbed to the demands of assigning natives to the most important posts in government. By the time of his death, Charles had travelled extensively throughout his lands, but Spaniards had come to view him as being more Spanish than any other nationality; after all, as Spaniards came to boast, 'Charles spoke French with his ambassadors, Italian with his wives, German with his grooms but Spanish with God'.[16] Perhaps this is the reason why Spanish history refers to him to this day by his imperial title of Charles V and not his Spanish title.

It was his role as sovereign of Spain that made Charles responsible for what can be considered the biggest moral crisis he faced: expansion into America.[17] Millions of Native Americans perished as a result of Spanish and Portuguese incursion into the New World in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. There existed a discrepancy, noticeable even in the sixteenth century, between Charles V's role as defender of the Catholic Faith, pursuing the ideal, although unrealistic, goal of world unity under the merciful Church of Christ, and allowing the brutal and genocidal conquest of the New World in his name. It is true that by the time Charles came into power, nearly thirty years of Spanish presence in America had passed and much damage had already been done.[18] The success of the Hispanisation of America and the criticisms of the atrocities being committed there made their way back to Spain and prompted a large-scale moral debate that the emperor, clearly a man with a conscience as seen after the sack of Rome by his imperial troops in 1527, wished to resolve.[19] Some felt that the emperor did not

16 Heer, p. 150.

17 See Lewis Hanke, *La lucha por la justicia en la conquista de América*, trans. by Ramón Iglesia (Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, 1949).

18 Walter Cohen, 'The Discourse of Empire in the Renaissance' in *Cultural Authority in Golden Age Spain*, ed. by Mariana S. Brownlee and Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1995), pp. 260–283 (p. 261).

19 See Alfonso de Valdés, *Diálogo de las cosas ocurridas en Roma*, ed. by José F. Montesinos (Madrid: Ediciones de 'La Lectura', 1928). Valdés, one of Charles V's secretaries, wrote this dialogue in order to vindicate the emperor in the sack

possess the right to make laws for the whole world,[20] and insisted that if the Church were to continue spreading the gospel, it had to be done in a pious way without coercion by those preaching.[21]

Writers such as Fray Antonio de Guevara (1496–1545) and Father Francisco de Vitoria (1480?–1546) censured the brutality of Spanish colonialism, but it was the works of Fray Bartolomé de las Casas (1474–1566) that caused Charles V to summon him to a debate on the morality and legality of expansion into America. Las Casas argued that:

> the Indians, being subjects of the Spanish Crown, should enjoy equal rights with the Spaniards; that they were intellectually capable of receiving the Faith and should be gently instructed in the ways of Christianity under the government of benevolent officials; and that the colonists should support themselves by their own efforts and had no right to enforced Indian labour.[22]

Occurring in Valladolid in 1550, the great debate pitted Las Casas, defending the rights of the Amerindians, against the humanist Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda (1490–1573), who based his argument that the Americans were naturally inferior to Europeans and were justly enslaved by the Spaniards on Aristotelian thought.[23] The debate proved inconclusive, but the fact that a debate transpired is indicative of a trend of government action that regulated the Spanish presence in America.[24] Enslavement of the Indians was abolished, and Charles V even considered giving

of Rome. He places blame on the sins of the Pope Clement VII and the Roman people.

20 Bernice Hamilton, *Political Thought in Sixteenth-Century Spain: A Study of the Political Ideas of Vitoria, de Soto, Suárez, and Molina* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1963), p. 96.

21 Ibid., p. 124.

22 J. H. Elliott, *Imperial Spain: 1469–1716* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1963), p. 73.

23 See Lewis Hanke, *La humanidad es una: Estudio acerca de la querella que sobre la capacidad intellectual y religiosa de los indígenas americanos sostuvieron en 1550 Bartolomé de las Casas y Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda*, trans. by Jorge Avendaño-Inestrillas and Margarita Sepúlveda de Baranda, 2nd edn (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1985).

24 Elliott, *Imperial Spain*, p. 74.

Peru back to the Incas for lack of evidence that he possessed the rightful claim to rule that country.[25]

Despite the widespread debate on the subject, pointing toward not only the freedom of intellectual debate in the reign of Charles V, but also toward a substantial opposition to Spanish advancement in America, 'it is highly improbable that so much would have been achieved if the Spanish Crown had not already been predisposed in favour of Las Casas's ideals for less altruistic motives of his own'.[26] Charles knew, as did his maternal grandparents, that the more power gained by those in America the less control he would have over them being separated by an ocean in the age of sail. Although efforts to control Spaniards in America continued, and had their successes and failures, the Spanish presence steadily grew.[27]

Six years after the debate of Valladolid, Charles retired to the monastery in Yuste, where he died two years later, after having abdicated his Spanish crown to Philip II. Like the first Charles the Great,[28] this new Charlemagne split his empire, leaving his Austrian holdings to his brother, who was elected Emperor Ferdinand I (1558–1564). Even though Charles supported his son's candidacy as emperor, anti-Spanish sentiment in the imperial cities and fear that Philip would attempt to Hispanicise Germany, resulted in Ferdinand's election, despite the new emperor having been raised in Castile. Ferdinand favoured religious tolerance and reforms, hoping that proposals such as allowing priests to marry would bring Lutherans back to the Catholic Church.[29] Philip, on the other hand, was a staunch Counterreformationist who envisaged the return of a strictly orthodox Catholicism throughout all of Europe.

Charles V passed on his imperial ideas to his son, insisting that Philip continue the policy of Christian imperialism. Upon ascending the throne, Philip inherited the feud with the anti-Spanish Pope Paul IV

25 Heer, p. 168. Elliott reminds us that the Spanish conscience was much less disturbed by the importation of African slaves (*Imperial Spain*, p. 74).

26 Elliott, *Imperial Spain*, p. 74.

27 For an overview of Spanish incursion into America, see Ibid., pp. 62–76.

28 Charlemagne, meaning Charles the Great, comes from the Latin *Carolus Magnus*.

29 Heer, p. 181.

(1555–1559),[30] which tested his devotion to his father's manner of rule. Just as in 1527, the pope attempted to expand his power in Italy at the expense of the Spanish crown, and Philip's forces marched on Rome. On this occasion Rome was spared, as was the pope, who was protected by the Third Duke of Alba, Fernando Álvarez de Toledo (1507–1582); Philip chose not to conquer Rome, even though the papacy continued to oppose the king.[31] However, the war 'was far more important in establishing Spanish hegemony in Rome than any earlier event had been, including the sack of 1527'.[32] Although the Papal States had not come under the direct control of the Spanish Empire, Philip's indirect rule over Rome in the form of monetary and food contribution and military protection strengthened after Paul IV's submission.

Throughout the following decades, Philip observed the Christian imperial ideal, as his father had wished, but his fight against heresy escalated to a much greater extent than his father's. Charles V knew that he could not completely eradicate Protestantism, but Philip made a great effort to rid his realms of heretics. Philip also faced another threat from within and without his borders: the strength of Islam. Conflicts in the 1560s and 70s, most notably against the *moriscos* of Alpujarras in 1568–1570 and the naval battle of Lepanto against the Turks in 1571, heightened the king's desire to confront the threat. In addition, pirates from the East and Northern Africa patrolled the waters of the Mediterranean Sea, taking Christian captives as slaves and looting Christian ships.

Despite this, Philip chose to concentrate his efforts on regaining dissident souls for the Catholic Church, but this did not always have a favourable outcome for the king. Within the borders of his Iberian kingdoms, the Inquisition held a tight grip, but in other areas, such as the Netherlands, resistance to rule by a foreign king steadily grew. Under Charles V, a Fleming by birth, tolerance existed, but with Philip

30 'Pope Paul IV […] would conclude an alliance against Charles V with the Turks, the French and the Devil' (Ibid., p. 157).

31 For more on the war with Paul IV, called the Caraffa War after the pope's surname, see Elliott, *Imperial Spain*, pp. 228–31 and Dandalet, pp. 53–57.

32 Dandalet, p. 53

ruling from Madrid via the regent, his aunt Margaret of Parma, both Catholics and Protestants 'demanded in an open letter to the king an end to the Inquisition's activities, and a change of religious policy'.[33] Full-scale revolt broke out against Spanish rule in the Netherlands, and the Duke of Alba was sent with his army: 'The iconoclasts were to be punished, and rebellious and heretical subjects would be treated to the fate that they deserved'.[34] Alba instituted a policy of repression in the Netherlands that eventually failed and landed him in exile to his estates, and Philip's hold on the Netherlands was never as secure again as his father's had once been.[35] Also, Philip's peers did not understand why the Spanish king spent so much money and effort fighting Christian heretics when the threat of Islam was so much greater.[36]

While the revolt in the Netherlands is an example of the Spanish crown's insistence on maintaining political and religious control no matter the cost, it does not stray from the Christian imperialism ideal in that Philip does not attempt to conquer new territory beyond his borders. However, after nearly a quarter of a century on the throne, Philip's more circumspect imperial policies changed. In 1580, with the Portuguese throne vacant, he threatened to invade Portugal if he were not crowned her king, which sparked great controversy in Catholic Europe. Not only did many of his own people question Philip's motives for considering waging war on a fellow Catholic country in a time when unity among Catholics was necessary to fend off heretics and infidels, but also Pope Gregory XIII (1572–1585) was so opposed to the annexation of Portugal that he threatened any papal subject with excommunication and confiscation of property if they joined the Spanish forces in their fight against their neighbour.[37]

33 J. H. Elliott, *Europe Divided: 1559–1598* (Glasgow: Fontana/Collins, 1968), p. 136.

34 Ibid., p. 144.

35 For details of the revolt in the Netherlands, see Ibid., pp. 125–144.

36 Such as Philip's first cousin, the Emperor Maximilian II (1564–1576) (Heer, p. 185).

37 Dandalet, pp. 74–75; Dandalet reminds us that Gregory XIII also encouraged more compromise in the Netherlands (p. 74).

It was during this time as well that Philip took an active interest in the reconquest of England for Catholicism. Philip II and Elizabeth I of England (1558–1603) did not disrupt each other much in the early years of their reigns; even when Elizabeth was finally excommunicated from the Roman Church in 1570 and Pope St. Pius V (1566–1572; canonised in 1712) urged Philip to invade England, the Spanish king declined. In the 1580s, however, at the height of his power, Philip undertook the enterprise and failed decisively. He sought legal and moral justification for taking the Portuguese crown and invading England, but his actions seem to have had a rather Machiavellian impetus.[38]

Philip seemingly attempted to become a universal monarch, but the quest to rule absolutely over a vast empire consisting of several different nationalities, as occurred under the *Pax Romana*[39] of ancient days, had become impractical even in the sixteenth century. The rise of nationalism, and with it the nation-state, made the fall of imperial rule in countries such as Portugal and the Netherlands inevitable. Even within what is now the nation of Spain, the authoritarian form of rule in Castile opposed the constitutional system of the crown of Aragon, and resulted in the Catalan revolt in 1640. The *Pax Hispanica*, 'peace' under Spanish rule achieved by threat of force and implementation of fear tactics, was destined to fail. It is the same fate shared by the subsequent *Pax Napoleonica* and *Pax Britannica*. In an age considered by many as *Pax Americana*, the same arguments of the morality of rule by one country over another, whether it be direct imperialism with military occupation or indirect imperialism with economic force, arise to be debated by intellectuals.[40]

38 See Niccolò Machiavelli (1469–1527), *The Prince*, ed. by Anthony Grafton, trans. by George Bull, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1999), especially chapters I, VI, and VII, in which Machiavelli cites military and political expediency as justification for invasion and conquest of other territories.

39 *Pax Romana* refers to the period of Roman history beginning with the reign of Augustus (27 BC-AD 14) and lasting until AD 180. While it literally means peace under Roman rule, such a state was only achieved with the use and constant threat of military force against any who dissented.

40 Remnants of the Holy Roman Empire can still be seen in the modern economic sphere: 'The dollar is the nominal descendant of the *Joachimstaler* (for centuries

Miguel de Cervantes composed *La destrucción de Numancia* in the early-to-mid 1580s, after Philip II had taken the crown of Portugal and before the ill-fated Armada expedition, and I argue that the annexation of Portugal, along with other enterprises of the Spanish imperial agenda of the sixteenth century that went against Cervantes's vision of just action, is what the playwright wished to criticise with this work. Cervantes, although not opposed to the idea of hereditary monarchy or moral and just expansion, is a sharp critic of oppressive and tyrannical imperialism, especially in light of the apparent abandonment of the conflict against Islam. As I demonstrate in Chapter I, Cervantes was not alone in his thoughts on this matter, as other playwrights, writers, philosophers, and moralists of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries actively promoted the defence of the people against tyranny. Writers such as Guevara, Father Juan de Mariana (1535–1624), and Vitoria wrote volumes on the dangers of tyrannical overlords gaining too much power, so when Philip II was judged to have begun to follow this path, it was cause for concern amongst the country's intellectuals.

In *La Numancia*, Cervantes connects justice with destiny and develops the notion of the injustice of tyrannical imperialism. From the perspective of the sixteenth century, and of the sixteenth-century view of the ideals of ancient Rome, destiny is synonymous with fortune and fate, and it dictates the outcome of the world's events. The outcome, no matter how cruel or brutal it may seem, is inherently just, and those in ancient Rome who either ignored destiny's decree or actively opposed it suffered moral castigation. Although from the sixteenth-century Catholic perspective human affairs were governed by divine providence, God's established yet unrevealed plan for the course of human events,

the currency of the Empire). The two vertical strokes and wavy band of the dollar sign – to many a sacred symbol indeed – first adorned, as the emblem of the Spanish monarchy, *taler* made from South American silver. The strokes stand for the Pillars of Hercules, which together with a legend-bearing scroll (the wavy band) made up the sacral-political device of Charles V and his empire.' (Heer, p. 2); for a complete study of the evolution of a just war paradigm with comparative references to present-day and past examples, see Michael Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations*, 4th edn (New York: Basic, 2006).

Cervantes's Numantians are clearly pre-Christian people who are not subject to such providence; rather, their actions are governed by an inalterable destiny, to which even the Gods are subject.[41]

For approximately four hundred years, from the second century BC through the second century AD, the leading philosophy of life in the Roman world was Stoicism, which emphasised the importance of destiny and its role in human lives. Stoics identified fate with the gods, the former controlling the latter, believing that all things natural came from the two; to accept fate was to be in harmony with divine reason:[42] 'Séneca conceptúa al hado como una ley externa e immutable, por encima de todo poder, y de todas las cosas; a veces recomienda enfrentarse a ella, pero en general aconseja dejarse llevar por esa fuerza irresistible'.[43] They also espoused the idea that adversity should be accepted as part of destiny, for even though the suffering of good people is an example of the seeming injustice of destiny, death is a blessing, 'removing us from the fetters of the body to a tranquil and blessed existence'.[44] Destiny is an inalterable force, but the Stoics also recognised free will and the importance of choice. Human beings have the option of how to behave, whether to be a good person or a bad person, but their ultimate outcome is dictated by destiny. Stoicism denies the existence of an inherent good or evil, espousing instead that human beings commit good or evil acts. Clarke reminds us that 'prayer may be of some use if what is prayed for is in accordance with fate'.[45]

This ancient idea of the power and control of destiny over our lives and the course of events in the world appears throughout Cervantes's play. From the first act of *La Numancia*, the characters and the audience

41 According to the Papal Bull by Sixtus V (1585–1590) entitled Constitutio Sixti Papae V, dated 5th January 1586, in which the pope condemned soothsayers and astrologers, 'sólo Dios conoce el futuro, que ni hombre ni demonio pueden predecir' (Felipe Díaz Jimeno, *Hado y fortuna en la Espana del siglo XVI* (Madrid: Fundación Universitaria Española, 1987), p. 169.)

42 M. L. Clarke, *The Roman Mind: Studies in the History of Thought from Cicero to Marcus Aurelius* (London: Cohen and West, 1956), p. 116.

43 Días Jimeno, p. 15.

44 Clarke, pp. 118–19.

45 Ibid., p. 120.

are informed of how the play will end; nevertheless, the Romans, especially Cipión, choose to dismiss the power of fate.[46] The Numantians end their lives to preserve their honour, a truly Stoic act, but also to comply with destiny. Cipión, on the other hand, chooses to ignore his destiny, and despite the Stoic virtues of strength and self-control that he possesses, he, like the Celtiberians, experiences the fate that destiny had already dictated for him beforehand. The difference, though, of course, is that the Numantians will remain 'eterna en la memoria' (v. 2266) as 'la fuerza no vencida' (v. 2445), while Cipión ends the play with nothing except his terrestrial life, which is not necessarily desirable in Stoicism.

This is not to say, however, that Cervantes was a Stoic; in fact, I believe that although sixteenth-century Spaniards in many ways associated themselves with the ancient Numantians, and perhaps even considered themselves to be descended from them, they, including Cervantes, also distanced their Christian world from the pagan ways of Rome and Numancia. This seemingly paradoxical reference to the past was not necessarily considered blasphemous in the Golden Age, and it was not altogether uncommon either, even in Catholic Spain. Yates tells us that in the sixteenth century Virgil's (70–19 BC) *Aeneid* was widely popular, mainly because it glorifies the reign of Augustus, the historical context in which Jesus Christ was born.[47] The Augustan age was seen as the supreme example of a world united and at peace under the imperial majesty of one man and of Rome.[48] Brian N. Stiegler writes that Cervantes portrays the fiery destruction of Numancia in a

46 'Cada cual se fabrica su destino, / no tiene allí fortuna alguna parte' (vv. 157–158). According to Book 31 of Polybius's *Histories*, Scipio Aemilianus was ironically among the first of the Roman Stoics. See Polybius, *The Histories*, ed. by G. P. Goold, trans. by W. R. Paton, 6th edn, 6 vols (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1927; repr. 1980), VI. All citations from the play come from the following edition: Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, *El cerco de Numancia*, ed. by Robert Marrast (Madrid: Cátedra, 1999).

47 While Cervantes certainly could have read the *Aeneid* in Latin, it was available in Castilian translation: Virgil, *Los doze libros de la Eneida* de Vergilio, Príncipe de los Poetas Latinos. Traduzida en otaua rima y verso castellano, trans. by Gregorio Hernández de Velasco (Toledo: Juan de Ayala, 1555).

48 Yates, pp. 3–4.

way reminiscent of the Apocalypse; he necessarily destroys the pagan times of Spain's past in order to provide for the coming of the Christian faith. Stiegler feels that Cervantes glorifies the Spanish Empire as the peaceful reign of the Golden Age of Catholicism by separating his people from the pre-Christian days of the Roman Empire, which were almost perfect.[49]

I feel that Stiegler's explanation of the events in the play as being so blatantly pro-imperialist, patriotic, and glorifying of Philip II, whom he says is a God figure while Cipión is an anti-Christ, is too narrow.[50] Cervantes seems to emphasise the potential for his age to become something great in the context of world history, but *La Numancia* serves as a warning against unjust and tyrannical rule. The annexation of Portugal would certainly fall into the Universal Monarchy ideal, but Philip II's methods of taking by force what is not unanimously considered his could easily have been interpreted by intellectuals as unjustly dictatorial and oppressive.

Perhaps the most important aspect of the play in terms of interpreting it as a criticism of Philip II's imperial plan appears in Cervantes's characterisation of the Numantians as victims of Rome's scheme of expansion. I shall often refer to the pitifully human consequences of Cipión's military tactics as demonstrated in Cervantes's Celtiberian characters. The development of the humanisation of the Numantians, in contrast to the greedy search for hegemonic control by the Roman general, casts a long, dark shadow over the justice of Cipión's, and Philip II's, imperial quests.

The humanisation of the Numantians exists on two different levels that correspond to the different types of characters within the walls of Numancia: the individual and the collective; however, as the play progresses and comes to a close it is the collective whole of Numancia that suffers one fate, and the individual and the collective mesh together. Many affirm their beliefs that the entire city of Numancia is the protagonist of the play, but this idea, which is represented by

49 Brian N. Stiegler, 'The Coming of a New Jerusalem: Apocalyptic Vision in Cervantes's *Numancia'*, *Neo*, 80 (1996), 569–81 (p. 578).

50 Ibid., pp. 572–73, 579.

the Numantian characters that are not given specific names, such as *paje*, *numantino*, *mujer*, etc., does not detract from the suffering of the individual characters that the audience comes to know. The loss of pure love between Marandro and Lira, and the loss of friendship between Marandro and Leoncio illustrate the death of innocence caused by Cipión's refusal to compromise. The Numantian leader Teógenes, who is seen as the symbolic father of the city, is forced to kill his own wife and children so they may avoid violation and slavery, and this action embodies the death of the entire town. The final three of the four acts concentrate on the fate of the Numantians, and the sadness provoked by their final self-destruction heavily outweighs any triumph from either Cipión's moral defeat or Spain's hegemony at the time of the play's composition.

One can find support for the theory of anti-tyrannical discourse in *La Numancia* by surveying the different applications of both Cervantes's play and subsequent theatrical works depicting the legend. While this fact does not directly lend weight to the argument that Cervantes's Romans stand for an oppressive imperial Spain, the play's legacy has proven to be used to criticise oppression; several re-creations and productions of the legend and Cervantes's dramatic work in different languages and countries have served the purpose of condemning political, economic, military, or cultural hegemony. Alfredo Hermenegildo agrees that 'el drama de Cervantes ha sido utilizado a veces como instrumento de agitación de masas',[51] even if he had not originally intended it to have that meaning. These playwrights compose their *Numancias* to emphasise *lo numantino* in the people of their own era.[52] The work and the legend have given a voice to the oppressed and emphasise the cruelty of the domination portrayed by Cervantes. Like Cervantes, many writers wished to comment on their own contemporary society with the play.

After Cervantes composed the first dramatic version of the fall of Numancia of which academia is aware, other original versions appeared

51 Alfredo Hermenegildo, *La 'Numancia' de Cervantes* (Madrid: Sociedad General Española de Librería, 1976), p. 30.

52 Francisco Vivar, *La Numancia de Cervantes y la memoria de un mito* (Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 2004), p. 107.

on the scene. In approximately 1630, fifty years after Cervantes wrote his play, Francisco de Rojas Zorrilla (1607–1648) composed a tragedy in two parts entitled *Numancia cercada y Numancia destruida*. Since Cervantes's play was not published until 1784, it is unknown if it influenced Rojas Zorrilla's work, but some similarities stick out:

> Es evidente que Rojas retuvo casi todos los sucesos históricos dramatizados por Cervantes. […] Siguió también el episodio legendario del muchacho que se arroja de la torre, episodio que es más similar en los detalles que ninguno otro de los dramatizados por los dos escritores.[53]

According to MacCurdy in his introduction to the only modern edition of the play, Rojas Zorrilla individualizes characters much more instead of relying, like Cervantes, on a collective central figure.

He seemingly imitates Cervantes by including in his work the omen of the eagle, which carries potent symbolism with it. In Act Two of Cervantes's *La Numancia*, the great eagle flies overhead during the religious ceremony, alarming the priests: '¿No ves un escuadrón airado y feo / de águilas fieras, que pelean / con otras aves en marcial rodeo?' (vv. 849–51). MacCurdy explains that in Numancia cercada y Numancia destruida, 'un águila desciende, poniendo una corona de laurel en la cabeza de Retógenes, agüero, según lo interpreta él, que significa que Numancia derrotará a Roma; pero, de pronto, el águila la vuelve y le arrebata la corona'.[54] The eagle, as a strong bird of prey, often represents tyranny. It was, however, adopted as a symbol by both Imperial Rome and the Holy Roman Empire. Rojas Zorrilla's play adopts anti-imperialist sentiment by indirectly representing the Numantians as victims of the eagle, which symbolises oppression and domination.

A century and a half later, Ignacio López de Ayala (d. 1789) published his dramatic adaptation of the destruction of Numancia,

53 Raymond R. MacCurdy, 'Prólogo' of *Numancia cercada* y *Numancia destruida* by Francisco de Rojas Zorrilla, ed. by Raymond R. MacCurdy (Madrid: Porrúa, 1977), p. xxi. This edition by MacCurdy represents the first publication of these plays by Rojas Zorrilla.

54 Ibid., pp. xxiv-xxv.

entitled *Numancia destruida* (1775).[55] López de Ayala's play follows in the development of the concepts of defending the patria and the tragedy of the human element of the fall of the Celtiberian capital. According to Marrast, the lines of his play were used to protest against the absolutism of King Ferdinand VII of Spain (1808, 1814–1833), relying on the relation between the Numantians and the oppressed people of his country; after years of bloody warfare against Napoleon Bonaparte (1769–1821; Emperor Napoleon I of France (1804–1814)), the Spaniards suffering under Ferdinand VII identified themselves with the Numantians and their heroic defense of their homeland.[56] The use of the play to champion the side of the oppressed continued into the twentieth century.

On December 27, 1937, after the beginning of the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939), Rafael Alberti (1902–1999) premiered his version of the drama in Madrid, which 'adapted the play for an audience of battle-weary Republican militia'.[57] In the Prologue, Alberti informs the readers that the play was performed 'a poco más de dos mil metros de los cañones facciosos y bajo la continua amenaza de los aviones italianos y alemanes'.[58] The Nationalist forces of General Francisco Franco (1892–1975) were besieging the city, and Alberti wished to strengthen the morale of his comrades, while heavily criticising contemporary events in his 'adaptación y versión actualizada'.[59] After the war, he had the play performed again, this time in exile in Montevideo, Uruguay, in 1943, calling his *Numancia* a symbol of freedom in theatre, and stressing its social value:

55 Ignacio López de Ayala, *Numancia destruida*, ed. by Russell P. Sebold (Madrid: Anaya, 1971).

56 Robert Marrast, 'Introducción' to *El cerco de Numancia* by Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, p. 27.

57 Emilie Bergmann, 'The Epic Vision of Cervantes's *Numancia*', *TJ*, 36 (1984), 85–96 (p. 93).

58 Rafael Alberti, *Numancia: tragedia: adaptación y versión actualizada de* La destrucción de Numancia, *de Miguel de Cervantes*, estrenada en Madrid, 1937 / *Numancia: tragedia: versión modernizada de* La destrucción de Numancia, *de Miguel de Cervantes*, estrenada en Montevideo, 1943 (Madrid: Turner, 1975), p. 7.

59 Ibid., p. 7.

> Espectáculo destinado a un pueblo enardecido, estremecido, bombardeado, heroico, pensé entonces, después de un detenido estudio de la tragedia, en la necesidad de reducirla a sus límites emocionales, rigurosos, eliminando cuanto pudiera diluir el hecho militar, el ejemplo cívico, la hazaña fabulosa.[60]

Alberti took great artistic license in his handling of Cervantes's text in order to express his feelings on its symbolic implications.

In several places, Alberti makes critical changes to the play to suit his audience. For example, he titles the play simply *Numancia*, opting against either *El cerco de Numancia* or *La destrucción de Numancia*. This change 'eliminates the feeling of annihilation from the title'.[61] In the text, he omits the scenes in which Cipión refers to the Numantians as beasts and those that point out the horrors of starvation in the city, so that the audience remained optimistic during their own war:

> [Cipión] speaks about the 'barbaric Spanish rebels' (v. 110) [in Cervantes' play]. Alberti, together with his audience, identifies the rebels with the Franco troops and, consequently, not with the people of Numancia in his own dramatic transcription. Therefore, Cervantes's allusion must be suppressed.[62]

Alberti carefully and thoughtfully constructed his version of Cervantes' play, but the changes definitely stand out to modern critics.

Alberti not only cut dialogue, but also altered the personality of the Roman leader in order to 'appear vainglorious by changing a few words in his speech. […] By changing one letter, Cervantes's "feared" Romans become "timid" in Alberti's text ("temidos" – "tímidos")'.[63] He necessarily altered the general feel of Cipión in both the 1937 Madrid presentation, and his 1943 adaptation performed in Montevideo:

> The attitude of Cervantes towards Escipión and the army is a fundamental element of [his play]. But Alberti could not share with Cervantes the admiration for the enemy general. The reasons seem obvious. Nor was it possible in [the

60 Ibid., p. 80.
61 Alfredo Hermenegildo, 'Alberti and the Spectator of *Numancia*', trans. by Lucía Graves, *The Malahat Review*, 47 (1978), 148–53 (p. 150).
62 Ibid., p. 153.
63 Bergmann, p. 93.

> 1937 adaptation] and [the 1943 production] to consider the reform of the Roman army as something positive, as it appears in Cervantes. On the contrary, [the 1937 version] insists on identifying the Romans with the Italian fascists.[64]

The Roman soldiers in the 1937 performance wear dark uniforms, resembling Mussolini's troops, and any praise of Cipión by the Numantians is cut out, such as Cervantes's reference to him as the 'general prudente' (v. 1153). Alberti strategically manipulated the dialogue and the stage directions of Cervantes' work to promote his own political position.

In 1968 the Spanish dramatist Alfonso Sastre (1926-) penned his dramatic work *Crónicas romanas* while he was in exile in Italy. His play depicts Numancia with satirical scenes that represent the anti-hegemonic opinions of the dramatist using contemporary and colloquial language. He begins the drama with an assembly of Numantian governors seated at a table in front of microphones, in the style of a press conference. He criticises the atrocities committed by the world's governments in the latter half of the twentieth century, including the presence of the United States in Viet Nam, basing his characters on Cervantes's: 'Son deliberadamente bien visibles los elementos de *La Numancia* de Cervantes elaborados en estas *Crónicas*. Se ha hecho así, como homenaje y tributo debidos – y jamás pagados – al gran Cervantes: "el manco sano, el famoso todo, el escritor alegre"'.[65] Sastre resuscitates the ideology that Cervantes emphasises in his drama to criticise society in the 1960s.

Sastre, like Cervantes, inserts comments in the drama that excuse or hide criticism of the Spanish government. In *La Numancia* the prophecy delivered by the wise River Duero seems to praise Spain, possibly concealing criticism of the nation's imperial aspirations. In the introduction of *Crónicas romanas*, Sastre includes a *Noticia* before the start of the work in which he explains the genesis of his *Numancia*: 'Pisábamos las huellas de Numancia, en la tierra de Soria, las riberas del Duero. "¿Por qué no haces una Numancia?" Pisábamos

64 Hermenegildo, 'Alberti', p. 151.

65 Alfonso Sastre, *M.S.V., o, La sangre y la ceniza / Crónicas romanas*, ed. by Magda Ruggeri Marchetti (Madrid: Cátedra, 1998), p. 303.

con emoción la tierra carbonizada de la ciudad heroica. "Una obra para la lucha" dijo la compañera'.[66] The impressive ruins of the conquered city inspired Sastre just as the legend of Numancia inspired Cervantes. Sastre emphasises his manipulation of history in creating 'una tentativa *probablemente revolucionaria*'[67] to stimulate the inevitable criticism of hegemony from the audience. He does not try to hide his opinions as Cervantes did, but rather exonerates himself of guilt if the audience chooses to interpret the work as a call to revolt.

Sastre ends the work with a jump in time from the second century BC to the twentieth century to juxtapose the ancient story of Numancia with the modern world. In the penultimate scene, Escipión, contemplating the destroyed city and the shame of having lost the war, tries to erase the memory of Numancia. Sastre's Escipión realises the power of history and tries to ensure that Roman honour will be preserved. Escipión decrees:

> No quede memoria de[l] […] extraño heroísmo [numantino]. Polibio, quema todas tus notas y cuadernos. Soldados, nunca vinisteis a Numancia, bajo pena de muerte; ni nunca existió una ciudad con ese nombre. En vuestros relatos, los que lleguéis a viejos, pasad, como si fueran ascuas, por este rarísimo episodio, sin duda imaginario, y si los nietos os preguntaran algún día, decid que nunca oísteis nombre tan raro como éste de Numancia: ciudad, desde ahora, no destruida: jamás edificada. Arrasad lo que quede y reste sólo la colina desnuda.[68]

In Cervantes's *La Numancia*, *Fama* vows to keep alive the valiant struggle and death of the Numantians, and historically, the Greek historian Polybius recorded the atrocities of Numancia. Sastre's Escipión attempts to take full advantage of censoring information before it reaches Rome, using a true tyrant's tool for maintaining power, but the story eventually reaches the people. It is up to the Romans to carry on the story of Numantian heroism.

Suddenly, the last scene entitled 'Ocupación del teatro' begins. A character named Estudiante rises in the audience, interrupts the work, and informs all who are present that the Social Brigade and the police have

66 Ibid., p. 299.
67 Ibid., p. 301, original emphasis.
68 Ibid., p. 416.

arrived to arrest everyone. The 'obra probablemente revolucionaria' has caused the arrival of the authorities, and from the audience there arise shouts. Estudiante ends the drama calming the members of the audience who are not actors, but he warns them of the anti-imperialist power that *Crónicas romanas* can transmit:

> Aquí acaban nuestras *Crónicas romanas*, mientras la lucha, en mil lugares continúa. ¡Ah! No sería raro que a la salida se encontraran con la Policía de verdad. Por si acaso, lleven preparada la documentación, y buena suerte. *(Telón. A la salida, si no ocurre en realidad, algunos actores-policías pedirán la documentación a los espectadores más sospechosos)*.[69]

The metatheatricality of the play literally connects historical events with the political problems of Spain under Franco. The criticism of the dictatorship differs from the conjecture of Cervantes, but the support of liberty is preserved in the literature.

Another version of the play was done in Mexico in 1973, when the Mexican poet and dramatist José Emilio Pacheco (1939-) staged his own version of *La Numancia* just days after the coup d'état in Chile: 'The director Manuel Montoro recalled [the] performance on 19 September 1973, in which the final scene was accompanied by a voice crying out "¡Viva Allende!"'.[70] I have not been able to discover the exact changes that Pacheco made, but it is known that he used the drama to denounce the dictators and military governments that took control of Latin American countries in the twentieth century. According to Carroll B. Johnson, José Emilio Pacheco 'apoya la tesis "revolucionaria", y afirma que nunca, en los cuatrocientos años que lleva *La Numancia* en el mundo, ha sido representada al servicio de los intereses totalitarios e imperialistas que parece pregonar'.[71] Again, Cervantes's ideas are used to promote liberty and not imperialism.

69 Ibid., p. 419.

70 Bergmann, p. 96.

71 Carroll B. Johnson, '*La Numancia* y la estructura de la ambigüedad cervantina' in *Cervantes: su obra y su mundo, Actas del I congreso international sobre Cervantes*, ed. by Manuel Criado de Val (Madrid: Arcipreste de Hita, 1981), pp. 309–16 (p. 310)